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“A New Policy in Church School Work”: The Founding of the
Mormon Supplementary Religious Education Movement

Brett David Dowdle

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

“A New Policy in Church School Work”: The Founding of the Mormon Supplementary Religious Education Movement

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The following thesis is a study of the founding years of the Mormon supplementary religious education between 1890 and 1930. It examines Mormonism’s shift away from private denominational education towards a system of supplementary religious education programs at the elementary, high school, and college levels. Further, this study examines the role that supplementary religious education played in the changes between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

During the 1870s and 1880s, Utah’s territorial schools became an important part of the battles over polygamy and the control of Utah. As the Federal Government began to wrest control of the schools from the Mormon community, the Church established a system of private academies. Economic problems during the 1880s and 1890s, however, made it difficult for the Church to maintain many of these schools, necessitating the Mormon patronage of the public schools. As a result, in 1890 the Church established its first supplementary religious education program, known as the Religion Class program. The Religion Class program suffered from a variety of problems and was criticized by both Mormon and non-Mormon officials.

Despite the failings of the Religion Class program, the need for supplementary religious education became increasingly important during the first two decades of the twentieth century. In 1912, the Granite Stake established the Church’s first high school seminary. Within ten years, the seminary program replaced the majority of the academies and became the Church’s preeminent educational program. During the 1920s, the Church began extending supplementary religious education to its students in colleges and universities through the establishment of the institute program and the near-complete abandonment of its private colleges and schools.

The successive establishment of these three programs demonstrates a shift in Mormon educational priorities and attitudes throughout this period. Whereas the academies and the Religion Class program emphasized a general fear of Americanization, the seminary and institute programs accepted the public schools and much of the Americanization that accompanied them, while at the same time providing means for the continued inculcation of Mormon values into the lives of Latter-day Saint youth.

Keywords: Church and State, Educational History, Mormon History, Progressive Era, Religious Education, Utah History, Religion Class Program, Seminary, Institute, Depression of 1890, Fundamentalist Movement, Polygamy, Sexual Revolution, Granite Utah Stake, Joseph F. Merrill, Moscow Idaho, Salt Lake City Utah

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CHAPTER 1

TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY MORMONISM IN AMERICA AND ITS SCHOOLS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Few periods of Mormon history have been as outwardly dynamic and revolutionary as the era from 1890 to 1930. On the surface, the entire makeup of Mormonism seemed to change during these years. Most visibly, plural marriage, a key tenet of nineteenth-century Mormonism, was abandoned amidst increasing pressure from the federal government and the wider American population. Thomas O’Dea described nineteenth-century Mormonism as possessing “a common homeland, a common culture, a common religion, common social institutions, a deeply felt common tradition, and the self-image of a separate and divinely chosen group with its own peculiar destiny,” a near-nationality distinctive from the rest of the United States.¹ From 1890 to 1930, however, Mormonism changed from its status as a closed, community-based church that maintained its distance from national issues, into a more open religion with an interest in many important national issues.

Viewing such radical changes, some historians such as Klaus Hansen have suggested that this period resulted in the wholesale alteration of Mormonism, creating so wide a distinction between the nineteenth and twentieth-century models as to make two distinct branches of Mormonism corresponding to each century. Indeed, Hansen has argued that Mormonism “experienced a social and intellectual transformation of such magnitude that a resurrected Joseph Smith, returning to earth today, might well wonder if this was indeed the same church he had

¹ Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 116.

founded.”² Following such reasoning, Ethan Yorgason has referred to this period as a period of *transformation*, suggesting that the changes of these years were more than just cosmetic changes of practice, but instead were internal changes of doctrine and belief.³

While it is undeniable that Mormonism underwent a number of drastic changes around the turn of the twentieth century, a more nuanced view of these changes is essential to better understand the similarities as well as the differences between nineteenth and twentieth-century Mormonism. In contrast to Hansen and Yorgason’s *transformation* theses, Thomas Alexander has argued that the period from 1890 to 1930 was a period of *transition* for Mormonism.⁴ Alexander has written that although these changes did “require the abandonment or change of much that Mormons had considered essential before, including plural marriage, a church-controlled political party, and church domination of public schools,” they “did not involve the adoption of a completely new world view.”⁵ He argues that while this period involved a number of significant changes for Mormonism, it did not produce the wholesale transformation of Mormonism that Hansen and Yorgason have suggested.

Grant Underwood has likewise argued that Mormon historians must temper their theses about the radical transformation by seeing a Mormonism that extended beyond the church hierarchy and included the theological thoughts and practices of the ordinary members of the

² Klaus Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 147.

³ Ethan R. Yorgason, *Transformation of the Mormon Culture Region* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

⁴ Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

⁵ Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 14.

Church.⁶ He suggests that, statistically speaking, many ordinary Mormons were largely unaffected by issues such as the abandonment of plural marriage and the utopian principles of Brigham Young's United Order because they had never been significantly involved in the practices.⁷ While the changes that altered these practices may have presented some doctrinal differences and posed questions to ordinary Latter-day Saints, these changes did not have a drastic impact upon the everyday lives, beliefs, and practices of many Mormons. Similarly, Thomas Simpson has suggested that "all the scholarly attention to the 1890s...has obscured important continuities between Mormonism before and after the Manifesto."⁸ This is not to suggest that such issues were unimportant, or that they did not vitally influence the shaping of twentieth-century Mormonism. Certainly these changes, and particularly the plural marriage manifesto, cut a wide swath through the period and became the most defining events of the age; however, just as it is historically unwise to define a period merely by its "great men" without reference to the ordinary people, so it is historically unwise to define a period merely by its "great events" without reference to its ordinary occurrences.

Education was among the every-day occurrences that defined Mormonism and its transition during these years. Throughout this period Mormon leaders experimented with several

⁶ Throughout this thesis, the term "the Church" will be used to signify the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Any exceptions will be noted in the text. The abbreviation "LDS" will likewise be used to signify the Mormon Church. Grant Underwood, "Re-visioning Mormon History," *Pacific Historical Review* 55, no. 3 (August 1986): 403-26.

⁷ While polygamy defined the lives of most of those who practiced it, not all Mormons were comfortable with the practice of plural marriage. Martha Cragun Cox related her shock at the attitudes that many within the community of Saint George reflected toward plural marriage in the late 1860s. According to Cox, there was a prevalent idea that plural marriage was "for those girls who cannot very well get good young men for husbands," but should not have been practiced by the community's more eligible young women. While Cox's statement is a late recollection and reflects the feelings of only a small group of people, it underscores Underwood's position that plural marriage was not a universally accepted practice of pre-Manifesto Mormons. Underwood, "Re-visioning Mormon History," 415-18; Martha Cragun Cox, *Autobiography* 1928, folder 1, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereinafter cited Special Collections, HBLL).

⁸ Thomas Wendell Simpson, "Mormons Study 'Abroad': Latter-day Saints in American Higher Education" (PhD. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 2005), 4.

different educational programs, all in an effort to “counteract the tendencies” that they viewed as growing “out of a Godless education.”⁹ They hoped that these educational programs would assist in the development of a continued, albeit altered, sense of Mormon distinctiveness and identity in a post-plural marriage environment. Where plural marriage had created a visible boundary between Mormons and Gentiles, education was used to create what Mormon leaders hoped would be a more ethereal, but equally effective, boundary to distinguish members of the Church, thus helping to maintain a distinctive Mormon milieu.

Crucial among these educational efforts was the development of a large system of supplementary religious education programs that operated in connection with the public schools. This system of religious education encompassed three major programs which provided religious instruction to Mormon students in each of the educational grade levels. The Religion Class program, which was developed in 1890, served Mormon children in the elementary grades; the Seminary program, which was organized in 1912, covered the Latter-day Saint students in the public high schools; and the Institute program, which was founded in 1926, provided religious instruction to Mormon students at the University level. Developed at three distinct periods during the forty years of Mormonism’s transition, the differences among these programs demonstrated the changes that took place in the Church throughout this era. These religious education programs not only illustrated the important alterations within the Mormon community, but, as key centers of Latter-day Saint religious education, they also played an essential role in the development of twentieth-century Mormonism. By making it culturally acceptable for Mormon students to attend the American public schools, these programs made it possible for Mormon youth to be exposed to the assimilative elements of American education. At the same

⁹ First Presidency to Presidents of Stakes and Bishops, 25 October 1890, in James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833-1964*, 6 Vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), 3:196.

time, they provided for the inculcation of Mormon values and doctrine into the lives of LDS youth. Accordingly the Church's supplementary religious education programs assisted in both the "Americanization" and "Mormonization" of Latter-day Saint youth.

Although many historians have written about the development of Mormon education during this period, none has examined how the Church's leaders attempted to use religious education to provide a substitute for the identity that had been created by plural marriage. One of the first efforts to write the history of Mormon education was a historical study composed by Adam S. Bennion, the Superintendent of Church Schools, in 1928.¹⁰ At the time the paper was written, Mormon leaders were forced to make a number of critical decisions about the Church's educational future because of the period's economic uncertainties.¹¹ Bennion's paper provided the Church Board of Education with important information on the history and trends of Mormon education up to that time, and ultimately proved to be an important factor in determining educational policy for the Church. In the document, Bennion advocated the Church's abandonment of the academic field in preference for a system that focused solely upon religious education programs to supplement the public schools.¹² Ultimately, many of his suggestions

¹⁰ Adam S. Bennion, "A Brief Summary of the Historical Background, the Present Status, and the Possible Future Development of the Latter-day Saint Educational System," folder 5, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹¹ Prior to making his paper available to all of the members of the Board of Education, Bennion met privately with Heber J. Grant for "a long confidential talk regarding the situation of the Church Schools." During this meeting, Bennion made it clear that he was "inclined to think that [the Church] should discontinue all church school education that is duplicated by the state" because of the rapidly rising costs of education. Grant later explained to the Board that "the Church could not keep pace financially with the demands of our schools." Heber J. Grant, Diary, 6 January 1926, *The Diaries of Heber J. Grant, 1880-1945, Abridged* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2010), 333; Grant, Diary, 10 March 1926, *Diaries of Heber J. Grant*, 334.

¹² Bennion questioned, "How far will the finances of the Church allow us to go in carrying forward an academic program, in the face of ever-increasing needs in the realm of religious education"? At the same time, he was one of the driving forces in the development of college level seminaries, later renamed institutes. In this document, he pushed for the establishment of college seminaries in Moscow and Pocatello, Idaho; Logan, Cedar City, and Salt Lake City, Utah; Tucson, Phoenix, Tempe, and Flagstaff, Arizona. Bennion, "A Brief Summary," 6-7.

were adopted by the Board of Education, including the expansion of the supplementary religious education program at the expense of the Church's privately owned colleges.

A decade later, M. Lynn Bennion, wrote *Mormonism and Education*.¹³ Originally written as a dissertation at the University of California at Berkeley, the book grew out of the “widespread interest in religious education” in a society where “the elimination of religious instruction from American schools” had become the norm.¹⁴ It focused upon the growth and development of the Mormon educational system and the faith's educational philosophy. Because Bennion's doctoral work was in education rather than history, *Mormonism and Education* is somewhat lacking in terms of historical analysis; however, what the book lacks in historical analysis, it makes up for in charts and other useful data that would otherwise be difficult to obtain. For instance, Bennion provides detailed enrollment statistics for the Church schools, as well as data concerning the per-capita costs of Church education.¹⁵ Additionally, the book provides valuable information regarding the costs and enrollments during the first twenty years of the seminary program.¹⁶ Hence, although *Mormonism and Education* is now outdated, it remains a valuable source of information on Mormon education.

As the most up-to-date and detailed history of Mormon education, Lynn Bennion's book served as the quintessential narrative of the subject for several decades until the publication in 1988 of Church Educational System administrator William E. Berrett's *A Miracle in Weekday*

¹³ Milton Lynn Bennion, *Mormonism and Education* (Salt Lake City: Department of Education of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1939).

¹⁴ Bennion, *Mormonism and Education*, 3.

¹⁵ Bennion, *Mormonism and Education*, 198-201.

¹⁶ Bennion, *Mormonism and Education*, 205-10, 221-25.

Religious Education, which has since served as the institutional history of Mormon education.¹⁷ Berrett's book was a condensed version of an unpublished five-volume institutional history that he had written for the Church Educational System in the 1970s.¹⁸ As the title suggests, the book is a providential history of the seminary program, and is intended to provide spiritual uplift more than historical interpretation. While Berrett did provide the reader with some important details, he focused upon the aspects of the history which he had personally experienced, to the neglect of other important subjects. Additionally, the book suffers from problems of poor documentation and a lack of historical context. Despite these problems, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education* is an important addition to the historiography of Mormon education because it outlines the providential interpretation that most who are interested in the topic generally ascribe to the history.

In addition to these general histories of Mormon education, a number of biographies have provided valuable information regarding the growth and development of Mormon education. Although some of these biographies at times border on hagiography, obscuring or ignoring certain failings, they provide many useful insights into the lives of the men who shaped the Church's educational program during the forty years from 1890 to 1930. With two exceptions, there have been informative biographies written on all of the leaders of the Mormon educational system during this period.

¹⁷ William E. Berrett was a former teacher in, and administrator of, the Church's educational system, with responsibility for the seminaries and institutes. William E. Berrett and Frank W. Hirschi, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education: A History of the Church Educational System, Being an Account of Weekday Religious Education of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and especially of the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Printing Center, 1988).

¹⁸ Berrett and Hirschi, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education*, xi-xii; William E. Berrett, *My Story*, 125, LDS Church Historical Library, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereinafter cited as CHL).

Alma Burton's biography of Karl G. Maeser as an educator provides many insights into the inner workings of Mormon education during the 1880s and 1890s.¹⁹ Because Maeser is most well known as the founding principal of the Brigham Young Academy, the majority of the book emphasizes Maeser's role in that capacity. The book also includes a valuable chapter on his work as the superintendent of Church schools, which discusses Maeser's place in establishing the Church's educational system. In this capacity, Maeser played a crucial role in the development and expansion of the Religion Class program.²⁰ Thus, while Maeser's name is generally associated with Mormonism's private schools, he was also crucial to the development of the Church's supplementary religious education program. Accordingly, Maeser "occupied a unique position in the Church," having established the foundation of the Mormon educational system in both academic study and religious indoctrination.²¹

Unfortunately, relatively little has been written on the administrations of Joseph M. Tanner and Horace H. Cummings, who directed Mormon education from 1901 to 1919. Although Tanner and Cummings are not as well known as Maeser and the leaders during the 1920s, they both played essential roles in the growth and development of Mormon education from 1901-1919. Margery Ward's biography of Tanner briefly discusses his various accomplishments as superintendent. The biography's main emphasis, however, is upon Tanner's polygamous experience rather than his educational achievements.²² Horace Cummings left an extensive autobiography, but his years as superintendent have been generally overlooked by

¹⁹ Alma P. Burton, "Karl G. Maeser, Mormon Educator," (MS Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1950).

²⁰ According to Maeser's daughter, Maeser was the principal author of the Religion Class curriculum. Burton, "Karl G. Maeser," 106.

²¹ Burton, "Karl G. Maeser," 134.

²² Margery W. Ward, *A Life Divided: The Biography of Joseph Marion Tanner, 1859-1927* (Salt Lake City: Publisher's Press, 1980), 41-47.

historians.²³ When Cummings' tenure has been mentioned, it has usually been to note his participation in the infamous 1911 controversy over higher criticism at Brigham Young University, which, although important, should not be viewed as his only contribution to Mormon educational thought and practice.²⁴ Both Tanner and Cummings served during crucial periods in the development of the Church's supplementary religious education program.

Kenneth G. Bell's Master's thesis emphasized Adam Bennion's role as superintendent of Church schools during the 1920s.²⁵ Bell argued that Bennion's practical and innovative approach to religious education transformed Mormon education during the period. Perhaps the most important aspect of Bell's work is the fact that he was granted a remarkably liberal degree of access to the Church Board of Education minutes, which are presently closed to researchers. These minutes reveal important controversies and discussions regarding the future direction of Mormon education, particularly concerning the future of the Mormon private schools. Bell thus provides valuable insights into the inner workings of Mormon education during the 1920s.

Building upon Bell's work, Casey P. Griffiths' thesis examined the accomplishments of Joseph F. Merrill as the Church Commissioner of Education.²⁶ Until Griffiths' thesis, Merrill had been largely ignored by Mormon history, despite a lifetime of vital contributions to Mormon education. Griffiths helps to rectify this problem by detailing Merrill's involvement in

²³ Horace H. Cummings, *Diary and Autobiography 1917-1936*, Special Collections, HBLL.

²⁴ For information on the 1911 controversy, see: Ernest L. Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, 4 vols. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 1: 409-433; Gary James Bergera, "The 1911 Evolution Controversy at Brigham Young University," in *The Search for Harmony: Essays on Science and Mormonism*, eds. Gene E. Sessions and Craig J. Oberg (Salt Lake City: Signature Book, 1993), 23-41; Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), 134-48.

²⁵ Kenneth G. Bell, "Adam Samuel Bennion: Superintendent of L.D.S. Education—1919 to 1928" (MA Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1969).

²⁶ Casey P. Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education, 1928-1933," (MA Thesis, Brigham Young University, 2007).

establishing the modern Church Educational System. The thesis includes chapters on Merrill's role in the establishment of the institute, the transfer of the Church junior colleges to state control, and his handling of a major crisis in church and state relationships. While noting that many of Merrill's acts as commissioner were highly unpopular, Griffiths convincingly argues that Merrill's service as commissioner was crucial to the continued development of Mormon education as a whole, and to the rise of supplementary religious education in particular.²⁷ Unfortunately, Griffiths did not deal with Merrill's role in establishing the seminary program, which was arguably his most important contribution to Church education.

Mary Jane Woodger's dissertation on the educational philosophy of David O. McKay likewise contributes to our understanding of Mormon educational leadership during the period.²⁸ Woodger notes that McKay advocated many of the educational philosophies espoused by John Dewey and the other leaders of the progressive education movement, effectively helping to transform teaching methods within the Church during the first four decades of the twentieth century.²⁹ Woodger's discussion of McKay's time at the Weber Stake Academy helps to explain a later episode when McKay voted to perpetuate the Church schools rather than to focus entirely upon supplementary religious education. Woodger's analysis of McKay's educational philosophy and practices in the context of many of the prevailing American educational techniques and practices of turn-of-the-century America is likewise useful. She demonstrates that McKay accepted many of the ideas made popular by progressive educators, including many

²⁷ Among the controversial decisions that Griffiths discusses are Merrill's role in the closure of many of the Church schools, and his decision to send Mormon seminary teachers to the University of Chicago for divinity training. Griffiths argues that both of these decisions, while difficult, were correct and played an important role in the development of Mormon education.

²⁸ Mary Jane Woodger, "Educational Ideas and Practices of David O. McKay: 1880-1940" (Ed.D. Dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1997).

²⁹ Woodger, "Educational Ideas and Practices of David O. McKay," 16, 103-13, 144-59.

of the country's most liberal educational philosophies.³⁰ Accordingly, Woodger demonstrates the important influence of the wider American society upon the Church and its educational institutions. Eventually, the modernizing influences that shaped McKay would affect the whole of Mormon education, and would play a vital role in the Americanization of twentieth-century Mormonism.

While the historians studying Bennion, Merrill, and McKay have generally focused upon the educational contributions of these Mormon leaders, Alan Parrish's biography of John A. Widtsoe ranges well beyond his examination of Widtsoe's educational life and philosophy.³¹ Several chapters deal with Widtsoe's educational life and philosophy, including an informative chapter on Widtsoe's two terms as the commissioner of Church education.³² The chapter largely focuses upon Widtsoe's efforts to combine faith and science in Mormon education, a theme which Parrish uses to reinforce his argument that Widtsoe was "Mormonism's model of... higher education."³³ Unfortunately, the chapter combines the two terms of service and thereby limits the reader's understanding of the differences between the terms. Additionally, the book's nature as a biography precluded the possibility of providing the reader with an adequate comprehension of the important contextual events surrounding his two terms. Although a fuller consideration of Widtsoe's contributions in this position is still needed, Parrish's biography provides the historiography of Mormon education with a nice synopsis of Widtsoe's educational influence during his years of service.

³⁰ Woodger, "Educational Ideas and Practices of David O. McKay," 244-58.

³¹ Alan K. Parrish, *John A. Widtsoe: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003).

³² Parrish, *John A. Widtsoe*, 357-379.

³³ Parrish, *John A. Widtsoe*, xi.

While the biographies of Mormon educational leaders shed light on the development of Mormon education between 1890 and 1930, they are not without limitations. Although some authors provide contextual information extending beyond the life of the person being memorialized, they generally maintain a rather narrow focus that limits historical understanding. Biographies usually follow the erroneous reasoning of Thomas Carlyle that “the History of the world is but the Biography of great men.”³⁴ Such history leaves little space for the contributions of “ordinary men,” to say nothing of the roles of women, minority groups, and children.

In this respect, the contributions of James R. Clark, Thomas Alexander, Scott Esplin, and Thomas Simpson have been of immense worth to the historiography of Mormon education. Rather than merely emphasizing the “great men” of Mormon educational history, their works have focused upon elements and trends that defined Mormon education during these years. While these works have not completely abandoned a focus upon “great men” and institutions, they have brought a higher level of historical criticism to the study of Mormon education.

James R. Clark’s 1956 dissertation examined the relationships between church and state in education and emphasized the ways that the Mormon concept of the kingdom of God shaped education in Utah.³⁵ Drawing upon Joseph Smith’s Council of Fifty as an example, Clark argued that Mormon education was uniquely influenced by the Mormon concept of Zion and that the Kingdom of God encompassed a community in which “church and state, politics, [and] the economy” were combined into a single entity.³⁶ According to Clark, these theological leanings

³⁴ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and The Heroic in History* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1907), 41.

³⁵ James R. Clark, “Church and State Relationships in Education in Utah” (Ed.D. Dissertation, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, 1958).

³⁶ The Council of Fifty was a theocratic organization established in Nauvoo by Joseph Smith during the 1840s. According to one historian, the council’s “primary role... was to symbolize the other-worldly world order that would be established during the millennial reign of Christ on earth,” while its “secondary role... involved its

influenced the whole of Utah, including its schools, and often resulted in conflicts between the Church and the state. Correspondingly, he argued that the change in church and state relationships was at least partially due to the fact that Mormons were constrained to give up such close relationships as a part of the agreement with the government to end the practice of plural marriage.³⁷

Perhaps the most influential history of Mormonism's transition era is Thomas Alexander's *Mormonism in Transition*, which addresses several vital aspects of the Church's changes from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, including a chapter on Mormon education.³⁸ He argued that education was one of the elements that demonstrated Mormonism's transition to a more Americanized church during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to Alexander, it was during these years that "church leadership on both the general and local levels...charted a course which the church educational system has followed to the present time" by founding the seminaries and institutes and abandoning "competing and expensive collegiate and high school education."³⁹

Scott Esplin's dissertation, "Education in Transition: Church and State Relationships in Utah Education, 1888-1933," builds upon Alexander's work and demonstrates the extent to

literal, practical functions" as a political entity and a governing body in the Church. Clark argues that "the Council of Fifty...was the policy making body for the civil government of Utah from 1848 to 1870, if not later," though most historians would now argue that its influence was dramatically reduced after 1850. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 4; D. Michael Quinn, "The Council of Fifty and Its Members, 1844 to 1945," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 163-64, 171; James R. Clark, "The Kingdom of God, the Council of Fifty, and the State of Deseret," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 26 (April 1958): 143. See also Andrew F. Ehat, "It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 3 (Spring 1980): 253-80; Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God & the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967).

³⁷ Clark, "Church and State Relationships," 169, 259-60.

³⁸ Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 159-179.

³⁹ Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 179.

which Mormon education changed during this period.⁴⁰ Because Alexander's work was not intended to be an in-depth treatment of Mormon educational change during the period, Esplin's work provided details on these changes. He focuses primarily upon the system of Mormon academies that was developed in the 1880s and continued into the 1930s, emphasizing the Dixie Stake Academy experience. By focusing upon the Mormon educational experience in St. George, Utah, Esplin added the much needed element of a community study to the historiography. Esplin showed that through a study of the Mormon stake academy movement, one can see the shift from the "us versus the world" attitude that pervaded Mormon thinking" prior to 1890, into a more open and Americanized Mormonism that was more palatable to American society by the 1930s.⁴¹ Additionally, by tracing the history of Church and State relationships in education during the period, Esplin demonstrated that by the 1930s, the Church and the State had agreed to cooperate in their separate spheres in the education of Utah's youth.⁴² Although he addresses the Church's forays into supplementary religious education, Esplin's treatment of these programs is minimized by the scope of his topic. His discussion of the Religion Classes generally relies upon Michael Quinn's history of the program, while his treatment of the seminaries and institutes follows the history outlined in Berrett's book.⁴³ Although Esplin's lack of emphasis upon the supplementary religious education programs is merited, readers are left without an understanding of the complex history and background of the programs that replaced the academies.

⁴⁰ Scott C. Esplin, "Education in Transition: Church and State Relationships in Utah Education, 1888-1933" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Brigham Young University, 2006).

⁴¹ Esplin, "Education in Transition," 219.

⁴² Esplin, "Education in Transition," 237.

⁴³ D. Michael Quinn, "Utah's Educational Innovation: LDS Religion Classes, 1890-1929," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (Fall 1975): 379-89.

Thomas Simpson's recent dissertation makes a unique contribution to the historiography of Mormon education. Harkening back to Thomas O'Dea, Simpson, demonstrated that the topic of Mormon educational history can be used to make historical arguments about the larger American community and thus is a subject that is worthy of study by more than just a small segment of Mormon historians. Simpson analyzed the phenomenon of LDS university students who went east during the period from 1870 to 1940 to pursue college degrees. He described his project as an examination of "how Mormon students maintained their identity outside Utah, the commitments and restraints that brought them back, and the fate of Mormon attempts to reconcile faith and reason."⁴⁴ While studying in the east, students were often exposed to new intellectual ideas in the fields of philosophy, science, and psychology. As the students returned to Utah, they often brought these new ideas with them and often incorporated them into their teaching. Simpson argued that the process of sending Mormon students to eastern universities played a crucial role in Mormonism's transition and twentieth-century development.

Although universities and schools represented the vast majority of the Church's educational efforts, they were not its only educational programs. Richard Kimball's *Sports in Zion* examined one such effort by discussing Mormonism's recreational program during the Progressive Era.⁴⁵ Drawing upon the concepts developed by Clifford Putney in his book *Muscular Christianity*, Kimball examined the way that Mormon leaders used recreational programs to "'Mormonize' the rising generation of post-polygamy young men and women" and to "inculcate values, teach morals, and model exemplary behavior."⁴⁶ Accordingly, Kimball

⁴⁴ Simpson, "Mormons Study 'Abroad'," iii.

⁴⁵ Richard Ian Kimball, *Sports in Zion: Mormon Recreation, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

⁴⁶ Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Kimball, *Sports in Zion*, 11.

argued that the Mormon recreational program played an integral role in the retention of young Latter-day Saints and the development of twentieth-century Mormonism in the post-polygamy era. It also demonstrated the Americanization of Mormonism during these years through the adoption of Protestant recreational philosophies and practices.⁴⁷ His book helps to explain both the changes and continuities between nineteenth and twentieth-century Mormonism.

While the social forces and issues of the day were among the most pressing reasons for the development of the Church's supplementary religious education programs, other social forces also contributed to the growth of the movement. Both the economic and political climates of turn-of-the-century Utah shaped the environment in which supplementary religious education became the dominant feature of Mormon education. Indeed, it is highly doubtful that Mormonism would have adopted such a policy if it had not faced the same economic and political pressures.⁴⁸ Hence, the history of Mormon supplementary religious education must be contextualized within the larger story of the Church's economic and political situation throughout the transition era. Further, by placing these educational developments within this wider context, they take on a significance that transcends simple programs of religious education and instead demonstrates that they were an important part of the transition in Mormon culture.

Among the changes in turn-of-the-century Mormonism that Thomas Alexander examines are, Utah's economic and political changes at the turn-of-the-century, alterations in the Church's

⁴⁷ Kimball, *Sports in Zion*, 4-5; George S. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 247-48.

⁴⁸ As will be shown throughout this thesis, the decision to abandon the private Mormon schools was unpopular and was largely motivated by economic necessity. Economics played a crucial role in the development and expansion of all three supplementary programs. In a meeting of the Church Board of Education in 1926, just a few years prior to the Church's decision to abandon all but a few of its remaining schools, Church president Heber J. Grant stated, "I am free to confess that nothing has worried me more since I became President than the expansion of the appropriation for the Church school system." Still, Grant expressed deep regret at the thought of losing the schools, saying "that it 'almost breaks one's heart' to think of closing these institutions which have accomplished so much good." Church Board of Education Minutes, 3 February 1926, folder 3, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 20 February 1929, folder 5, box 2, reel 2, William E. Berrett, CES History Research Files, CHL.

administrative structure, and modifications in some of the doctrinal emphases. Additionally, Alexander included a valuable chapter on the development of Mormon education throughout this forty-year period.⁴⁹ Alexander demonstrated that the changes in Mormon education during these years reflected Mormonism's transitional environment during this era. He thus used the modernization of the Church's educational practices throughout this period to illustrate the larger story of the Americanization of Mormonism and its movement into the twentieth-century world.

Many historians have taken up the task of writing the history of the political and economic circumstances of Mormonism during this period. Notably, the last two chapters of Leonard Arrington's *Great Basin Kingdom* detail the economic changes that defined Mormonism during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, aptly showing the way that the financial seizures prescribed by the Edmunds-Tucker Act and exacerbated by the Depression of the 1890s shaped Mormon policy during the period.⁵⁰ Arrington argues that during the 1880s and 1890s, Mormonism drifted away from the more peculiar economic programs that had defined it during earlier years and moved toward economic principles that more closely resembled the generally accepted thoughts and practices of the day. In addition to necessitating changes within the Mormon economic system, these economic challenges made private schools too expensive for the average Latter-day Saint and aided the rise of the supplementary religious education programs.

In addition to the economic situation of the period, supplementary religious education was heavily influenced by Utah's political issues. During the 1890s and early 1900s, the education of Utah's children and adolescents became the source of political controversy as the

⁴⁹ Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 157-79.

⁵⁰ Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900*, 1958, repr. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 353-412.

public and private school systems struggled for supremacy. In 1890, the Religion Class program provided a temporary solution to this debate, only to become the source of additional political problems during the Reed Smoot Senate confirmation hearings in the early 1900s.

Monographs by Edward Leo Lyman and Kathleen Flake help to explain the political circumstances of these decades. Lyman's book, *Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood*, details Mormonism's nineteenth-century struggle to obtain political legitimacy through Utah's admittance into the Union as a State.⁵¹ Lyman argued that "the practice of plural marriage among the Latter-day Saints was the foremost obstacle to admission of Utah as a state." While others have claimed that polygamy was merely "a pretext useful in arousing public indignation and stimulating political support for their own aims of limiting the political power of the church leaders," Lyman demonstrates the centrality of polygamy to the political objections of national political leaders to Utah's statehood.⁵² Lyman showed that national leaders curtailed Mormon political rights because of their practice of polygamy, which eventually led Church president Wilford Woodruff to issue the Manifesto. Although Lyman mainly discussed the influence of polygamy upon Mormon political activities at the national level, the withdrawal of Mormon political rights extended across the political spectrum, including the Church's ability to influence educational policy. These circumstances played a crucial role in the development and administration of Mormonism's first supplementary religious education program. *Political Deliverance* thus provides important insights into the way that plural marriage shaped Utah's social and political environment during the late nineteenth century.

⁵¹ Edward Leo Lyman, *Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

⁵² Lyman's thesis departs from the theses of Klaus Hansen and Gustive O. Larson. Lyman, *Political Deliverance*, 2; Hansen, *Quest for Empire*, 170.

Although the Manifesto and the granting of statehood to Utah resolved many of Mormonism's political issues, many Americans remained suspect of the Church and its involvement in politics. Among the issues that concerned many of Utah's non-Mormons was the Church's involvement in the state's public schools. These issues came to a head during the Reed Smoot senate confirmation hearings which served as a referendum upon the Church's involvement in Utah politics as well as the continued commitment of some leaders to plural marriage. Kathleen Flake's *The Politics of American Religious Identity* addresses the role that the Smoot hearings played in Mormonism's "political deliverance," suggesting that the Smoot hearings were the pivotal event in the Church's entrance into the body of accepted American denominations.⁵³ She argues that the Smoot hearings helped to eliminate the perception of Mormonism as an anti-American denomination by leading Mormons to conform to the Protestant ideals of "obedience to law, loyalty to nation, and creedal tolerance" in exchange for a "form of religious citizenship that provided them protection at home and abroad, for the propagation of their faith." She further argues that in the wake of the concessions motivated by the Smoot hearings, Mormonism adopted various "measures to shore up the confidence of the faithful in their church's authority to mediate eternal truth."⁵⁴ The Church's political concessions to prove its loyalty to Americanism, as well as its efforts to find new avenues to generate confidence and

⁵³ Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 9-10.

⁵⁴ For Flake, one of Mormonism's most important efforts to reinforce the faith of its membership was through memorializing important elements of its past. Flake notes that during the same years as the Smoot hearings, 1904-1907, the Church began a concerted effort to commemorate the importance of various places of historical significance, beginning with the erection of a monument at Joseph Smith's birthplace. She suggests that such monuments "provided the occasion for identifying what about [Joseph Smith] and his legacy mattered to the L.D.S. Church and what would be carried forward into the twentieth-century to provide it with continuing confidence in both the original prophet and his twentieth-century successors." Flake, *Politics of American Religious Identity*, 8-9, 110.

faith within its membership both came to bear upon Mormonism's twentieth-century educational experience.

While the study of economics and politics surrounding Mormonism's transition has been a rich field of historical research and writing, relatively little has been written on Mormonism's economic and political circumstances after 1907. Contemporary restriction policies governing information on the Church's financial circumstances combined with the changing trends of the historical profession have largely precluded the possibility of writing a post-1900 economic history of Mormonism to complement *Great Basin Kingdom*. At the same time, Mormon politics since the Reed Smoot hearings have generally mirrored the political circumstances throughout the country.⁵⁵ Accordingly, Mormon historians have found much less that was distinctively Mormon to write about, leaving the historiography of Mormon politics and economics from 1908 to 1930 relatively underdeveloped.⁵⁶

In addition to understanding Mormonism's wider historical context, it is likewise vital to understand the American contexts of this same period. American economic, political, social, religious, and educational events all played important roles in the development of Mormonism's religious education programs. While the decades from 1890 to 1930 certainly brought significant change to Mormonism and Utah, it was likewise a time of profound national

⁵⁵ Although Mormon politics have been significantly less distinctive since 1907, this is not to suggest that the Church has remained politically neutral since that point. Among other twentieth century political ventures, Heber J. Grant frequently used his general conference addresses to support Prohibition; Church leaders opposed the New Deal; and in 1938, the First Presidency instructed BYU President Franklin S. Harris to run for the Senate. Heber J. Grant, Discourse, 4 April 1914, *Conference Report* (April 1914): 24-28; Joseph F. Darowski, "The WPA Versus the Utah Church," in *Utah in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Brian Q. Cannon and Jessie L. Embry (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2009), 167-185; Janet Jenson, *The Many Lives of Franklin S. Harris* (Provo, Utah: Independently published, 2002), 159.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of the historiography of Mormonism during this period, see: M. Guy Bishop, "Mormonism in Transition, 1890-1945," in *Excavating Mormon Pasts: The New Historiography of the Last Half Century*, eds. Newell G. Bringhurst and Lavina Fielding Anderson, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2004), 165-78.

transformation. Richard Hofstadter appropriately dubbed the period, an “age of reform,” a period characterized by dramatic changes and constant efforts to initiate national reforms.⁵⁷

The degree to which the Progressive Era was actually an “age of reform” has been debated by numerous historians. In 1970, historian Peter Filene wrote an article which he termed, “An Obituary for The Progressive Era.”⁵⁸ In the article, Filene questioned the reality of the Progressive Era, citing the incoherent nature of Progressivism’s ideals and goals. Undoubtedly influenced by the recent reforms of the Civil Rights movement, Filene questioned whether a movement as racially insensitive and as largely ineffective as the Progressive Movement had any right to be termed a movement at all, let alone “progressive.” In response to Filene’s criticisms, Daniel Rodgers argued that it was unwise for historians to jettison the idea of the Progressive movement in spite of its schizophrenic nature.⁵⁹ He argued that while goals may have differed from individual to individual and party to party, the overall sentiment of the era was indeed progressive. He suggested that the movement’s adherents generally fit into one of three “social languages” which they used “to articulate their discontents and their social visions”: the “rhetoric of anti-monopolism,” an “emphasis on social bonds and the social nature of human beings,” and an appropriation of the “language of social efficiency.”⁶⁰ He suggests that much of the philosophical schizophrenia of Progressivism could be linked to the fact that although these three movements drew upon each other for ideas, they “had distinctly different historical roots”

⁵⁷ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955).

⁵⁸ Peter G. Filene, “An Obituary for ‘The Progressive Movement,’” *American Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1970): 20-34.

⁵⁹ Daniel T. Rodgers, “In Search of Progressivism,” *Reviews in American History* 10, no. 4 (December 1982): 113-132.

⁶⁰ Rodgers, “In Search of Progressivism,” 123.

and applied the principles of progressivism in different ways.⁶¹ Accordingly, what resulted was not a uniform ideology, “but the surroundings of available rhetoric and ideas...within which progressives launched their crusades, recruited their partisans, and did their work.”⁶²

Over time, Rodgers’s view of American Progressivism has triumphed, as several recent books testify. Maureen Flanagan’s study of the era refers to a variety of Progressives and Progressivisms.⁶³ Her book examines the Progressive experience in terms of those fighting for social justice, those fighting corporate corruption and monopolies, and those who fought for gender equality. Similarly, Michael McGerr describes “four quintessential progressive battles: to change other people; to end class conflict; to control big business; and to segregate society.”⁶⁴ Hence, historians have widened the definition of the term progressive to include the variety of reform efforts, many of which were contradictory, that defined the period. Although progressivism included “some rather strange bedfellows,” encompassing the whole of the political spectrum, the period can still appropriately be described as a unique era defined by the common characteristic of progressive reform.⁶⁵ It was into this chaotic cacophony of ideas that even a few Latter-day Saints and Latter-day Saint programs, spurred on by Mormonism’s turn-of-the-century transition, blended into American Progressivism.

⁶¹ Rodgers, “In Search of Progressivism,” 123.

⁶² Rodgers, “In Search of Progressivism,” 123.

⁶³ Maureen Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms 1890s-1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁶⁴ Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), xv.

⁶⁵ Adam M. Scott, “The Progressive Era in Perspective,” *The Journal of Politics* 21, no. 4 (Nov. 1959): 691.

Among the most influential of the early works on American Progressivism were Richard Hofstadter's *The Age of Reform* and Robert Wiebe's *The Search for Order*.⁶⁶ Although the Progressive Era is generally confined to the first two decades of the twentieth century, Hofstadter and Wiebe extended their narratives to include events both before and after these decades. Hofstadter argues that the period from 1890 to 1945 was a period of intense political activism characterized by a general "impulse toward criticism and change" tending toward social and economic reform. Accordingly, he argues that "Progressivism...was not confined to the Progressive Party but affected in a striking way all the major and minor parties and the whole tone of American political life" during the early 1900s.⁶⁷ Even many Mormons, including several who helped shape the Church's educational programs during these years, adhered to certain aspects of Progressivism. Although admitting that the era was a period of intense efforts toward social change, Hofstadter criticizes the Progressives for having "set impossible standards" which were never ultimately achieved.⁶⁸

Whereas Hofstadter argues that reform was the defining characteristic of the Progressive Era, Wiebe argues that the era was underscored by a constant effort to restore social and moral order to a rapidly changing society. Throughout the book, Wiebe describes how America changed from a "society of isolated communities" in the nineteenth century into an urban and industrial society in the twentieth century.⁶⁹ He accordingly argues that the numerous initiatives and programs organized during the period from 1877 to 1920 can be interpreted as efforts to reestablish social order in the country. Wiebe's thesis is particularly useful in examining

⁶⁶ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

⁶⁷ Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 5.

⁶⁸ Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 16.

⁶⁹ Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, xiii.

Mormon history during this chaotic period. Indeed, many of the Church's actions during these years can be viewed as part of an effort to reestablish order following the chaotic decade of the 1880s and the 1890 Manifesto.

More recently, other authors have written interpretations of the era. Paul Boyer's treatment of the period demonstrated that many of the fears espoused by Progressives grew out of the trends of American urbanization.⁷⁰ He aptly argued that many middle class Americans felt that the country's rapid urbanization threatened "not just the moral fate of individuals but the very survival of the social order."⁷¹ In response, American reformers used a variety of different plans, such as building playgrounds and recreational programs, to establish an "adherence to a general standard of right conduct upon which an enduring urban moral order could be built."⁷² Boyer argued that Sunday schools and other religiously oriented programs were an integral part of the effort to establish moral order in America's cities. Although Mormonism's religious education programs were established to be implemented by both urban and rural wards and stakes, it is perhaps significant that the ideas for the three major programs were all conceived in a city setting.

While Boyer focused primarily upon class struggle in the cities and the efforts of the middle class to maintain moral order in their communities through the imposition of middle class values upon the lower classes, Steven Diner emphasized the ways in which the legislative and communal measures of the Progressive Era influenced the lives of discrete groups of Americans, including "women, immigrants, African Americans," and other groups of marginalized citizens

⁷⁰ Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

⁷¹ Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order*, 130.

⁷² Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order*, ix.

like Catholics and Jews.⁷³ The perspectives of these groups provides a more nuanced view of American Progressivism that enables the reader to understand the viewpoints of those who were marginalized by middle class Americans who established public policy throughout the era.

Correspondingly, McGerr examined the middle class majority that initiated most of the progressive reforms and the reasons why Progressivism ultimately failed. He suggested that “Progressivism, the creed of a crusading middle class, offered the promise of utopianism—and generated the inevitable letdown of unrealistic expectations,” creating many of the problems that exist in contemporary America.⁷⁴ Whereas Diner explained the influence of progressive policies upon different groups of Americans, McGerr described the underlying ideologies that motivated those who pushed Progressive ideals. Both books are valuable because of the fact that from 1890 to 1930 Mormonism spent time as both a marginalized community and an integrated member of American society, with policies generally reflecting its corresponding status at the time.

While American Progressivism helps to explain some aspects of the Mormon religious education movement, it is crucial to note that Progressivism largely died following the end of the First World War. In 1959, Arthur S. Link addressed the end of Progressivism in an article entitled, “What Happened to Progressivism in the 1920s?”⁷⁵ Link noted that up to the time he wrote that article, most historians had argued that progressivism died in the 1920s because of the actions of Wall Street businessmen and other executives who subverted “the regulatory

⁷³ Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 8.

⁷⁴ McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent*, xiv.

⁷⁵ Arthur S. Link, “What Happened to the Progressive Movement in the 1920s?,” *The American Historical Review* 64, no. 4 (July 1959): 833-51.

structure” that had been established during the Progressive Era.⁷⁶ While he agreed that progressivism experienced a dramatic decline after 1918, he contended that the movement had never been particularly strong and ended due to a number of different reasons in addition to the advent of the culture and business makeup of the 1920s.⁷⁷ He argued that the deepest reason for the failure of progressivism was by 1920 “the major objectives of the progressive movement of the prewar years had...been largely achieved” and progressives were thus left without new avenues for their political efforts.⁷⁸ Although Link argued that progressivism declined during the 1920s, he likewise contended that some of the important aspects of the movement continued on into the twenties, suggesting an element of continuity amidst change.⁷⁹ Noting many of the significant accomplishments of the twenties, Link argued for a renewed investigation of the decade, which he deemed to be “the exciting new frontier of American historical research” with almost “limitless” opportunities for additional research and writing.⁸⁰

A decade after Link’s endorsement of the twenties, the Ohio State University Press published a volume entitled *Change and Continuity in Twentieth Century America: The 1920s*, which contained several of articles on America during the 1920s.⁸¹ True to the book’s title, the articles maintained that the 1920s was a decade of both dramatic change and static continuity. While one author agrees that the twenties represented what Warren G. Harding referred to as “a return to normalcy,” he notes that by the summer of 1920, many Americans acknowledged that

⁷⁶ Link, “What Happened to the Progressive Movement,” 834.

⁷⁷ Link, “What Happened to the Progressive Movement,” 837-38.

⁷⁸ Link, “What Happened to the Progressive Movement,” 841.

⁷⁹ Link, “What Happened to the Progressive Movement,” 845-46.

⁸⁰ Link, “What Happened to the Progressive Movement,” 834.

⁸¹ John Braeman, Robert H. Bremner, and David Brody, eds., *Change and Continuity in Twentieth-Century America: The 1920s* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968).

the America they had known prior to World War I had disappeared, leaving “a new order” in its wake.⁸² Among the other important topics discussed throughout the book are the rise of the Christian fundamentalist movement, the development of the American city, and the sexual revolution of the 1920s. In the main, the book demonstrated, as Link had argued, that the 1920s was indeed a fertile source for additional research and composition.

Since the 1990s, a number of other historians have examined the intricacies and importance of the twenties. Michael E. Parrish’s *Anxious Decades* examines the country’s history of prosperity and depression from 1920 to 1940.⁸³ Parrish wrote that this twenty-year stretch represented American society’s formal entrance into the modern era, complete with all the benefits and detriments of the consumer era. While Parrish agreed that “the roots of consumerism reached back to the creation of a continental market and the rise of big business in the last third of the nineteenth century,” he suggested that the years following World War I proved to be consumerism’s “ultimate triumph” as many middle-class Americans began purchasing automobiles and stocks.⁸⁴ Noting that most Americans feared that “abundance...would infect all classes with a taste for luxury” and dilute the virtue of the American republic, Parrish argued that the development of American consumerism was not an “unmixed blessing,” but created distinct groups of “winners and losers” as well as the financial policy that eventually led the country into the Great Depression.⁸⁵ He further examined aspects of the twenties such as the sexual revolution, prohibition, and Christian fundamentalism, arguing

⁸² David Burner, “1919: Prelude to Normalcy,” in Braeman, Bremner, and Brody, eds., *Change and Continuity in Twentieth-Century America*, 30.

⁸³ Michael E. Parrish, *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression, 1920-1941* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992).

⁸⁴ Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, x.

⁸⁵ Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, 29-31, 71.

that the America of this decade was divided along lines of wealth, class, race, gender, and religion. Accordingly, Parrish's portrait of 1920s America showed a country that was caught between old ideals and an emerging modernism that was as frightening as it was exciting.

Similarly Lynn Dumenil examined the role that the twenties played in the creation of modern America by focusing upon the decade's cultural developments.⁸⁶ She argued that "the decade of the 1920s illuminates fundamental issues of the twentieth century," and that these issues could be better understood by an investigation of the decade's "domestic history."⁸⁷ The book made several valuable contributions to our understanding of the pervading lifestyles and ideas of the twenties. Dumenil's chapter dealing with the issues of gender and sexuality is particularly insightful and provides important glimpses into the contextual setting of the sexual revolution. At the same time, although Dumenil accepts the idea that the twenties was a decade of profound change, she disputes the notion that it was a period of unmitigated economic prosperity and general financial profligacy for most Americans. She writes that such an idea "distorts the lives of most ordinary Americans and in particular negates the experiences of poor people, of African Americans and ethnic minorities."⁸⁸ Dumenil disagreed with Parrish's tendency to dichotomize the economic differences between twenties and the thirties, suggesting, instead, that historians ought to do more to recognize the continuity between the two decades.⁸⁹

By the 1920s, Mormonism had become generally integrated within American society. Therefore, Mormons experienced many of the same problems that concerned the wider American community throughout the decade. The economics of the period played a vital role in

⁸⁶ Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

⁸⁷ Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 12.

⁸⁸ Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 308.

⁸⁹ Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 312.

determining the future of Church education. At the same time, issues such as the sexual revolution, Darwinism, and modernism came to the forefront of Mormon education during this period. Indeed, the culture of the twenties seems to have been an important motivating factor in the Church's decision to extend its supplementary religious education program to the collegiate level.

In addition to the historiography of American life and politics during the Progressive Era and the twenties, an understanding of American education during the period is crucial to the history of the seminaries and institutes. Two seminal works have described how Progressive ideology influenced the field of American education. Lawrence Cremin's *The Transformation of the School* examines the way that American schools worked to "apply the promise of American life—the ideal of government by, of, and for the people—to the puzzling new urban-industrial civilization that came to being during the latter half of the nineteenth century."⁹⁰ Cremin argues that education formed an essential aspect of the Progressive movement because it helped to inform the public of the changes that were needed within American society. As such, Cremin described the educational efforts of the era in a positive light that obscured some of the more questionable trends that marred it. Contrastingly, David Tyack's *The One Best System*, suggests that the country's urban public schools often played "a systematic part" in the perpetuation of "institutionalized racism...unequal treatment of the poor, [and] cultural chauvinism."⁹¹ For Tyack, American education during the Progressive Era, at least in the country's urban areas, produced a legacy of racism and forced assimilation, a reminder that at the turn-of-the-century,

⁹⁰ Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), viii.

⁹¹ David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 12.

the “American Dream” was a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant dream and disenfranchised the “other.”

Although Cremin and Tyack are helpful in understanding the development of the American public school system, they provide almost no information on the development of the American university system. George Marsden’s *The Soul of the American University* shows the integral role that higher education played in the country’s academic shift toward modernism and secular humanism in the twentieth century. Marsden’s book traces the development of religious thought within American universities from the country’s beginnings until 1950. He suggests that in the wake of “Darwinism and the rising popularity of biblical criticism,” most universities moved toward a position of secularism during the period from 1890 to 1950. Because these universities trained the majority of the teachers for the country’s colleges, these ideas dramatically influenced the rest of the American educational system.⁹² The Mormon schools were among the various educational institutions that found themselves profoundly influenced by the theological shift described by Marsden.

Given the large domain occupied by the historiography of transition era Mormon education, it is evident that the story of the development of supplementary religious education programs is not just a provincial account holding interest only for Mormons. Rather, the story of the development of Mormon religious education is a profoundly American story encompassing themes of Americanization and acculturation. It is part of the larger American narrative showing the efforts of American outsiders to find a place of acceptance within their country, while at the same time maintaining cherished measures of distinctiveness and individual identity. It exemplifies the problems that characterized a modernizing America from 1890 to 1930.

⁹² Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, vii, 19.

The Mormon supplementary religious education movement typified the experiences of both the country's non-Protestant others and assimilated Americans. In the movement's early years, Mormon supplementary religious education can be viewed as an effort by an un-American religious group to resist the forces of Americanization and to protect their religious distinctiveness. In this way, Mormons mirrored Catholics, Jews, and the other non-Protestant groups who organized schools and other organizations to ensure the inculcation of their faith into the lives of their youth. By the 1910s and 1920s, however, the focus of the Church's supplementary religious education efforts shifted away from limiting the Americanizing influence of the public schools towards counteracting the dangers of modernism and the modern society. Underlying this change in the emphasis for the Church's religious education programs was Mormonism's metamorphosis from a community of religious outsiders concerned about self-preservation into a community with highly American sensibilities. Mormon leaders appropriated certain aspects of American Progressivism into these programs as part of an effort to acculturate unruly Mormon youth.

Thus the story of these reform initiatives helps to place Mormonism's efforts to preserve its identity through educational programs and other measures within the context of a national movement to maintain their identity as members of the American community. The Latter-day Saint struggles to maintain a Mormon identity, while at the same time moving into the mainstream of American society, demonstrates the challenges faced by the country's social, ethnic, and religious outsiders during this period of assimilation.

CHAPTER 2

“BETWEEN TWO FIRES”: THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SCHOOL ORIGINS OF MORMON SUPPLEMENTARY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Throughout the nineteenth century, Mormonism’s educational efforts were uniquely tied to the Church’s desires to “stand independent above all other creatures [and institutions] beneath the Celestial world.”¹ This desire for independence from the outside world in some ways precluded the Church’s participation in many aspects of the American experience. The field of American education was among the venues eschewed by many Mormons, who feared the dangers of exposing their children to nineteenth-century America’s highly assimilative educational system. Accordingly, during the late nineteenth century, Mormons devised a number of ways to limit the influence of Protestant America’s schools upon their communities.

During the early Utah period, it was relatively easy for the Church to limit the influence of American schools upon Utah’s communities. From the arrival of the Mormon pioneers in 1847 until the mid to late 1860s, Utah was largely governed by a theocratic government with Brigham Young and the priesthood at its head. Although some schools were designated as “territorial schools,” and were administered by the territorial legislature, there was a high level of Mormon influence upon the schools due to the fact that the legislature was largely composed of

¹ When specifically referring to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I have capitalized the term “Church.” When referring to other denominations, I have not capitalized the term. Joseph Smith, Jr., Revelation 1 March 1832, in Joseph Smith, Jr., *Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books*, The Joseph Smith Papers, eds. Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2009), 269.

Latter-day Saints. The schools and other social entities were generally administered by Mormons with little to no competition from opposing groups.²

The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, however, significantly shortened the distances between Mormons and Gentiles, leading to an era of momentous change in Utah.³ The railroad brought a bevy of different religions and new ideas that worked to undermine Mormonism's social, religious, and political control of the region. These new groups accordingly set to work to effect changes within the Utah theocracy. As Leonard Arrington has written, these groups hoped to transform Utah's "religious, political, and economic ideologies," replacing its "customs, beliefs, habits, and other forms of social differentiation" with "a new cosmopolitanism in thought and action."⁴ They deemed a discontinuance of Mormonism's control of the territory's schools crucial to the success of these desired changes. Thus, in the late 1860s, non-Mormons began to present serious challenges to the Church's control of Utah education. Throughout the remainder of the century, the Mormon control over the territory's schools was increasingly diminished as non-Mormons came to replace Mormons in significant educational and political positions.

Viewing the schools as important centers of instruction and assimilation, Mormon leaders became alarmed at the Church's decreasing influence in the schools and the growth of what they

² This is not to suggest that there was not a non-Mormon influence in Utah during these years. The Federal Government retained what Mormons viewed as an uncomfortable presence in Utah throughout the 1850s and 1860s through a number of judges and other government appointees. Additionally, the government maintained a military presence in Utah during this period, although the Civil War dramatically decreased the size of the Utah army.

³ Gentile was the term most generally used by nineteenth-century Mormons to describe non-Mormons. Generally used as a pejorative term, it emphasized the deep divisions between the two groups.

⁴ Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* 1958, repr. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 235.

deemed “Godless education.”⁵ In response to these circumstances, the Church established private academies throughout its communities in the West. As private schools, these academies gave the Church the luxury of incorporating Mormonism into the academic curriculum without concerns of government intervention.

Even with the founding of the academies, however, Mormons found it impossible to remain unaffected by American education. As institutions of higher learning became more prevalent during the late nineteenth century, Bright Latter-day Saint students were increasingly drawn east to obtain advanced degrees. Although, in some ways, this trend benefited Mormonism and its fledgling academies, it also raised the question of how the Church could safeguard the faith of Latter-day Saint students in non-Mormon schools. The Church’s earliest efforts to resolve this problem included the calling of students as missionaries and the establishment of branches and Sunday schools in cities like Ann Arbor, Michigan and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The origins of Mormonism’s forays into the field of supplementary religious education are thus inextricably tied to Mormonism’s nineteenth-century efforts and failures to remain independent from the American educational system. Only by understanding Mormonism’s nineteenth-century resistance to non-Mormon schools is it possible to comprehend the dramatic nature of the Church’s shift toward supplementary religious education in the early twentieth century. Further, the Church’s earlier adversarial attitudes toward the American public schools, followed by its acceptance of those schools through the establishment of Religion Classes, Seminaries, and Institutes, underscores the role that supplementary religious education played in Mormonism’s assimilation into the body of Americanism.

⁵ First Presidency, Circular, 25 October 1890, in James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833-1964*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), 196.

American Educational Context

It is not surprising that education became an integral part in the development of Mormon identity during these years. During times of social tension, the content of education often becomes more important to society, making people much more “self-conscious about the civic values that the schools should teach.”⁶ Indeed, Mormonism’s turn-of-the-century educational impulses directly mirrored those of the wider American society, with the only major difference being the differentiation of the values system.

The history of education in America’s post-bellum public schools is a story of continuous efforts to Americanize the country’s ethnic and religious others. The half century following the Civil War was a period of sweeping educational changes throughout the United States.⁷ These changes resulted from the country’s radical transformation during these years, a transformation which included “nationalization, industrialization, mechanization, [and] urbanization.”⁸ During this period, Thomas Jefferson’s agrarian republic drastically morphed into a country filled with “dense urban neighborhoods where foreign tongues predominated.”⁹ In the midst of such sweeping changes, many Americans worried that their country was abandoning its fundamental values and was becoming “a society without a core.” Fears accordingly pervaded, that the country was losing its very identity, and this in the wake of a costly war that had thoroughly

⁶ David B. Tyack, *Seeking Common Ground: Public Schools in a Diverse Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 12; William J. Reese, *America’s Public Schools: From the Common School to “No Child Left Behind”* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 1.

⁷ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 117-120.

⁸ Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 12.

⁹ Stephen J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 5.

tested the principles of American democracy.¹⁰ Particularly worrisome to native born Americans was the rapid influx of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants, most of whom came from the non-Protestant regions of Europe and brought with them ideas that seemed to run counter to the principles of Americanism. In these circumstances, education became a key ingredient to the country's remedy for the social problems and challenges posed by religious others.

As the religious and democratic majority, Protestants used the burgeoning American public school system to achieve their assimilative agenda. In addition to the construction of public parks, the founding of boys' and girls' clubs, and the formation of various missionary societies, public schools became important centers of assimilation for the country's non-Protestant population.¹¹ Education became such a crucial part of national policy during these years that some American leaders even championed the idea of making "education compulsory, so far as to deprive all persons who [could] not read and write from becoming voters after the year 1890."¹² Such plans were clearly directed at America's numerous minority groups, particularly Native Americans and immigrants.¹³ In the case of Native Americans, American educators planned to "civilize" the students by providing them with "the rudiments of an academic education," as well as converting them to the American ideals of individuality and

¹⁰ Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 12; Abraham Lincoln, "Address Delivered at the Dedication of the Cemetery at Gettysburg, 19 November 1863," *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler, 8 vols. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 7:17.

¹¹ Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1978), 175-204, 219-51.

¹² Ulysses S. Grant, "Annual Message to the Senate and House of Representatives, December 7, 1875," *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant: Volume 26, 1875*, ed. John Y. Simon (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 416.

¹³ African Americans, the country's largest minority group, were treated somewhat differently than the other minorities in educational matters. Both Eric Foner and David Tyack have noted the fact that African Americans consistently appealed for better schools to enable their social advancement. These appeals, however, were often denied them by the white hegemony, suggesting, as Tyack has written, that "the educational system that was to homogenize other Americans was not meant for them." Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990), 66; Tyack, *One Best System*, 110.

Protestant Christianity. For immigrants, the educational plans focused upon loyalty to the United States and the abandonment of foreign ideas and practices, generally including religious practices.¹⁴ Accordingly, the educational system provided an important glimpse into the views of nineteenth-century Americans on social “others,” particularly as they pertained to issues of race and class.

Understandably, most marginalized Americans came to question the underlying motives of America’s public schools and came to believe that the school was an institution that was “capable of genocide.”¹⁵ At least part of the reason for such feelings was the “Protestant insistence on reading the Bible” as a part of the school curriculum.¹⁶ Although such readings were done “without note or comment,” Catholics found the practice offensive because of the use of the King James Bible. They argued that the choice to read from a Protestant rather than Catholic translation of the Bible was immensely important and influenced the religiosity of the students.¹⁷ Though many Jews were not disturbed by Bible study in the schools, some objected to the pervasive use of the New Testament.¹⁸

¹⁴ David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: Public Schools in a Diverse Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 22; David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995), 8-9.

¹⁵ Tyack, *The One Best System*, 2, 11, 179. Educational historian Lawrence Cremin argues that one of the main purposes of public schools has always been to Americanize the country’s social outsiders. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 66-67. Michael McGerr agrees that the Americanization efforts of the Progressive Era had more sinister motives than simply the assimilation of immigrants and outsiders. He argues that these efforts were “interested in obliterating their culture and guaranteeing their submission” to American values. Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 292.

¹⁶ R. Lawrence Moore, “Bible Reading and Nonsectarian Schooling: The Failure of Religious Instruction in Nineteenth-Century Public Education,” *Journal of American History* 86, no. 4 (March 2000): 1583.

¹⁷ Moore, “Bible Reading and Nonsectarian Schooling,” 1583, 1589; Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 220, 250.

¹⁸ At least one court decision found that Bible reading was “a preference given to Christians and a discrimination against Jews” because of the consistent readings from the New Testament. T. V. K., “Constitutional Law: Reading Bible in Public Schools,” *Michigan Law Review* 28, no. 4 (February 1930): 434.

Non-Protestants worried that their children in the public schools were “encouraged to abandon their ties to their parents, homeland, and religion and embrace the American republic and Protestant religion.”¹⁹ Even under the most ideal circumstances, the Americanization of children within the schools “tended to produce strain between parents and children in the home.”²⁰ Far from providing the liberating experience that the schools promised, non-Protestant Americans found public education to be an oppressive venture that threatened the perpetuation of familial beliefs and values.²¹ While some non-Protestants openly accepted the public schools and saw them as “a doorway to new opportunities,” many parents continued to fear that they were “losing their children through Americanization.”²²

Although nineteenth-century Protestant Americans would not have agreed that they were participating in a form of cultural genocide, they did not see such purposes as being inappropriate. During an 1891 visit to Provo, Utah, U.S. President Benjamin Harrison stated,

The public school is a most wholesome and hopeful institution. It has an assimilative power possessed by no other institution in our country. Where the children of rich and poor mingle together on the play-ground and in the school-room, there is produced a unity of feeling and popular love for public institutions that can be brought about in no other way.... God bless and promote your public schools until every child in your Territory shall be gathered into them.²³

As Paul Boyer has noted, the Protestant majority did not view these assimilative efforts as the misguided endeavors of “would-be moral dictators,” rather “these activities represented a public-

¹⁹ Timothy Walsh, *Parish School: American Catholic Parochial Education from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 26.

²⁰ Tyack, *The One Best System*, 241.

²¹ Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 198.

²² Tyack, *The One Best System*, 241.

²³ Benjamin Harrison, Speech at Provo, 9 May 1891, in Benjamin Harrison, *Speeches of Benjamin Harrison, Twenty-Third President of the United States*, comp. Charles Hedges (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1971), 435.

spirited attempt to develop new supports for a community order which the reformers' experience led them to think of as the normal one—perhaps even as the only alternative to chaos.”²⁴

Indeed, for the Protestant majority, the claim that the schools were eradicating the controversial ideas and practices of immigrant children would have been viewed as a compliment rather than a criticism. The idea that “the common school should ‘Americanize’ the foreign born,” writes William Reese, was a concept that was “abundantly clear to the Protestant majority.”²⁵

It is tempting to view the Protestant efforts to Americanize the country's religious “others” as nothing more than a contemptible design to rid the United States of all differences and diversity. Indeed, contempt for the “other” did define many attitudes within turn-of-the-century America. As the Jewish playwright Israel Zangwill wrote, many Americans viewed the country as “God's Crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming!”²⁶ The very idea of a melting pot suggested that there was an element of dross within those who came from different ethnic backgrounds, and that element needed to be disposed of. As sociologist Charles Hirschman has described, “there was nothing subtle about racism and intolerance in America” during the period.²⁷ Such assimilative views and efforts, however, cannot be fairly judged without an understanding of the Protestant worldview at the time.

²⁴ Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order*, 58.

²⁵ It should be noted that not all native-born white Americans agreed that Americanization was the proper course of action with regards to the immigrant population. Among the most notable examples was Henry James, one of the country's most influential turn-of-the-century authors. His opposition was couched in blatantly racist reasoning which caused him to worry that the country's assimilative policies would eventually render the country “colourless” and impotent. Reese, *America's Public Schools*, 37; David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 6.

²⁶ Zangwill was an immigrant from England and was the descendent of Russian Jews. Israel Zangwill, *The Melting-Pot, Drama in Four Acts*, rev. ed. (New York: MacMillan Company, 1920), 33.

²⁷ Charles Hirschman, “America's Melting Pot Reconsidered,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): 397-98.

Turn-of-the-century Protestant America was a world that was, in many ways, defined by a pervasive pessimism. In 1892 the Populist Party unveiled its political platform “in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin.” They further argued, “Corruption dominates the ballot-box, the Legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench.” Such corruption, the Populists suggested, had caused the American people to become “demoralized.”²⁸ Such despondent sentiments were further underscored in 1893 when Frederick Jackson Turner declared to the American Historical Association that “the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history.” For Turner the existence of the frontier as an outlet of free and available land had been the defining characteristic of American society.²⁹ In the minds of Turner and his associates, the frontier had created a kind of safety valve to which Americans could escape whenever the pressures and dangers of urban life became overwhelming.³⁰ Thus the disappearance of the frontier portended a period of declension for the United States which threatened to be the undoing of American exceptionalism. Thus Turner demonstrated the general feeling of apprehension that many turn-of-the-century Americans felt about the future of the United States.³¹ Such pessimism was only

²⁸ George Brown Tindall, ed., *A Populist Reader: Selections from the Works of American Populist Leaders* (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1976), 90.

²⁹ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: ‘The Significance of the Frontier in American History’ and Other Essays*, ed. John Mack Faragher (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1998), 60.

³⁰ Frederick Jackson Turner, “Pioneer Ideals and the State University,” in *The Frontier in American History: ‘The Significance of the Frontier in American History,’* 111; John Mack Faragher, “The Significance of the Frontier in American Historiography: A Guide to Further Reading,” in *The Frontier in American History: ‘The Significance of the Frontier in American History,’* 226.

³¹ David Wrobel has written about the widespread frontier anxieties that characterized the late nineteenth-century. He argues that while “Turner provided the most scholarly and memorable expression” of such anxieties, his thesis ought to be interpreted as having been “symptomatic of a wider frontier anxiety that emerged in embryonic form in the 1870s and became more pronounced in the succeeding decades.” David Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism: Frontier Anxiety from the Old West to the New Deal* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 3.

heightened by a nationwide Depression during the 1890s. For Turner and others, all indicators seemed to suggest that they were “witnessing the birth of a new nation in America”³² Given the prevalent feelings that America had been founded to be an exceptional nation, a “city on a hill,” the creation of a new America was hardly viewed as a positive development by many Americans. Owing to such attitudes, America’s Protestant middle class began to initiate a number of social reforms in order to protect the country from what they viewed as steady societal decline. The aforementioned measures to increase the assimilative abilities of the public schools were among these social reforms.

In response to the Americanizing purposes of the public schools, marginalized religious groups such as Orthodox Jews, Catholics, and Mormons organized their own educational systems. These school systems “reflected a popular notion that schools should mirror their social roots” and “the needs of individual communities” rather than the ideas and morals of a nationally imposed value system.³³ Similar to the public schools, which operated as tools of Americanization, these denominational schools became centers of acculturation and learning for the country’s religious outsiders. Non-Protestant religious groups hoped that such schools would aid in the maintenance of cultural and religious distinctiveness in the midst of the country’s assimilative environment.³⁴ In effect, the establishment of these schools was intended to counter the public school efforts to assimilate America’s religious “others”.

Given the fact that the ability to control the education of children is vital to the shaping of a society, such responses are unsurprising. Just as the Protestant establishment hoped to use the

³² Frederick Jackson Turner, “Social Forces in American History,” in *The Frontier in American History*, ed. Frederick Jackson Turner (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921), 311.

³³ Frederick S. Buchanan, *Culture Clash and Accommodation: Public Schooling in Salt Lake City, 1890-1994* (Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates in association with Signature Books, 1996), 5.

³⁴ Walsh, *Parish School*, 28-32.

schools to inculcate a Protestant value system into American youth, so Catholics, Jews, and Mormons wished to use education to instill their particular value systems within their own youth. One author has written that Mormon schools represented an “aspect of the Mormons’ efforts to maintain their hegemony” within the state of Utah.³⁵ Similarly, Protestants, Jews, and Catholics all used education to maintain a sense of moral and social order within their varying communities. In short, each of these communities partook of the contemporary fears that a changing America was undermining their long-held communal values and identity.

The Mormon Response to Assimilative Education

Among non-Protestant religious groups, the Mormon educational experience was peculiar. Although Mormons preferred the advantages of a private school system, economic circumstances forced them to look for effective ways to provide religious education to students who attended the public schools. Ultimately the solution would be to almost completely abandon the Church’s private schools in favor of a system of weekday religious education classes that supplemented public school education. In order to understand the peculiarity of the Mormon educational experience and the origins of the Church’s supplementary religious education system, it is essential to understand the genesis of Mormonism’s private academies and the initial circumstances that led Church leaders to consider a program of supplementary religious education.

In the four decades between the Mormon arrival in Utah and the mid-1880s, educational procedures in Utah were relatively simple. For the most part, the Church and its members controlled and managed the territory’s public entities, including the schools. While it would be an overstatement to suggest that all of the schools in the territory essentially functioned as Mormon institutions, it would not be inappropriate to say that the Church played an integral role

³⁵ C. Merrill Hough, “Two School Systems in Conflict,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 28 (1960): 113.

in their governance.³⁶ Even the territorial schools, which were established and governed by the territorial legislature, were not entirely free of Mormon influence as Mormons made up the majority of the legislators. Brigham Young himself played an active and important role in defining Utah's educational policy. As governor, Young had helped to found the University of Deseret and had spoken frequently about the importance of the territory's schools.³⁷ Even following his removal as governor, Young was crucial to Utah's educational policy, freely offering his suggestions in educational matters.³⁸ Other prominent Mormons likewise filled important places in Utah's educational organization. For instance, until the mid-1880s, the post of territorial superintendent of schools was filled by devout Mormons like John Taylor, who at the time was also the senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve and the head of the Church. In 1881, when the rigors of the Church presidency forced Taylor to resign as superintendent of schools, he virtually handed the position to his son-in-law and secretary, L. John Nuttall.³⁹ The result was a cadre of schools that, in the judgment of non-Mormon officials, essentially operated as de facto Church schools.

³⁶ For a discussion of the various types and distinctions of schools that existed in Utah during this period, see: James R. Clark, "Church and State Relationships in Education in Utah," (EdD. Dissertation, Utah State University, 1958) 168-69.

³⁷ Brigham Young, Discourse, 11 February 1849, *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. Richard S. Van Wagoner, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2009), 1:315; Brigham Young, Discourse, 28 August 1850, *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, 1:397; Brigham Young, Discourse, 22 September 1851, *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, 1:457.

³⁸ Brigham Young, Discourse, 29 November 1867, *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, 4:2507; Frederick S. Buchanan, "Education Among the Mormons: Brigham Young and the Schools of Utah," *History of Education Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 435-59.

³⁹ Clark, "Church and State Relationships," 125-26; Scott C. Esplin, "Education in Transition: Church and State Relationships in Utah Education, 1888-1933," (PhD. Dissertation, Brigham Young University, 2006), 57-59; Scott C. Esplin, "Moving Zion 'Far Ahead': John Taylor's Educational Contributions," in *John Taylor: Champion of Liberty*, ed. Mary Jane Woodger, (Provo: Religious Studies Center, 2009), 327-46; L. John Nuttall, Diary, July 28, 1881, *In the President's Office: The Diaries of L. John Nuttall, 1879-1892*, ed. Jedediah S. Rogers, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with the Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007), 59.

That the territorial schools were essentially Mormon in character during these years is evidenced by Taylor's insistence, spoken as territorial superintendent, that the Saints "look after the education of our children and see that they are placed under proper teachers and receive proper training, and not be placed in the hands of the enemies of the church and kingdom of God."⁴⁰ The implication was that the territorial schools were not to employ non-Mormons, or that Latter-day Saints were not to patronize those schools that did. Fearing the possible consequences of the schools coming under Gentile control, Church leaders attempted to ensure that the territorial schools would be Mormon in all but name.

While Mormons wielded an immense amount of control within most of the territory's schools during this period, they did not control them all. Many influential non-Mormon schools were established by the territory's Catholics and Protestants as denominational schools. Although both the Catholic and Protestant schools were denominational in nature, they were founded for very different purposes. Catholics set up schools primarily for the education of their own children, while Protestant groups established schools, in large measure, as missionary schools to evangelize Mormon children.⁴¹ These efforts drew mixed reactions from the Latter-day Saints. The Catholic approach, which seems to have been an extension of their wider national educational policy, was generally accepted and even praised by Mormons, though this

⁴⁰ John Taylor, Discourse, 8 December 1878, *Journal of Discourses* 26 vols. (Liverpool, England: William Budge, 1880), 20:107 (hereafter cited as *JD*). Taylor's message was largely a reiteration of a circular issued by the First Presidency the previous year. In that circular, the First Presidency has written, "[Parents] should send [their children] regularly to day and Sunday [*sic*] schools and furnish them with every possible facility for gaining a sound and thorough education, and especially in the principles of the gospel and the history of the church. The teachers to whom we entrust our children for education should be faithful Latter-day Saints, sound in doctrine and thoroughly imbued with a love of Zion. In this way we can rear up a generation of men and women who shall love and maintain truth and righteousness in the earth." First Presidency, Circular, 11 July 1877, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:288.

⁴¹ Clark, "Church and State Relationships," 143-44; T. Edgar Lyon, "Evangelical Protestant Missionary Activities in Mormon Dominated Areas, 1865-1900" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1962); Hough, "Two School Systems in Conflict," 118.

acceptance never included patronage of the schools.⁴² The Protestant denominational schools, however, brought varied responses from Latter-day Saints. While some saw the schools as a dangerous attack upon the faith of Latter-day Saint students, others viewed the schools as important opportunities for the educational growth of their children, in spite of their evangelical purposes.

Mormons generally acknowledged that “the education offered by... [the] mission schools was usually a standard somewhat above that of the other common schools,” leading a number of orthodox Mormons to send their children to denominational schools.⁴³ Although some leaders warned the Saints not to “give [their children] over to the powers of darkness to be taught by the enemies of God and his people,” other leaders reportedly encouraged Mormons to “*send [their] children*” to the denominational schools if they were willing to teach LDS children “*without money and without price.*”⁴⁴ Despite the varied reactions to the schools, the general experience

⁴² Mormon leadership seems to have had a very high regard for the Catholic educational policy for a number of years. In 1892, George Q. Cannon praised the emphasis on the need for students to be taught by members of their own faith, concluding, “Catholicism is a growing influence in consequence of the excellence of their educational establishments.” He thus encouraged Latter-day Saints to follow the Catholic model and ensure that Mormon children were taught by Mormons. George Q. Cannon, quoted in Karl G. Maeser, “Church School Papers.—No. 16,” *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 October 1892, 608. Similarly, in 1904, Anthon H. Lund applauded the Catholic example of providing religious education for their children. Anthon H. Lund, Discourse, October 6, 1904, *Conference Report* (October 1904): 10. Indeed, in a 1926 meeting of the General Board of Education, Apostle David O. McKay referred to the proven successes of the Catholic schools in an attempt to defend the maintenance of the remaining Church schools. General Board of Education Minutes, 3 March 1926, folder 3, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as HBLL).

⁴³ Hough, “Two School Systems in Conflict,” 120, 122.

⁴⁴ John Taylor, Discourse, 1 December 1880, *Journal of Discourses*, 20:134; Brigham Young, quoted in T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints: A Full and Complete History of the Mormons, From the First Vision of Joseph Smith to the Last Courtship of Brigham Young* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1873), 704-05 (emphasis in the original). There is some dispute in the historical record concerning the actual wording and meaning of Young’s comments in favor of patronizing the denominational schools. The official record of Young’s discourse reads, “We have heard considerable from some parties in this city about what they call free schools, which they say they have established here. I say, now, come out, and be as liberal as you say you are, and teach our children for nothing. If they knew the ‘Mormons’ were willing to accept their charity and send their children to these so-called free schools, their charity would not weigh much. Their charity is to decoy away the innocent. Send your children to their schools and see how far their charity would extend.” Rather than an acceptance of the schools, the context of Young’s comments seems to be a refutation of the idea that the schools would actually provide the

of those Latter-day Saints who patronized the denominational schools was positive. Indeed, for many, it seems to have augmented their Mormon faith, rather than detracting from it. According to one Protestant official, the denominational schools did not convert LDS youth, but rather tended to “[train] Mormons to serve as Sunday school teachers, young folks leaders and bishoprics in the Mormon Church.” He concluded, “They take our proffered education, but not our religion, and use it to strengthen their own institutions.”⁴⁵

The denominational schools, however, were not the only schools which fell outside of Mormon control. The territorial university, the University of Deseret, maintained a consistently non-sectarian educational stance.⁴⁶ Although the school was originally organized by Church officials and contained a theological department for a few years, it was set up as a non-sectarian institution and was open to students of all faiths.⁴⁷ This position was reinforced when John R. Park was named the school’s president and principal in 1869. Although a devout Mormon, Park maintained that a teacher’s religious persuasion ought to remain separate from the classroom.⁴⁸

free education that they promised. Indeed, the context suggests that Young may not have even been speaking about the denominational schools at all. Hence, the quotation in Stenhouse’s book may, in fact, be a misrepresentation of Young’s actual comments. Brigham Young, Discourse, 7 April 1873, *Journal of Discourses*, 16:19; Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereinafter cited as JH), 7 April 1873, LDS Church Archives, (hereinafter cited as CHL).

⁴⁵ C. G. Hammond, undated memorandum, quoted in Lyon, “Evangelical Protestant Missionary Activities,” 251.

⁴⁶ The University of Deseret was organized in Salt Lake City on February 8, 1850, by the territorial legislature, which consisted entirely of Mormons. It was organized similar to the Saints’ earlier University of Nauvoo, and had the general responsibility to train teachers for and regulate the schools of the territory, though it was also intended to operate as a university. The University closed in 1852 due to a lack of financial support, but was reopened in 1869 with John Rocky Park as its president. The school’s name was changed to the University of Utah in 1892. Ralph V. Chamberlain, *The University of Utah: A History of Its First Hundred Years, 1850 to 1950*, (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1960), 5-6.

⁴⁷ Orson Spencer, “Proclamation by Chancellor and Board of Regents, 1850,” printed in Chamberlain, *The University of Utah*, 543-44.

⁴⁸ JH, 28 November 1867, CHL. Park’s commitment to the non-sectarian nature of the University of Deseret is evidenced by his decision to dismiss the talented educator Karl Maeser from the University because his

While the University's religious stance did not pose an evangelical threat to Mormonism like the Protestant schools, in succeeding years Church leaders came to see its secular approach as an equally formidable threat to Mormon youth, a sentiment that followed national trends.⁴⁹ Still, in spite of these concerns, the University of Deseret provided important educational experiences for many Mormon youths, including future Church leaders like Adam S. Bennion and Joseph F. Merrill.⁵⁰

In spite of the positive experiences of many Mormons within the denominational schools and at the University of Deseret, Church leaders became increasingly concerned that LDS youth receive a Mormon education. While the influence of the denominational schools was easily minimized within the Mormon community, the existence of the schools illuminated a concern that was much more distressing to Mormon officials, namely the fear that Protestants might gain control of the public schools. Whereas most Church leaders realized that only a minority of Mormons would ever patronize the denominational schools or attend the University, the anti-

teaching style had "too much the character of coercion or missionary work." John R. Park, University of Deseret Minute Book, 31 March 1871, quoted in Chamberlin, *The University of Utah*, 95.

⁴⁹ A frequent sentiment expressed by Mormon officials throughout the minutes of the General Board of Education for this period was the desire "to have some steps taken toward caring for the religious welfare of Mormon students" at the University of Utah. Although Church officials constantly worried over violating the separation of Church and State, there was a constant effort on their part to discover a way to combat what they viewed as the secularizing influences at the University. See General Board of Education Minutes, 12 May and 6 November 1912, folder 4, box 10, Scott G. Kenny Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; General Board of Education Minutes, 26 June 1914, folder 6, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Commission of Education Minutes, 25, October 1921, folder 9, box 25, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; General Board of Education Minutes, 4 April 1923, folder 3, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; General Board of Education Minutes, 12 September 1912, folder 4, box 11, D. Michael Quinn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (hereinafter cited as BL); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 118-19.

⁵⁰ Both Bennion and Merrill consistently defended the University of Utah, arguing that many members of the University's faculty were faithful members of the Church who wielded a positive influence upon their Mormon students, and that they were not "willfully perverting the truth" in an effort to destroy the faith of their Mormon students. General Board of Education Minutes, 23 March 1926, folder 3, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill," 24; Joseph F. Merrill, "The Lord Overrules," *Improvement Era* July 1934, 413.

Mormon political climate of the 1880s made the Protestant control of the territorial schools a distinct probability. Similarly, the concerns over secularism at the University of Deseret, where students remained surrounded by a Mormon environment, were much less disquieting than the fears about the secularization of the growing number of Mormon students at eastern universities, where the Church had a minimal or non-existent presence. Eventually, both of these fears would, to a degree, be realized. Accordingly, in the minds of some of the highest ranking Church officials, the development of a strong Mormon educational system became imperative.⁵¹

By 1871, Brigham Young had begun to contemplate the organization of a private Church school to combat the gentile influences that came to Utah along with the railroad. The plans solidified in 1873.⁵² Finally, in October 1875, Young formally organized the Brigham Young Academy at Provo, for the express intent that “the children of the Latter-day Saints [could] receive a good education unmixed with the pernicious, atheistic influences that are found in so many of the higher schools of the country.”⁵³ The Academy’s deed provided for education in all

⁵¹ Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff all argued for the development of Mormon schools during this period. Additionally, George Q. Cannon, who was arguably the most influential Mormon leader of the post-Brigham Young era, was highly influential in the development of the Church’s educational programs during these years. “Circular of the First Presidency,” July 11, 1877, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:289; Karl G. Maeser to Wilford Woodruff, 26 November 1887, folder 3, box 1, Karl G. Maeser Presidential Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Ronald W. Walker, *Qualities That Count: Heber J. Grant as Businessman, Missionary, and Apostle* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2004), 196-208; Joseph J. Cannon, “George Q. Cannon: Relations With Brigham Young,” *Instructor*, June 1945, 259-60; Heber J. Grant, Diary, 5 October 1887, *The Diaries of Heber J. Grant, 1880-1945 Abridged* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2010), 66.

⁵² In 1871, Young called John R. Park to serve a mission to the Eastern States and Europe to study educational systems. Upon returning from the mission, Park met with a number of other church members on August 19, 1873 “to consider preliminary measures for the establishment of a college or university by Brigham Young.” Young was likewise influenced by friends and confidants, Thomas L. Kane and George Q. Cannon, both of whom encouraged him to establish a school in his name. Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, 1:62; John Rocky Park, Diary, 19 August 1873, Special Collections, HBLL; Thomas L. Kane to Brigham Young, 4 December 1873, folder 14, box 40, Brigham Young Office Files, CHL; George Q. Cannon, Diary, January 1878, quoted in Cannon, “George Q. Cannon,” 259-60.

⁵³ Brigham Young to Alfales Young, 20 October 1875, folder 13, box 9, Brigham Young Office Files, CHL.

the usual branches of learning, but also required that students take classes in Mormon theology.

The deed read in part,

The Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, shall be the standard text books, and shall be read and their doctrines inculcated in the Academy, and further no book shall be used therein that misrepresents, or speaks lightly of the Divine mission of our Savior, or of the Prophet Joseph Smith, or in any manner advances ideas antagonistic to the principles of the Gospel.⁵⁴

Accordingly, Young designed the Academy to be an intellectual safe haven. Even the text books were not to be “imported from abroad,” but were to be written by Latter-day Saints, thus ensuring that Mormon doctrines would be inculcated and protected in the lives of LDS youth.⁵⁵

Using the Brigham Young Academy as the model, Young founded a similar school named the Brigham Young College, in Logan in 1877.⁵⁶ Another school named the Young Academy was planned for Salt Lake City, but Young died and the school did not materialize until years later.⁵⁷ Both the schools in Logan and Salt Lake City were to be organized according to the standards that had been outlined in the Brigham Young Academy’s deed of trust. At the time of Young’s death, however, most Mormons continued to patronize the territorial schools because private schools like the Brigham Young Academy and the Brigham Young College remained too expensive and too far away for most Saints.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ 1877 Deed of Trust of Brigham Young Academy, printed in Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, 1:527. The provision that “no book shall be used therein that misrepresents, or speaks lightly of the Divine mission of our Savior, or of the Prophet Joseph Smith, or in any manner advances ideas antagonistic to the principles of the Gospel” was not in the original deed, but was added to the deed by Young in 1877.

⁵⁵ First Presidency, Circular, 11 July 1877, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:289.

⁵⁶ Arnold K. Garr, “A History of Brigham Young College, Logan, Utah” (MA Thesis, Utah State University, 1973).

⁵⁷ D. Michael Quinn, “The Brief Career of Young University at Salt Lake City,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Winter 1973): 70-89.

⁵⁸ Brigham Young College Deed of Trust, folder 5, box 10, Brigham Young College Collection, Special Collections, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University, Logan Utah; Young Academy Deed of Trust, LDS

In 1884 the concerns over non-Mormon control of the territorial schools began to come to a head when Utah's non-Mormon territorial governor, Eli Houston Murray, appointed another non-Mormon, William M. Perry, to the post of superintendent of public schools. Prior to this time, the post had been an elected position, a fact that virtually ensured that a Mormon would fill it; by appointing Perry to the office, Murray shifted the territory's balance of educational power. Although many Mormon educators disregarded the authority of Perry and his successor Parley L. Williams and continued to report to L. John Nuttall until 1887, Murray's action had effectively ended the Church's administrative control over the territorial schools. The post would not be filled by a Mormon again until 1896, and never again by a high ranking Church official.⁵⁹

While the Church's ability to influence educational policy within Utah's territorial schools diminished, some efforts were likewise made in Idaho to revoke all teaching certificates by those who professed to be Mormons. Church officials argued that such a move would lead to the education of Mormon youth by "those who would gladly eradicate from their minds all love and respect for the faith of their fathers." In the minds of Church leaders, the duty of the Saints became clear: they were to establish their own schools where LDS youth could be kept "away from the influence of the sophisms of infidelity and the vagaries of the sects."⁶⁰

In 1886, Mormon leaders began to expand the system that had been inaugurated by Brigham Young in Provo and Logan. An October 1886 Epistle from the First Presidency noted the successful efforts of the two Church schools and encouraged Latter-day Saints to patronize and sustain them. The epistle stated:

Business College, College Journal History, 28 September 1876, unpublished manuscript, LDS Business College, Salt Lake City, Utah.

⁵⁹ Clarence G. Jensen, "A Biographical Study of Leonard John Nuttall, Private Secretary to Presidents John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff" (MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 1962), 94-99; Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:166.

⁶⁰ First Presidency, Epistle, March 1886, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 1:58-59.

In no direction can we invest the means God has given us to better advantage than in the training of our children in the principles of righteousness and in laying the foundation in their hearts of the pure faith which is restored to the earth. We would like to see schools of this character, independent of the District School system, started in all places where it is possible.⁶¹

Accordingly, by the end of 1886, three additional academies had been organized in Salt Lake City, Beaver, and Fillmore.⁶² Despite the death of Church president John Taylor, this trend continued throughout 1887 and 1888, until on June 8, 1888, a circular was sent throughout the Church urging that “there should be one Stake Academy established in each Stake as soon as practicable.”⁶³ For all intents and purposes, the letter announced the Mormon rejection of the territorial school system and an educational policy that would rely wholly upon private religious academies in the future.

While it is difficult to ascertain the exact number of schools that were founded in response to the First Presidency’s directive, extant records reveal that the Church school system had grown to as many as forty schools by 1893.⁶⁴ Geographically, these schools extended from Alberta, Canada to Juarez, Mexico, with the majority of the schools being situated within Utah and southern Idaho. Although some of the schools floundered and failed, the academies became the dominant feature of Mormon education during the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century. Further, in the Mormon communities where

⁶¹ First Presidency, Epistle, October 1886, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:86-87.

⁶² Karl G. Maeser to L. John Nuttall, 6 January 1886, folder 13, box 3, L. John Nuttall Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Karl G. Maeser to L. John Nuttall, 20 November 1886, folder 18, box 3, Nuttall Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁶³ Wilford Woodruff to Saint George Stake Presidency, 8 June 1888, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:168.

⁶⁴ Dale F. Topham, “Mormon Academies List,” Unpublished Manuscript, Copy on file at Education in Zion Project, Joseph F. Smith Building, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

the academies were built, the schools took on an essential role in defining the identities of those same communities.

Mormons in Eastern Universities

While primary and secondary education in Utah made up the vast majority of the late nineteenth-century Mormon educational efforts, at the same time, an increasing number of Mormon students continued migrating to the East in search of advanced learning not available in Utah.⁶⁵ Somewhat ironically, Brigham Young seems to have instigated this exodus to the east. Although Young worried that the schools were creating “young infidels” by introducing students to “the theories of Huxley, of Darwin, [and] of Miall,” he likewise believed that it was important for the Church to have individuals with adequate training in the fields of “engineering, chemistry, mineralogy, and geology.”⁶⁶ Accordingly, Young gave permission to a number of his sons to attend eastern universities, with the stipulations that they “attend two years at the University of Deseret” and that they use the knowledge acquired “for the upbuilding of Zion.”⁶⁷ Despite his encouragement of their educational pursuits, however, Young feared that the students would “bury the principles of their religion so deep out of sight that when wanted they [could not] find them.” To avoid the pitfalls of higher learning, he counseled his sons to associate “as much as practicable with the elders and members of the Church” while they were away from

⁶⁵ The Mormon migration to eastern universities had begun in the late 1860s, with the hope that “after just one or two students received their training, they could train others and eliminate the need for additional outside training.” During the 1870s, however, an increasing number of Mormon students were sent to the East, including several of Brigham Young’s own sons, nephews, and grandsons. Simpson, “Mormons Study Abroad,” 16, 242-243.

⁶⁶ Brigham Young to Willard Young, 19 October 1876, in Brigham Young, *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons*, ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company in Collaboration with the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1974), 199; Brigham Young to Willard Young, 11 November 1875, in Young, *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons*, 190.

⁶⁷ Young, *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons*, 265.

home, and to “be prudent in the choice of [their] companions” of different faiths.⁶⁸ In addition to his own children, Young sanctioned and encouraged the educational missions of other Latter-day Saints, most of whom went east for medical training.⁶⁹ Ultimately Young’s desire was to establish quality institutions where Latter-day Saints could “receive a good education unmixed with the pernicious, atheistic influences that are to be found in so many of the higher schools of the country,” but at the same time, he acknowledged that, in the absence of such institutions, eastern universities remained a necessary evil for the Church.⁷⁰

While this Young-inspired exodus to the east did not lead to a new settlement in the west nor culminate in a famous declaration like “This is the Right Place,” it did yield in a number of important benefits in the educational and cultural development of Utah and in Mormonism as a whole.⁷¹ As Thomas Simpson has shown, many of these students returned from their studies to make important contributions to Mormonism.⁷² While the later academic contributions of these students were clearly the most important results of Mormonism’s eastern exodus, it should likewise be noted that these students influenced Mormonism in other vital areas as well, including the integration of many modern ideas into LDS theology.⁷³ Further, several of the

⁶⁸ Brigham Young to Don Carlos and Feramorz L. Young, 16 July 1877, in Young, *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons*, 277.

⁶⁹ Simpson, “Mormons Study Abroad,” 17-49.

⁷⁰ Brigham Young to Alfaes Young, 20 October 1875, CHL.

⁷¹ Brigham Young, quoted in Wilford Woodruff, Discourse, 24 July 1880, in *The Utah Pioneers: Celebration of the Entrance of the Pioneers into Great Salt Lake Valley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Printing and Publishing Establishment, 1880), 23.

⁷² Simpson, “Mormons Study Abroad,” 236.

⁷³ An example of this is John A. Widtsoe’s treatise, *A Rational Theology*, in which Widtsoe defines a rational theology as “a theology which (1) is based on fundamental principles that harmonize with the knowledge and reason of man, (2) derives all of its laws, ordinances and authority from the accepted fundamental principles, and (3) finds expression and use in the everyday life of man.” Widtsoe had developed many of these ideas about religion while studying at Harvard, and spent the rest of his life insisting that the truths of science and religion could be harmonized. John A. Widtsoe, *A Rational Theology: As Taught by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day*

Church's most prominent leaders during the first half of the twentieth-century came from this group. Among them were James Talmage, John Widtsoe, and Joseph Merrill, all of whom would later become members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Mormonism's second highest governing body.

Despite the benefits of advanced education that the prestigious universities at Ann Arbor, Chicago, Baltimore, and Cambridge offered, there were also some drawbacks to the east-bound exodus of Mormon students. Those who went east were counseled by Church leaders that "there is great danger that young men in seeking for education will imbibe the false and pernicious philosophy which prevails in what is called the educated world."⁷⁴ Intriguingly, these leaders did not express the concern that the students would be Protestantized by non-Mormon instructors, but rather that they would lose their faith altogether while matriculating at the country's increasingly secularized universities. Although some like Talmage, Widtsoe, and Merrill seemed to return to Utah with their faith unscathed, the university experience challenged the faith of others.

The fears of Mormon leaders were somewhat justified by the experience of LeGrande Young, a nephew of Brigham Young. After studying law at the University of Michigan, Young returned to Utah and accepted employment from Parley Williams, "a notorious anti-Mormon." As a result, Young became temporarily inactive in his practice of Mormonism.⁷⁵ Others likewise struggled. A later student at the University of Michigan reported to the First Presidency that the

Saints (Salt Lake City: John A. Widtsoe, 1915), iii; John A. Widtsoe, *In a Sunlit Land: The Autobiography of John A. Widtsoe* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1952), 34-37.

⁷⁴ John Taylor to Benjamin Cluff, 18 November 1886, folder 8, box 18, Kenney Collection, Special Collections, HBL.

⁷⁵ Simpson, "Mormons Study 'Abroad,'" 29.

school's secularism had "a telling influence upon [the] faith" of the Mormons in Ann Arbor. He wrote,

[S]ome who were once faithful, begin to doubt this point and that, until at last, whole principles are rejected by them. I have, in two years while here, beheld with sorrow five or six of our young men lose the faith and deny either in part, or ~~the~~ in whole, the principles of the gospel.⁷⁶

Reports like this only heightened the concerns of Mormon leaders.⁷⁷ Church leaders accordingly implemented a rule that "any student or teacher returning home from an eastern University or College, no matter what his diploma or degrees might be, should first serve for awhile as a teacher" before being allowed to take over the principalship of one of the Mormon academies.⁷⁸ Measures such as this allowed Church leaders to gauge the degree to which students returning from the east had been influenced by the prevailing philosophies at the universities they had attended.

This proposed monitoring of those who had gone east acknowledged the latent belief that the modern philosophies espoused in the University setting could challenge the faith of even the most orthodox Mormon student. John Widtsoe noted that while he was at Harvard, he went through a series of "religious battles" which caused him to question, "Was Mormonism what it pretended to be?" and "Did Joseph Smith tell the truth?"⁷⁹ Similarly, Michigan student Josiah Hickman wrote, "The most faithful of our members testify of the almost overmastering influences that are brought to bear upon them, and that it takes the most vigilant scriptural

⁷⁶ Josiah E. Hickman to First Presidency, 5 July 1894, folder 3, box 20, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁷⁷ Simpson, "Mormons Study 'Abroad,'" 132.

⁷⁸ Karl G. Maeser to Benjamin Cluff, Jr., 12 April 1890, box 3, reel 2, Maeser Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁷⁹ Widtsoe, *In a Sunlit Land*, 37.

reading, fasting, and prayer to keep their faith from waining [*sic*].”⁸⁰ Hickman included himself in this group, confessing, “It is hard for me to keep the spirit of God while surrounded with such skeptical teachings. It takes constant prayer and reading of scriptures to keep me from becoming doubtful at certain hours.”⁸¹ Even James Talmage, an ardent defender of Mormonism, who had set out to redeem the sciences “from their...position of infidelity and skepticism,” was led to ask faith probing questions.⁸² Less than six months into his studies, Talmage began to question the extent to which Mormonism provided answers to the scientific questions of the day. In the midst of these questions he wrote in his diary, “I am between two fires in my own conscience, what shall I do? Rely upon my priesthood, as a touchstone, to detect at all times truth from error?”⁸³ That Talmage did not reject the new ideas that he learned is evidenced by the fact that when it came time for him to return to Utah, he was strongly tempted to remain in the East because of its superior academic institutions.⁸⁴ The world of higher academics wielded a powerful influence over the Mormon students who participated in it, leading one student to conclude, “I will rejoice when our young will not need to leave Zion to receive their education.”⁸⁵

In the midst of these challenges, Mormon officials became convinced of the necessity of developing programs that would assist Latter-day Saint youth in maintaining their faith while engaged in their university studies. In 1886, Brigham Young Academy professor Benjamin Cluff, Jr., wrote to John Taylor to request permission to pursue a collegiate degree at the

⁸⁰ Hickman to First Presidency, 5 July 1894, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸¹ Josiah Hickman Journal, 10 June 1894, quoted in Simpson, “Mormons Study ‘Abroad,’” 131.

⁸² James E. Talmage, Diary 17 June 1882, box 25, reel 1, James E. Talmage Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸³ Talmage, Diary 21 January 1883, box 25, reel 1, Talmage Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸⁴ Talmage, Diary 9 September 1883, box 25, reel 1, Talmage Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸⁵ Hickman to First Presidency, 5 July 1894, Special Collections, HBLL.

University of Michigan. Taylor approved Cluff's request, but warned him, "If in acquiring an education, a student becomes converted to these false views, he is in a worse position than if he had no education."⁸⁶ Upon hearing of Cluff's imminent departure and of the corresponding intentions of a fellow Mormon to join him, Brigham Young Academy principal, Karl G. Maeser, wrote to Taylor and suggested a plan that would help to curb the effects of secularism upon these students. He suggested that the Church should organize a formal branch at Ann Arbor, with Cluff as its leader, thus allowing the students to maintain a connection with the Church and with fellow Mormons during their studies.⁸⁷ Taylor immediately approved of Maeser's plan, and authorized him to place Cluff in charge of the Mormon students at Michigan. Under Cluff's administration, these students were to "hold their Sunday meetings and other meetings...and partake of the sacrament, and keep their faith warm and active in the work of God."⁸⁸ Throughout his time at Michigan, Cluff acted in this capacity, with at least two other Mormons participating in the meetings. He made periodic reference to these meetings throughout his diary and noted their importance: "I believe that these meetings will tend to keep alive within us our covenants."⁸⁹

The Church continued to maintain its presence in Ann Arbor for several years.

Following Cluff's return to Utah in 1891, Joseph F. Merrill was appointed to lead the branch.

⁸⁶ John Taylor to Benjamin Cluff, Jr., 18 November 1886, folder 8, box 18, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸⁷ Karl G. Maeser to John Taylor, 8 December 1886, folder 8, box 18, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸⁸ John Taylor to Karl G. Maeser, 10 December 1886, folder 8, box 18, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸⁹ Benjamin Cluff, Diary, 2 January 1887, folder 2, box 1, Benjamin Cluff Diaries, Special Collections, HBLL.

Following Merrill's departure, the branch was led by Josiah Hickman.⁹⁰ In 1894 Hickman wrote that the branch numbered 47 people, 28 of whom were adults.⁹¹ Similarly, when a group of students decided to attend Harvard, Joseph M. Tanner was appointed to fill the role of spiritual advisor.⁹² While these efforts did not inaugurate the formal establishment of a Mormon program for supplementary religious education, they demonstrated the fact that the Church would not ignore the growing trends of higher education and the potential impact that they could have upon the development of Mormonism.

By the 1890s, Mormon leaders understood that the Latter-day Saint educational experience was changing in higher academics and in the common grade schools. While Mormon leaders initially preferred a private educational system, the social, economic and political circumstances that confronted Mormonism during these years prompted them into a partial acceptance of the American public schools.⁹³ Changing economic circumstances forced Church officials to proclaim that "the public schools should be sustained and patronized by [LDS] children up to a certain point, at least in a primary capacity."⁹⁴ At the same time, the changing

⁹⁰ Hickman suggested that he be succeeded by Jedediah F. Woolley, but it is uncertain as to whether or not this took place, or how long the Ann Arbor Branch continued to function. First Presidency to Joseph F. Merrill, 10 October 1891, reel 21, First Presidency Letterbooks, CHL; Hickman to First Presidency, 5 July 1894, Special Collections, HBLL; Josiah E. Hickman to First Presidency, 19 October 1895, folder 5, box 20, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁹¹ Hickman to First Presidency, 5 July 1894, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁹² First Presidency to Joseph M. Tanner, 13 June 1891, folder 8, box 2, Kenney Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁹³ Saint George Stake Board of Education Minutes, 2 August 1892, Saint George Stake Board of Education Minutes, CHL; General Board of Education Board of Examiners Minutes, 7 April 1894, folder 3, box 20, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; General Board of Education Minutes, 25 June 1901, folder 6, box 21, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Bear Lake Stake Board of Education Minutes, 21 September 1903, Bear Lake Stake, Board of Education Minutes, CHL.

⁹⁴ Salt Lake Stake Board of Education Minutes, 13 May 1893, Salt Lake Stake, Board of Education Minutes, CHL.

world of higher academics forced the Church to accept the American university and the influence that it was beginning to have upon the country.

These admissions, however, did not eliminate the concerns of church leadership about the assimilative influences of American schools and the dangers they posed to Mormon youth.

Accordingly, from 1886 to 1930, Mormon leaders engaged in a concerted effort to develop supplementary religious education programs to ensure the continued Mormonization of Latter-day Saint youth in the public schools, as well as in America's colleges and universities. These efforts included several failed attempts, as well as the development of three successful programs: the Religion Class program, the Seminary program, and the Institute program.

CHAPTER 3

THE EXPERIMENTAL PERIOD: MORMON SUPPLEMENTARY

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 1890-1910

1890 proved to be a critical year in the development of Mormonism. Indeed, one historian has dubbed it “The Crucial Year.”¹ While the importance of this year has been widely recognized by Mormon historians since 1890, its importance was likewise recognized by those living at the time. On December 31, 1889, Wilford Woodruff wrote “1890 will be an important year with the Latter Day Saints & American Nation.”² Without question the most prominent event of 1890 occurred in September, when, under the pressures of continued polygamy legislation, Church president Wilford Woodruff issued a manifesto terminating the Mormon practice of plural marriage in the United States.³ Woodruff explained the decision in his journal entry for September 25th:

¹ Edward Leo Lyman, *Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 124.

² Wilford Woodruff, Diary, 31 December 1889, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal: 1889-1898*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1985), 9:74.

³ The actual intent of Woodruff's manifesto is somewhat debated, as plural marriages continued to be solemnized by Mormons in various places including Canada and Mexico, often with the sanction of high-ranking Church officials. Historian Kathleen Flake argues that the “Mormon abandonment” of polygamy occurred “in deed in 1906,” whereas the 1890 abandonment had been an abandonment in word only. While some like B. Carmon Hardy would suggest that such marriages represented a purposeful misrepresentation of the truth by Mormon leaders, other historians such as Davis Bitton have argued that with such a crucial change to Mormonism, “a transition period was inevitable,” which inevitably led to some confusion regarding the interpretation of the Manifesto. Indeed, such questions extended to members in even the highest positions of Church leadership. Apostle Anthon H. Lund records that during a meeting of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve in 1901, the question of whether “any one can receive another wife in any other country” was posed to the body, with both Church president Lorenzo Snow and his counselor Joseph F. Smith responding “no.” Still, it is evident that questions concerning the issue continued to surface. Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 8; B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992),

I have arrived at a point in the history of my life as the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints where I am under the necessity of acting for the temporal salvation of the church. The United States government has taken a stand and passed laws to destroy the Latter-day Saints on the subject of polygamy...and after praying to the Lord and feeling inspired, I have issued the following proclamation which is sustained by my counselors and the twelve apostles.⁴

Woodruff's diary then includes a copy of the formal declaration that the Church was no longer teaching "polygamy [*sic*] or plural marriage nor permitting any person to Enter into the practice."⁵ While the manifesto did not instantly change Mormonism, its far reaching influence was to erase one of the religion's most important identity markers, thus paving the way for the Church's Americanization in the twentieth-century.⁶ Although the manifesto served as a type of "temporal salvation" to the Church as an entity and eluded of its legal troubles, the end of polygamy likewise posed a unique threat to the perpetuation of Mormon way of life. According to one historian, "polygamy had become symbolic of the chasm that separated Mormon culture from 'American society'" and was "the centerpiece of the Mormon defense of the church's mission."⁷ Plural marriage had become the symbol of nineteenth-century Mormonism, including its enmity with the wider American culture. Historian Jan Shipps has observed:

167-243, 363-93; Davis Bitton, *George Q. Cannon: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1999), 409; Anthon H. Lund, Diary, 18 April 1901, *Danish Apostle: The Diaries of Anthon H. Lund, 1890-1921*, ed. John P. Hatch (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with the Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2006), 120. For further information on LDS post Manifesto plural marriage, see: D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 9-105; B. Carmon Hardy, ed., *Doing the Works of Abraham: Mormon Polygamy Its Origin, Practice, and Demise* (Norman, Oklahoma: Arthur H. Clark Company, 2007), 341-378.

⁴ Woodruff, Diary, 25 September 1890, *Wilford Woodruff's Diary*, 9:113-14.

⁵ Woodruff, Diary, 25 September 1890, *Wilford Woodruff's Diary*, 9:114.

⁶ Historian Richard Kimball has written that "plural marriage provided a strict border with the outside world," a boundary that defined the unique differences between Mormonism and other religions. Richard Ian Kimball, *Sports in Zion: Mormon Recreation, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 11.

⁷ D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1997), 329.

At stake was the sheer survival not of the LDS Church itself, but of a Mormonism that continued to preserve its exclusive claim to be the sole corporate body in possession of the holy priesthood and invested with the status of God's chosen people. Without boundaries to set them apart, without 'gentiles' to stand over and against, a chosen people cannot exist; their very identity depends on their perception of specialness; and that specialness, in turn, depends on their being separated in some way from that part of the population that is not special.⁸

Many historians have viewed the Manifesto as a compromise that cost Mormonism much of its religious distinctiveness.⁹ Although no evidence suggests that Mormons at the time feared that the Manifesto would undercut the foundation of Mormon distinctiveness, it is clear that numerous Church leaders wondered about the Manifesto's full ramifications for Mormonism.¹⁰ Most of these feelings, however, were kept private and expressed only in diaries. Reflecting on the events of 1890 and 1891, B. H. Roberts, a high ranking Church official, noted that that the Manifesto "continued as a trial to me thro[ugh] this year 1891, and plagued me much, but I said but little about it." He further wrote that "for every excuse" a fellow General Authority could bring up in support of the document, "I could bring ten reasons (sufficient to my mind) why we should hold to the principle even tho[ugh] it cost the very annihilation of the church." Roberts

⁸ Jan Shipps, "In the Presence of the Past: Continuity and Change in Twentieth-Century Mormonism," in *After 150 Years: The Latter-day Saint Sesquicentennial Perspective*, eds. Thomas G. Alexander and Jessie L. Embry (Provo, Utah: Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, 1983), 11-12.

⁹ Klaus Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957)

¹⁰ Upon hearing of the announcement, Apostle Moses Thatcher "asked the question if it would be wisdom on our part to fly in the face of the law and answered, no," while John Henry Smith "said that the Manifesto had disturbed his feelings very much." In addition to the men, Grant noted in his diary, "The Manifesto has been a fearful trial to the sisters in plural marriage," alluding to the fact that many men were forced to abandon some of their plural wives. Although some questioned the Manifesto, others like Heber J. Grant saw no decline, but rather an "increase of faith" in the Church in the days following the Manifesto. In spite of some objections, at a meeting of the First Presidency and the Twelve, "a vote was taken fully endorsing [the Manifesto]." Heber J. Grant, Diary, 1 October 1890, *The Diaries of Heber J. Grant, 1880-1945 Abridged* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2010), 121-22; Grant Diary, 7 October 1891, *The Diaries of Heber J. Grant*, 144; Grant Diary, 5 October 1890, *The Diaries of Heber J. Grant*, 124; Grant, Diary, 2 October 1890, *The Diaries of Heber J. Grant*, 123.

ultimately became reconciled to the declaration, but such conciliatory feelings came only after a deep personal struggle.¹¹

While the Manifesto was clearly the most important event of the year, 1890 was important for other reasons as well. In terms of educational history, 1890 marked the beginning of an educational policy that has since come to dominate a significant portion of Mormon educational thought and practice. Just weeks after the Manifesto, with the support of key leaders and under the duress of mounting economic difficulties, the Church inaugurated its first program in supplementary religious education, known as the Religion Class program.

The establishment of the Religion Class program represented a significant departure from the Church's prior educational policy which promoted the establishment and patronage of Mormon private schools. Whereas the earlier policy had called for the separation of Mormons from non-Mormon institutions, the new policy underscored the realization that Mormon participation in the territorial public schools was inevitable and had to be accounted for. Hence, the founding of the Religion Class program reinforced the concept that Mormonism would have to change in order to survive. Thus, while the events of 1890 threatened to be the undoing of Mormonism, they also provided the Church with an opportunity to discover new means of creating Mormon distinctiveness while still complying with the assimilative imperative of Woodruff's manifesto.¹²

¹¹ Even Roberts' reconciliation to the Manifesto reflected his uneasiness about the policy. He wrote, "Bro. Woodruff had signed the paper himself and I concluded that he had determined to carry the responsibility ~~himself~~ <alone>" for the Manifesto, "and I had began to be reconciled to the Manifesto on that ground." B. H. Roberts, *Diary, 1891, History's Apprentice: The Diaries of B. H. Roberts, 1880-1898*, ed. John Sillito (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 2004), 226-27.

¹² Shippy writes that in the wake of the Manifesto, "Somehow the responsibility for boundary maintenance had to be shifted from the corporate body to the individuals within that body, and that shift had to be legitimated in such a way that it would gain general acceptance." Shippy, "In the Presence of the Past," 12.

Over the next two decades, Mormon leaders worked to establish the Religion Class program throughout the Church. This effort included a number of attempts to extend the reach of supplementary religious education beyond the elementary schools with a particular focus upon the university level. Although these other endeavors largely failed, they solidified the Mormon commitment to a measured assimilation into American society by allowing Mormon students to attend the public schools. At the same time, these programs were part of Mormonism's larger effort to instill a sense of Mormon distinctiveness among young Latter-day Saints. As such, these educational programs demonstrated the peculiar situation in which Mormonism found itself at the turn-of-the-century and its attempts to negotiate the paradoxical needs for distinctiveness and assimilation.

Despite the fact that the Religion Classes played an integral role in the development of a new Mormon educational policy, relatively little is known about the program. Indeed, perhaps no major Mormon auxiliary is less familiar to the current Church membership than the Religion Class program. Part of the blame for this anonymity is undoubtedly due to the program's overly generic name, a name which has subsequently been used to describe other theologically-based classes in the Church.¹³ The generic title Religion Class, however, is not the whole reason for the program's forgotten identity, both the program's relative unpopularity among many Mormons and its termination in 1929 helped it to fade from the collective memory of the Latter-day Saints.

Historiography of the Religion Class Program

In spite of the general anonymity that plagues the historical memory of the Religion Classes, some historians have written about the program and noted its importance within

¹³ The term "religion class" has described classes taught by Religious Education at Brigham Young University. It was not used however, until after the Religion Class program was discontinued by the Church. Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, 2:218-19.

Mormon history. The program is briefly discussed in a number of larger works, including those by M. Lynn Bennion and William E. Berrett. It is likewise briefly mentioned in Glen Leonard and James Allen's survey of Mormon history.¹⁴ Such treatments of the classes, however, are vague and do little more than mention the forgotten program.

Without question, the most important work on the history of the program is Michael Quinn's 1975 article entitled "Utah's Educational Innovation: LDS Religion Classes, 1890-1929."¹⁵ In this article, Quinn lays out a concise narrative of the Religion Class program and convincingly demonstrates its importance within Latter-day Saint history. He argues that the program was not only the first Mormon attempt to "supplement (but not replace) secular education," but also that the Religion Classes were "America's first experiment in providing separate weekday religious training for public school children."¹⁶ Quinn suggests that this program constituted Mormonism's only unique contribution to the field of American education, suggesting that the other programs had merely been patterned after contemporary educational programs.¹⁷ Quinn's narrative considers many aspects of the program, including its uneasy relationship with the other auxiliaries, and the unwillingness of many local leaders to support the program. What emerges is a portrait of a well-intentioned and innovative program that nevertheless failed because it was never fully adopted by the members of the Church.

While Quinn's article is the most substantive work on the Religion Class program to date, it does not examine every important aspect of the program. Quinn takes a generally top-down

¹⁴ James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), 422, 453, 462.

¹⁵ D. Michael Quinn, "Utah's Educational Innovation: LDS Religion Classes, 1890-1929," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (Fall 1975): 379-89.

¹⁶ Quinn, "Utah's Educational Innovation," 379.

¹⁷ Quinn, "Utah's Educational Innovation," 387.

approach to the subject that makes no reference to the numerous body of meeting minutes, correspondence, and diaries that detail the various ways the program functioned on the local level. While this bottom-up approach would have served to corroborate many of Quinn's conclusions about the program's effectiveness, it also provides contradictory evidence showing that in many wards the program was both accepted and successful. Additionally, although his paper probes the conflicts that plagued the program throughout its history, time and space constraints did not allow him to address issues such as the impact of gender roles upon the program and the corresponding influence of the program upon the defining those roles, the implications of the dissent from ordinary Mormons, and the ability and willingness of lower level Mormon leaders to disagree with the General Authorities. Further, Quinn largely fails to contextualize the program's growth and progress within the social, economic, and educational trends that defined both America and Mormonism throughout these years.

Beyond these questions, historians must question Quinn's assertion that the Religion Class program was the country's first program of supplementary religious education. In many regards, Quinn's argument is correct, as it is generally accepted that supplementary religious education did not become an established trend among other American denominations until the 1910s.¹⁸ Historians of the Protestant supplementary religious education movement generally attribute the beginnings of this movement to a program established in Gary, Indiana in 1914 that came to be known as the "Gary Plan." Prior to the establishment of the "Gary Plan," however, officials from Indiana contacted Mormon officials requesting "literature in relation to the Religion Class work of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."¹⁹ Accordingly, even the

¹⁸ Robert Michaelson, *Piety in the Public School: Trends and Issues in the Relationship Between Religion and the Public School in the United States* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1970), 170-74.

¹⁹ Joseph W. McMurrin, Discourse, 6 October 1914, *Conference Report* (October 1914): 119.

founders of the program that is generally acknowledged as the country's first supplementary religious education program acknowledged that the Religion Classes predated their own program. Nevertheless, one must still question the innovative nature of the Religion Class program. Despite the difficulties of denominational conflict, moral and religious training had been a core principle of the nineteenth-century common schools.²⁰ It would be a mistake to equate these early schools with the American public school system at the turn-of-the twentieth century, but it is clear that the idea of integrating religious education into the education of the country's youth had a long history of which the LDS Religion Classes make up one part. Furthermore, throughout the history of the program, numerous leaders questioned the necessity of the Religion Classes because of its similarity to other Church programs.²¹ Given such concerns, the question remains whether the Religion Class program should be classified as supplementary religious education program or a Church auxiliary.²² While Quinn's article should be considered the definitive narrative of the Religion Class program, it is not necessarily the definitive interpretation of the Religion Classes and their significance.

A further examination of Mormon supplementary religious education from 1890 to 1910 reveals that the Church's efforts were shaped and defined by the educational, social, and political events of the time. The Free Schools Act, the Panic of 1893, the Reed Smoot Senate confirmation hearings, and the establishment of the American Progressive movement all played

²⁰ Lawrence Arthur Cremin, *The American Common School: An Historic Conception* (New York: Columbia University Teachers College, 1951), 66-70.

²¹ Quinn, "Utah's Educational Innovation," 381-82.

²² Intriguingly, the Religion Class program experienced what might be termed organizational schizophrenia during the early twentieth century. While early leaders clearly identified the program as a Church auxiliary, akin to the Sunday School, during the 1910s, Religion Class leaders emphatically argued that "Religion Classes are really a part of the Church School system and [are] not strictly a ward organization as are the auxiliary organizations." Karl G. Maeser, "Church School Papers.—No. 4," *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 April 1891, 226; General Board of Religion Class, Minutes, 14 February 1913, folder 4, box 11, D. Michael Quinn Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (hereinafter cited as BL); General Board of Religion Class Minutes, 17 October 1917, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL.

an integral role in the development of Mormon supplementary religious education. As such, these efforts provide valuable insights into the development of Modern Mormonism at the close of the nineteenth century.

Establishing the Religion Class Program

On February 18, 1890, Utah's territorial legislature established the territory's first public school system by passing the Free Schools Act.²³ Although public schools had been established in other parts of the nation, government officials had specifically emphasized the need for these schools to be free to attract a larger number of Mormon children. One official argued, "Free education means free men, and Utah needs just such education; and if there be any agency that will draw the Mormon people and cause the building up of a truly democratic republican commonwealth in Utah, it will be through the medium of free schools."²⁴

The Free Schools Act provided for the establishment of tax-supported schools throughout the territory and mandated that children who were not enrolled in other schools had to attend a free school. Fearful that the schools might be used to promote sectarian religious ideas, the act expressly forbid that any "atheistic, infidel, sectarian, or denominational doctrine shall be taught in any of the district schools of this Territory" even while providing that "moral instruction tending to impress upon the minds of the people the importance of good manners, truthfulness, purity, patriotism and industry shall be given in every district school."²⁵ Although the law appeared to be benign, the Federal government and Utah's appointed officials hoped that in time

²³ Prior to this time, there were several different school system in Utah, some of which were associated with the territory, some with individual wards and cities, and others that were privately operated denominational schools.

²⁴ Congress, *Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, transmitting a letter of the Governor of Utah and a report of the Commissioner of Public Schools*, 51st Cong., 1st sess., 1890, S. Exec. Doc 27, Serial 2682.

²⁵ *An Act to Provide for a Uniform System of Free Schools Throughout Utah Territory Passed at the Twenty-ninth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah, 1890*, Special Collections, HBL.

the free schools would dramatically change Utah society, particularly regarding Mormonism's influence within the territory.²⁶

Not surprisingly, Mormon leaders failed to see anything benign about the Free Schools Act, viewing it as an attack upon the Church and an outgrowth of anti-polygamy legislation. Economic conditions together with the promise of superior educational opportunities, however, ensured that the Free Schools Act would have a lasting influence upon Mormonism. Indeed, many Mormon parents sent their children to the free schools because they could not pay tuition for the Church's academies while at the same time financially supporting the public schools with their taxes. Furthermore, others patronized the free schools because they offered better resources and educational opportunities to the children. Ultimately Mormon leaders acknowledged the important role that the free schools played in the lives of the people, and even encouraged Church members to patronize the schools so long as they were taught by Latter-day Saints.²⁷

Despite their acknowledgement of and support for the schools, Mormon leaders feared that these schools would ultimately lead to the perpetuation of a "Godless education" which would "win the children from religion."²⁸ Woodruff's first counselor George Q. Cannon expressed this fear in 1892 when he warned a group of Mormon educators about the "tendency toward unbelief" in the school textbooks, arguing that unless the situation was remedied, "a great many" of the Mormon youth would "lose all liking for religious principles and become alienated

²⁶ In his report to the Secretary of the Interior, Jacob S. Boseman, the Commissioner of Schools for Utah Territory, wrote that although Mormon leaders were "unfriendly to the district schools," it was his belief that "free schools with thorough teachers, would...work in Utah a wonderful change in a very few years." Congress, *Letter from the Secretary of the Interior*, 51st Cong., 1st sess.

²⁷ Salt Lake Stake, Board of Education Minutes, 13 May 1893, Salt Lake Stake Board of Education Minutes 1892-1899, CHL.

²⁸ First Presidency, Circular, 25 October 1890, in James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833-1964*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), 196; George Q. Cannon quoted in Karl G. Maeser, "Church School Papers—No. 16," *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 October 1892, 607.

in their feelings toward the gospel.”²⁹ Hence, while Mormon leaders were obliged to accept the free schools, they continued to fear that widespread patronage of the schools would undermine the Mormon faith.

On June 2, 1890, Church officials met to discuss possible solutions to the educational quandary posed by the Free Schools Act. Karl Maeser, the superintendent of Mormon schools, proposed that the Church establish elementary schools to function alongside its secondary level academies.³⁰ The economic situation of the Church, however, rendered Maeser’s idea impossible. With the encouragement of George Q. Cannon, Apostle Anthon H. Lund proposed a new program that would allow LDS students to attend the territorial schools while at the same time receiving religious instruction.³¹ Lund’s plan called for Mormon children in the territorial schools to receive a half hour of religious instruction each day after school. Where possible, these classes were to be taught in the schoolhouses, and preferably by the school teachers—provided they were Mormon.³²

Despite the cost effectiveness of this plan, several members of the Board of Education expressed concerns about it. First, they were apprehensive about the possible implications of using both the public schoolhouses and teachers. Lund responded that he had made the

²⁹ George Q. Cannon, quoted in Maeser, “Church School Papers—No. 16,” 607-08.

³⁰ Quinn, “Utah’s Education Innovation,” 380-81.

³¹ *Program of Lund Day Exercises in Religion Classes*, 1912, CHL; Lund, Diary, 2 June 1890, *Danish Apostle*, 7.

³² Lund, Diary, 2 June 1890, *Danish Apostle*, 7. Lund’s interest in the educational problem was not surprising. Although his formal education in Denmark’s public schools lasted only five years, Lund had earned praise for his proficiency as a learner. When Lund came to Utah, he served in many prominent positions of educational administration for both Church and State institutions. His educational work included a period of service as a member of the Board of Regents for the University of Utah. In this capacity he worked to “gradually overcome prejudices” against the University and encouraged members of the Church to “take advantage of the advantages offered there.” Accordingly, whereas many of the Mormon leaders favored the sole patronage of Mormon schools, Lund recognized the benefits of the public school system and encouraged a Church presence in the public schools and universities. Lund, *Danish Apostle*, xxiv, xxvii, 204.

suggestion to use the public schoolhouses because it would keep the students from having to travel to some other location for the classes. He suggested that another building, such as the chapel, could be used for the classes, but that the schoolhouses would be preferable because they contained desks where older students could take notes. This mention of older students suggests that there were early intentions to expand the program to reach secondary aged students as well as those in the elementary schools. Hence, Lund's plan contemplated an increasing Mormon influence within the public school system. In response to the problem of using the local school teachers to teach the Religion Classes, Lund suggested that the church pay these teachers for their service, "so that the imputation can not be case[d] upon us that the teacher is paid for this service by the trustees even indirectly."³³

The Board's main concern with Lund's program was that it would violate the separation of church and state. They feared that these classes would constitute the introduction of sectarian religion into public schools, thus leaving the church liable to additional lawsuits and further troubles with the government. Lund responded, "There will no doubt be a hue and cry raised against teaching religion...but we can not afford to lose our childrens [*sic*] souls."³⁴ At least for Lund, the perpetuation of Mormon values in the lives of LDS youth was worth the risk of transgressing the boundaries that separated church and state and plunging the church into more political turmoil.

These general concerns demonstrated the paradoxical position of Mormonism in the critical year of 1890. During this period, Church leaders struggled to find ways to retain their Mormon distinctiveness even while they were being forced to abandon many of the practices that had made them distinct. Anthon Lund's Religion Class program was emblematic of this

³³ Lund, Diary, 2 June 1890, *Danish Apostle*, 7.

³⁴ Lund, Diary, 2 June 1890, *Danish Apostle*, 8.

struggle. On the one hand, Lund's proposal suggested a move towards cultural assimilation. The establishment of Religion Classes tacitly acknowledged and approved of Mormon participation in public schools, schools that had been created for the express purpose of Americanizing Mormon youth. Such participation, however, would benefit both the church and the schools. Mormon youth would receive what in some cases was a superior educational experience, while their parents and church leaders would be relieved of a heavy economic burden. Additionally, the public schools stood to benefit from a much larger attendance. Hence, there seemed to be no losers in this proposition. For Mormon leaders, however, the dangers of cultural assimilation and Americanization remained very real. They were unwilling to turn their children over to these schools without some way to ensure the perpetuation of Mormon values. Lund's idea represented an effort to assimilate into American society on the Church's own terms.

Interestingly, another concern emanating from the Board of Education's was that the parents would be uninterested in the weekday religion program. The Board members worried that these classes would take the children away from their homes for too long and detract from their performance of their duties on the family farm. Lund responded that such parents should remember "the importance of the matter" and "manage the time [so] that the children can have it for instruction."³⁵ This concern suggests that the average Mormon did not necessarily feel the same deep concerns about LDS youth in the public schools as did their church leaders. Indeed, such "apathy" may have been as important a reason for the establishment of the program as the fears over the teachers and curriculum within the public schools. The unwillingness of parents, however, likely had more to do with the economic realities that faced most Utah families during

³⁵ Lund, Diary, 2 June 1890, *Danish Apostle*, 7-8.

1890s. During an era of economic privation, most families simply could not afford to do without the labor that their children provided on the farm.

Over the life of the program, each of these initial concerns, together with some that had not been anticipated, would be validated. What seemed to be a simple program of religious education would prove to be a source of constant criticism from inside and outside the Church. In spite of these problems, however, Lund's idea would become the launching point for the next century of Mormon educational policy.

Despite their apprehensions, the Church Board of Education approved the implementation of Lund's plan, to be known as the Religion Class program, on October 8, 1890.³⁶ Later that month, the First Presidency sent a circular throughout the Church announcing the program. The circular warned of a "benumbing influence" that had caused many Latter-day Saints to lose the "ardent desire to serve the Lord," replacing it with "less noble aims." To counteract these problems and "the tendencies that grow out of a Godless education," the First Presidency reaffirmed its support of the church schools and encouraged "every ward where a Church school is not established" to develop a weekday Religion Class where Mormon values could be taught to LDS youth.³⁷

Internal Opposition to Religion Classes

Immediate reaction to the new program was mixed and would remain so throughout its forty-year history. A lack of records makes it difficult to ascertain how many classes were organized within the first few months following the program's establishment; however,

³⁶ The Religion Class Program gained a critical supporter in George Q. Cannon, who was arguably one of the five most influential Mormons of the nineteenth-century. Quinn, "Utah's Educational Innovation," 381; Church Board of Education Minutes, 8 October 1890, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL; Edward Leo Lyman, "George Q. Cannon's Economic Strategy in the 1890's Depression," *Journal of Mormon History* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 28.

³⁷ First Presidency to Presidents of Stakes, 25 October 1890, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:196-97.

statements by Church leaders regarding the Religion Classes during these first few months suggest that the initial reaction was lukewarm at best.³⁸ A year after the organization of the program, Karl Maeser wrote that it was “incumbent upon all Stake Presidencies to take steps for the establishment of ‘Religion Classes’ throughout their respective stakes, and to report to the General Superintendent the progress of the work,” suggesting that many stakes had still not made an effort to implement the program.³⁹ According to Maeser, during the early years of this program, “Religion Classes were either not started at all, or ceased after a feeble existence” in many stakes, a circumstance that he largely blamed upon a lack of support from authorities at the stake and ward level.⁴⁰ Indeed, many local Church leaders saw the Religion Classes as “a superfluous burden,” rather than the integral program described by top Mormon officials.⁴¹

While the idea of stake presidents and bishops opposing a general Church policy or program seems strange to twenty-first century Mormons, such disputes were not unheard of during the tumultuous period surrounding the turn-of-the twentieth century. Although such disputes generally revolved around minor issues like support of the Religion Class program,

³⁸ Joseph Keeler, a Church leader in Provo claimed that the first Religion Class was organized in the Utah Stake by Karl G. Maeser soon after the organization of the program. At the time, Maeser was serving as Principal of the Brigham Young Academy in Provo. Hence it is highly possible that Keeler’s assertion was valid. If true, however, the Provo Religion Class was either short lived or quite inefficient, leading Maeser to complain, “I experience the same difficulty in getting the Religion Class started in Utah Stake of Zion... [as] those that have the charge of [the Stake] have not the spirit of it.” The earliest documentation for the organization of a Religion Class was a circular letter from James Talmage to the Salt Lake Stake in March, 1891. General Board of Religion Class Minutes, 14 June 1911, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL; Quinn, “Utah’s Educational Innovation,” 381; Karl G. Maeser to George Reynolds, 23 August 1893, box 3, reel 3, Karl G. Maeser Presidential Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; *Program of Maeser Day Exercises in Religion Classes to Officers and Teachers of Religion Classes*, 1910, CHL; James E. Talmage to Salt Lake Stake Bishops, 14 March 1891, folder 13, box 23, James E. Talmage Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

³⁹ Karl G. Maeser, “Church School Papers.—No. 11,” *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 November 1891, 673-74.

⁴⁰ Karl G. Maeser to Presidents of Stakes and the Stake Boards of Education, 12 September 1893, folder 9, Salt Lake Stake, Board of Education Files 1893-1896, CHL.

⁴¹ Karl G. Maeser, “Church School Papers—Series II, No. 2,” *Juvenile Instructor*, 15 November 1895, 695.

there were times when such power struggles became more intense.⁴² The power and significance of stake presidents had increased throughout the 1880s as the general leaders of the Church were forced into hiding, limiting their communication with the Church to general epistles.⁴³ Tithing funds generally remained under the control of stake presidents, as well as the power to make decisions about local schools and other Church programs. Accordingly, in the aftermath of the Manifesto, local leaders may have exhibited greater levels of organizational independence than characterized by contemporary Mormonism.

To resolve concerns about the legitimacy of the classes, Church leaders praised the ability of the classes to “Mormonize” Latter-day Saint youth and prepare them for further work in the Church. Maeser argued that the classes prepared students to work in other auxiliaries like the Sunday Schools and Mutual Improvement Associations, and thus merited greater attention from local leaders.⁴⁴ These justifications, however, did little to assuage the concerns of the local leaders, and may have even perpetuated inter-organizational conflict. Despite Maeser’s repeated assertion that conflict between the Religion Classes and the other auxiliaries was “impossible,”

⁴² Perhaps the most serious example of these power struggles came in 1885, when Abraham O. Smoot, president of the Utah Stake and the Brigham Young Academy Board of Trustees, sent a bill to Church President John Taylor for \$7,000 in back rent on a piece of Church property that Brigham Young had intended to deed to the Brigham Young Academy. When Taylor refused to pay rent on the property, Smoot threatened legal action. Although Smoot eventually backed down from his threats, the incident showed the demonstrated the type of power that characterized stake presidents of the period. Jed L. Woodworth, “Refusing to Die: Financial Crisis at the Brigham Young Academy, 1877-1897,” *BYU Studies* 38, no. 1 (1999): 90-92.

⁴³ Many stake presidents and bishops were likewise forced to go into hiding. But because of their close proximity to their stakes, they remained fairly active in the leadership of these stakes. Accordingly, the underground did not necessarily minimize their leadership in the same way that it minimized the leadership of the general authorities.

⁴⁴ Maeser, “Church School Papers.—No. 4,” 226.

friction developed between the various programs in several areas throughout the Church.⁴⁵ Such conflicts served only to accentuate concerns about the new program.

The lack of a definitive plan for conducting the classes provided an additional reason why acceptance and support of the classes was not immediately forthcoming. Lund's initial idea for the program had been heavily focused upon the troubles that the classes might encounter with the government, while largely ignoring the question of the curriculum. The idea was simply that students would learn the principles of Mormonism, but exactly what principles and how this program would differ from the other youth programs of the Church remained undefined. Even Maeser, the superintendent of Church education, did not initially give much thought to the content of the classes, or how they would differ from the other auxiliaries of the Church.⁴⁶ Although Maeser quickly developed a pedagogical plan for the classes, the program was recovered from the initial uncertainty as to how it differed from the Church's other auxiliaries.⁴⁷

With all these problems to consider, many wards and stakes were hesitant to organize Religion Classes.⁴⁸ It seems that local Church leaders did not view the Free Schools Act with the same sense of apprehension exhibited by members of the Church Board of Education, or at least viewed the previously existing Church auxiliaries as a sufficient response to the dangers of

⁴⁵ Karl G. Maeser, "Church School Papers.—No. 1," *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 January 1891, 31-33; Karl G. Maeser, "Church School Papers.—No. 12," *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 January 1892, 33; Conrad A. Harward, "A History of the Growth and Development of the Primary Association of the LDS Church from 1878 to 1928" (MA Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1976), 131.

⁴⁶ *Program of Maeser Day Exercises in Religion Classes*, CHL.

⁴⁷ Anthon H. Lund, Discourse, 6 April 1916, *Conference Report* (April 1916): 10-11; Alma P. Burton, "Karl G. Maeser, Mormon Educator" (MS Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1950), 106.

⁴⁸ Maeser to Presidents of Stakes and the Stake Boards of Education, 12 September 1893, CHL.

American public education. Whatever their reasons, many local leaders remained far less committed to the Religion Class program than the general leadership of the Church.⁴⁹

Growth Amidst Challenges

Despite the lukewarm reception that the Religion Classes received in many stakes, the program did have some success in its early years. In October 1892, Maeser reported that 112 Religion Classes had been organized in nineteen of the thirty-five stakes.⁵⁰ Although rates of participation were lower than in the Primary Association, they nevertheless demonstrated considerable growth during the first two years of the program's existence.⁵¹ Although the Religion Class program was unpopular among many local Mormon leaders, it would be inaccurate to suggest that such unpopularity extended throughout the entire Church.

Interestingly, one of the program's greatest stimuli was the Panic of 1893. The Panic, which began in May with a drastic drop on the New York Stock Exchange, soon spread throughout the nation. By the beginning of 1894, unemployment had risen to twenty percent, leading "many comfortable citizens to question the nation's economic and political system."⁵² The Panic affected nearly every aspect of society, including education. Schools and universities throughout the country were forced to make cuts in teacher salaries and educational offerings.

⁴⁹ Only a year before the termination of the Religion Class program in 1929, Heber J. Grant "declared that bishops who cannot be converted to the importance of the work should be given their release." While it is doubtful that any bishops were actually released, Grant's statements demonstrate the disconnect that existed between local and general leaders over the Religion Class Program. "The Religion Class Convention," *Juvenile Instructor*, May 1928, 275.

⁵⁰ Karl G. Maeser, "Church School Papers—No. 16," *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 October 1892, 605-06. Information on the number of stakes in 1892 derived from: Andrew Jensen, *Church Chronology: A Record of Important Events Pertaining to the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1914); Andrew Jensen, *Encyclopedic History of the Church* (Salt Lake City: No Publisher, 1941).

⁵¹ "Report of Primary Associations," *Deseret News*, 15 October 1892.

⁵² Diner, *A Very Different Age*, 19-20; Nell Irvin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: A Grassroots History of the Progressive Era* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 116.

Even renowned universities like Yale and Harvard were forced to downsize due to drastic decreases in student enrollments and tuition payments. The Panic represented not only a transnational catastrophe, but also a “cross-class catastrophe” that affected even the country’s most affluent classes.⁵³

Utah Territory struggled with many of the same problems that plagued the nation during the depression. The Panic deeply affected Mormons, both individual members and the Church as a whole, who were still trying to overcome the financial fallout of the previous decade’s polygamy legislation. By 1890, the Church’s debt totaled nearly \$300,000, a sum that would grow to more than one million dollars by the end of the decade, thanks in large part to a variety of expensive public works projects sponsored by the Church and the effects of the nationwide depression.⁵⁴ James Talmage, a prominent Salt Lake City educator, described the desperate conditions in his journal, writing, “During the present trying stringent season in matters financial we have endured deprivation to as great an extent as most people are called to, except those who are suffering in abject poverty: for money has become to us almost an unknown quantity.”⁵⁵

The Mormon academies were among Utah’s educational entities most affected by the Panic. By May of 1893, even while agreeing that the Church schools “must receive the support of the Latter-day Saints,” the leaders in the Salt Lake Stake concluded that “the public schools

⁵³ Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009), 169.

⁵⁴ *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900*, 1958 repr. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 400-01; Lyman, “George Q. Cannon’s Economic Strategy,” 4-41. For an excellent description of the impact of the depression of the 1890s on Mormonism, see Ronald W. Walker, “Crisis in Zion: Heber J. Grant and the Panic of 1893” *Arizona and the West* 21, No. 3 (Autumn 1979): 257-78. In this article, Walker examines the effects of the depression on Mormonism during the height of the depression in 1893. See also Leonard J. Arrington, “Utah and the Depression of the 1890’s,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (January 1961): 3-18; Woodworth, “Refusing to Die,” 71-123.

⁵⁵ Talmage Diary, 25 December 1893, box 25, reel 2, Talmage Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

should be sustained and patronized by our children up to a certain point, at least in a primary capacity.”⁵⁶ Then, on June 1, 1893, the Church Board of Education informed academy officials that the Board was “entirely out of funds” and was “not in a condition, just now, to make further appropriations” to the schools.⁵⁷ This policy became solidified at a meeting of the Board of Education on August 11th, when Church officials decided that the Church would not provide any appropriations for the remainder of that year.⁵⁸ Reaction to the decision was immediate, with a number of local boards deciding that without Church appropriations, they were “obliged to suspend operations during the ensuing academic year.”⁵⁹ According to Talmage, the Panic forced twenty of the academies, nearly half of the total number of schools, to close in 1893.⁶⁰ While the majority of the schools that closed tended to be less established academies, even the Church’s most established academies in Provo and Salt Lake struggled to stay afloat during these years.⁶¹ The academies that managed to remain open made dramatic cuts in operating expenses and teacher salaries.⁶²

⁵⁶ Salt Lake Stake Board of Education Minutes, 13 May 1893, CHL.

⁵⁷ Scott C. Esplin, “Education in Transition: Church and State Relationships in Utah,” (PhD. Dissertation, Brigham Young University, 2006), 112.

⁵⁸ Church Board of Education Minutes, 11 August 1893, William P. Miller Collection, CHL; Saint George Stake Board of Education Minutes, 20 August 1893, Saint George Stake, Board of Education Minutes 1888-1898, CHL.

⁵⁹ Karl G. Maeser, “Church School Papers No. 23,” *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 September 1893, 554.

⁶⁰ According to Willard Done, only 15 academies were closed due to the Panic. James E. Talmage, Diary, August 11, 1893, James E. Talmage Collection, MSS 229, box 25, reel 2, Special Collections, HBLL; Dale F. Topham, “List of Stake Academies 1883-1933,” Unpublished Document, Copy on file at Education in Zion Project, Joseph F. Smith Building, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; Salt Lake Stake Board of Education Minutes, 19 August 1893, folder 2, box 8, Quinn Papers, BL.

⁶¹ Salt Lake Stake Board of Education Minutes, 19 August 1893, folder 2, box 8, Quinn Papers, BL; Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, 2:235-38.

⁶² Karl G. Maeser to George Teasdale, 23 August 1893, box 3, reel 3, Maeser Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

While the Panic wreaked havoc on the academies, it proved a great boon to the struggling Religion Class organization. Just a few months prior to the crash of the stock market, Maeser had praised the Stakes for making progress in regard to the Religion Classes, adding that “the people also are beginning to realize the importance and necessity of [the program].”⁶³ As Utah began to spin into financial chaos, however, Maeser took up the cause of the Religion Classes with even greater fervor and called attention to the vast number of Mormon youth who could no longer attend one of the academies. Maeser argued that the importance of the 1890 circular announcing Religion Classes had been enhanced due to “the stringency of the times.”⁶⁴ Further, in a circular issued by the Church Board of Education on September 12, 1893, Maeser pled with stake presidents for their “earnest co-operation in the establishment of these classes,” the necessity of which, was “more apparent than ever” because of the difficult financial circumstances facing the Church.⁶⁵ In addition to promoting Religion Classes at conventions and in circulars, Maeser visited some of the stakes which had closed their academies.⁶⁶ As financial conditions made the Mormon academies impossible to maintain, Maeser urged ward and stake leaders to see the importance of supplementary religious education.

Although some ward and stake leaders remained ambivalent to the program, Maeser’s promotional efforts temporarily succeeded. In December, superintendent Maeser reported that “the circular letter of September 12th has been readily responded to by a great number of local authorities, so that satisfactory arrangements for the development of the important movement of

⁶³ Karl G. Maeser, “Church School Papers.—No. 18,” *Juvenile Instructor*, 15 January 1893, 66.

⁶⁴ Maeser, “Church School Papers No. 23,” 554.

⁶⁵ Maeser to Presidents of Stakes and the Stake Boards of Education, 12 September 1893, CHL.

⁶⁶ Saint George Stake Board of Education Minutes, 4 November 1893, CHL.

Religion Classes are now in progress in many Stakes of Zion.”⁶⁷ While later years would yield higher attendance numbers than 1893, in some ways this year represented the program’s zenith. Although financial troubles continued to threaten the remaining academies after 1893, the local communities and the Church were able to offer greater help than had been available in the immediate aftermath of the Panic, enabling most of the schools to remain in operation.⁶⁸ In the absence of such difficulties, many wards and stakes returned to their former neglect of Religion Classes, and “many of the classes died out after a few spasmodic efforts.”⁶⁹ Another massive closure of academies would not occur again until 1920 and by that time the Religion Class program had largely been supplanted by a newer program for supplementary religious education. In the end, the Panic of 1893 provided the Religion Class program with its one brief moment to shine as the answer to the Church’s educational needs.

The widespread troubles caused by the Panic together with the short-lived successes of the Religion Classes yielded a number of other efforts to expand supplementary religious education within the Church. On three different occasions, Church officials worked to establish religious education programs in connection with the public high schools and universities. Each of these attempts ultimately proved unsuccessful, but they revealed that the future of Mormon education was moving away from private education toward support for public institutions and supplementary religious education.

⁶⁷ Karl G. Maeser, “Church School Papers No. 26,” *Juvenile Instructor*, 15 December 1893, 763.

⁶⁸ Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, 243-45; Woodworth, “Refusing to Die,” 99-106; Salt Lake Stake Board of Education Minutes, 11 March 1899, CHL.

⁶⁹ Salt Lake Stake Board of Education Minutes, 22 December 1896, CHL; Karl G. Maeser, “Church School Papers,” *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 June 1894, 352; Maeser, “Church School Papers—Series II., No. 2,” 695.

Initial Efforts at the High School and College Levels

Beginning in 1890, Mormon leaders created plans for the construction of a university in Salt Lake City that would serve as the Church's flagship school.⁷⁰ It was hoped that the Church University would eliminate the necessity of Mormon youth leaving Utah to attend eastern schools.⁷¹ Church leaders chose James Talmage to serve as the university's first president and principal professor. A product of the Brigham Young Academy in addition to two eastern universities, Talmage offered the new Church University a combination of devout Mormonism and rigorous academic training. With Talmage in place, the Church officially announced plans for the University at the April 1892 General Conference.⁷²

Circumstances at the cross-town University of Utah were not as positive as at the Church University. Following the financial challenges of 1893, the Territorial Legislature appropriated an insufficient amount to the University of Utah. The small appropriation combined with the Church's growing commitment to building its own university spelled the possible dissolution of the University of Utah.⁷³ Early in 1894, University of Utah officials began negotiating for the close of the Church University in exchange for a greater church influence upon the University of Utah.⁷⁴ On January 29, 1894, Wilford Woodruff announced the decision to close the Church

⁷⁰ D. Michael Quinn, "The Brief Career of Young University at Salt Lake City," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Winter 1973): 79-80.

⁷¹ Church School Convention Minutes, 2 June 1891, Church Board of Education Minutes 1879-1970, box 1, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁷² According to Quinn, the Church seemed to possess "more than casual commitment to sustain [the University]." That commitment continued in spite of the fact that the Panic of 1893 necessitated the cancelation of the University's first semester. Quinn, "The Brief Career of Young University," 81-82.

⁷³ Quinn, "The Brief Career of Young University," 83.

⁷⁴ Talmage, Diary, 25 January 1894, box 25, reel 2, Talmage Collection, Special Collections, HBLL. During the Reed Smoot Hearings, Talmage was questioned regarding his connections to the Church and the University of Utah. He responded by stating, "[W]hen I entered the service of the University of Utah, which is the State University, I severed my connection entirely with all church schools and all accessory organizations of the

University and to “give [the Church’s] influence and aid to the State University.”⁷⁵ Thus, Mormon officials encouraged the membership of the Church to “support by their influence and energy the State University,” while the academies were instructed to prepare courses that would “lead to the Freshman Year of the University of Utah.”⁷⁶ Maeser triumphantly wrote that this arrangement would allow Mormon students to “pursue their University course at our home institution, instead of going abroad for that purpose away from our control and influence.”⁷⁷ Pursuant to the promise for increased Church influence at the school, Talmage was named president of the University of Utah in spite of his close connections to Church leadership.⁷⁸ Although Talmage’s tenure as president lasted only three years, it played an important role in the development of a working relationship between the Church and the University of Utah, as well as the other public schools.⁷⁹

Even with an increased Church influence at the school, however, the University could not teach the classes in Mormon theology that had been planned for the Church University. In

kind.” *Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate in the Matter of the Protests Against the Hon. Reed Smoot, a Senator from the State of Utah, to Hold his Seat*, 5 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904): 3:77.

⁷⁵ Talmage, Diary, 29 January 1894, box 25, reel 2, Talmage Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁷⁶ Karl G. Maeser to Wilford Woodruff, 29 December 1894, folder 3, box 20, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Board of Education Board of Examiners Minutes, 7 April 1894, folder 3, box 20, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁷⁷ Maeser to Woodruff, 29 December 1894, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁷⁸ Talmage’s Church service was purposely limited by Mormon officials during his tenure as president of the University of Utah, a restriction that Talmage found to be “positively irksome.” Talmage, Diary, 23 February and 16 March 1894, box 25, reel 2, Talmage Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; Talmage Diary, 12 April 1897, box 25, reel 2, Talmage Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁷⁹ Talmage resigned from the position of president in April 1897, citing a number of reasons for the decision in his journal. He wrote that he found the administrative duties of the office to be onerous and noted that they conflicted with his ability to fulfill his duties as the University’s chair of Geology. Interestingly, Talmage does not list questions about his Mormonism as a reason for his resignation. While this issue was no doubt raised by some, it does not seem to have influenced Talmage’s decision to resign. Talmage Diary, 3 April 1897, box 25, reel 2, Talmage Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

response, Maeser suggested that a program should be established where LDS students at the University of Utah would “receive theological instructions in the L.D.S. College.”⁸⁰ At the time, Church leaders planned for a close relationship between the two schools, but it seems that this relationship was never actually realized, and the Church’s increased influence at the University of Utah was short lived.⁸¹ While Maeser’s suggested program was probably never implemented, its mere suggestion represented a continuing shift in Mormon attitudes toward the public schools and towards American institutions in general. At the same time, Maeser’s idea reinforced the thought that Mormonism would refuse to abandon its commitment to the concept of religious education despite its growing commitment to public schools.

In 1892, the territory’s first public high school opened in Salt Lake City with an enrollment of fifty students.⁸² The school was part of a trend that saw a general growth in the number of high schools throughout the country as education became increasingly focused upon preparing students for university studies.⁸³ While some opposed the institution, seeing it as elitist and an unnecessary luxury during stringent economic times, the Salt Lake High School represented a significant step forward in Utah education and demonstrated the State’s continued shift toward public schools.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ The name of the Salt Lake Stake Academy was changed to LDS College in the early 1890s. The term college, however, was something of a misnomer, signifying the school’s aspirations more than its actual status, though it should be noted that the school did offer a few collegiate courses. The LDS College, was not, as some have supposed, the remains of the Church University. Maeser to Woodruff, 29 December 1894, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸¹ Church Board of Education Minutes, 25 June 1901, folder 6, box 21, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸² Frederick S. Buchanan, *Culture Clash and Accommodation: Public Schooling in Salt Lake City, 1890-1994* (Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates in association with Signature Books, 1996), 44.

⁸³ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 118.

⁸⁴ Buchanan, *Culture Clash and Accommodation*, 47.

Although many Mormons, including several high ranking officials, opposed the school, some saw the school as an opportunity to abandon the increasingly costly academies system. Among the supporters of the High School were Apostle John Henry Smith and George M. Cannon, a member of the state legislature and a nephew of George Q. Cannon.⁸⁵ Cannon in particular saw the possibilities of the high school. In 1899, he encouraged the Church Board of Education to abandon the church school system in favor of religious education classes at church-owned buildings near the public high schools and the University of Utah.⁸⁶ At the time the LDS College in Salt Lake was experiencing severe financial problems “with practically no funds” to support its operation, while the Salt Lake High School enjoyed a new building with “every modern convenience.”⁸⁷ Writing to George Reynolds, Cannon said that he had seriously considered the question of Church schools for some time because of the economic challenges facing the Church. He concluded that, “Under these circumstances it will...be very difficult indeed to obtain from the people the necessary funds with which to procure proper buildings and suitably equip and maintain the same,” a matter which he considered to be “of the gravest importance to all who have children to educate in this Stake.”⁸⁸

Cannon suggested that rather than trying to duplicate the work being done by the University of Utah and the Salt Lake High School, the LDS College should become a purely theological institution, supplementing the work done by the public schools. Under such a plan,

⁸⁵ Buchanan, *Culture Clash and Accommodation*, 44-47.

⁸⁶ George M. Cannon to George Reynolds, 18 March 1899, folder 3, box 21, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Lynn M. Hilton, *The History of LDS Business College and Its Parent Institutions, 1886-1993* (Salt Lake City: LDS Business College, 1995), 48; Willard Done to Church Board of Education, 31 March 1899, folder 11, box 18, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸⁷ George M. Cannon to George Reynolds, 18 March 1899, folder 3, box 21, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Salt Lake Stake Board of Education Minutes, 11 March 1899, CHL; Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 13 March 1899, CHL (hereinafter cited as JH).

⁸⁸ George M. Cannon to George Reynolds, 18 March 1899, Special Collections, HBLL.

Cannon argued, “hundreds of students,” rather than the relatively few who could afford tuition, “would receive theological training...and be benefitted as the Church schools are designed to benefit those who attend.” Under Cannon’s plan, Mormon students could take theological classes during free periods of their day, while at the same time attending the public institutions. Cannon argued that this plan would provide “the greatest good to the greatest number with the least burden upon the people” while helping to heal rifts with the non-Mormon community.⁸⁹

On the same day that Cannon’s letter was dated, Joshua H. Paul, who would become principal of the LDS College only three months later, wrote an article in the *Deseret News* that proposed essentially the same idea as had been set forth by Cannon. Paul suggested that “the College should take up quarters near to the new University site, and should so arrange its courses of study that students of the University could pursue a course of study in theology, in addition to the course they are pursuing in the University.” Paul’s principal reason for this suggestion was his belief that “the burden of supporting a dual system is probably greater than this community can bear” because of the depressed economic conditions.⁹⁰ In later years this notion of a double taxation of the Saints for education would become a powerful argument in favor of closing the Church schools.⁹¹

The plan suggested by Cannon enraged LDS College principal, Willard Done, who saw the proposal as an attack upon the integrity of his school.⁹² Done was critical of Cannon’s plan in a number of ways. First, he argued that the purpose of Church education was to integrate

⁸⁹ George M. Cannon to George Reynolds, 18 March 1899, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁹⁰ J. H. Paul, “Shall It Still Be Maintained?,” JH, 18 March 1899, CHL.

⁹¹ Esplin, “Education in Transition,” 150; Church Board of Education Minutes, 26 June 1914, folder 6, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁹² Done’s letter to the Church Board of Education never mentions J. H. Paul’s letter to the *Deseret News*, though it can be inferred that he was denouncing Paul’s suggestions along with Cannon’s.

Mormon theology into all of the academic subjects rather than to teach it separately. In Done's opinion, the Cannon plan ignored this important aspect of Mormon education, and instead of integrating the secular and religious subjects, it kept them at odds with each other. Second, he suggested that the students at the University and at the High School were "not very strongly inclined toward such a work as Brother Cannon outlines; and even if they were, it is very doubtful that any number of them would have time to devote to it." He argued that without the incentive of academic credit, most students would be unwilling to take courses in religion. Third, Done questioned the implications of an "attempt to introduce theological teaching, even indirectly, into the work of University and High School students," suggesting that such an effort would cause opponents of the Church "to raise the old hue and cry of church influence in civil schools." Finally, he argued that Cannon's plan, far from alleviating the financial woes of the Church, would incur a considerable expense.⁹³

Willard Done's arguments doubtless influenced at least some of the members of the Church Board of Education and were part of the reason that the plan was ultimately rejected. Although Done's first objection would certainly have convinced some members of the Board, like Anthon H. Lund, it was his other three objections that likely killed Cannon's plan.⁹⁴ First, for the members of the Church Board of Education, the idea that a majority of Mormon students might go without religious education was unacceptable. Though later years would see dramatic increases in Latter-day Saint attendance at public institutions, at this time Mormon leaders were unwilling to force public education upon the Saints. Second, although Cannon had suggested

⁹³ Done to Church Board of Education, 31 March 1899, Special Collections, HBL.

⁹⁴ In voicing his approval for the efforts to save the Latter-day Saints College, Lund stated, "In mediavel [sic] times...religion was taught in the schools to the exclusion of almost everything else, and progress was thus hampered. Now the other extreme was resorted to—the exclusion of religion from the schools. Both were mistaken policies. Those trained in the Church schools, where there is a mingling of religious and secular teachings, were best qualified for the various duties of life." JH, 13 March 1899, CHL.

that this was a way for the Church to eliminate non-Mormon concerns about Church involvement in politics, he was probably overly optimistic in this assessment. Cannon's feelings seem particularly optimistic given the Church's recent efforts to have his uncle George Q. Cannon elected to the Senate, which according to John Henry Smith caused "grave questions" to arise over the Church's political efforts.⁹⁵ At that time the establishment of theological classes in connection with the public schools was simply not worth the political problems that it would have caused the Church. Finally, Done's argument that Cannon's plan would prove to be too expensive would doubtless have found attentive ears in a period when the Church was trying to cut costs wherever possible.⁹⁶

In September 1899, the Church Board of Education formed a committee to investigate Cannon's plan.⁹⁷ Three months later, the committee reported that it had "strong doubts as to the feasibility of such an enterprise." The committee argued that Cannon's plan would cause the Church educational programs to be subordinate to the public institutions and would "be antagonized as an attempt to evade the law." The committee further doubted that University of Utah officials would support any efforts to encourage students to attend theology classes at a theological college. Although the committee conceded that Cannon's plan "might perhaps be successfully established at some future time" when the conditions facing the Church were

⁹⁵ Lund, Diary, 30 March 1899, in *Danish Apostle*, 51-52; Bitton, *George Q. Cannon*, 428; Rudger Clawson Diary, 10 March 1899, in Rudger Clawson, *A Ministry of Meetings: The Apostolic Diaries of Rudger Clawson*, ed. Stan Larson (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1993), 31.

⁹⁶ Bitton, *George Q. Cannon*, 420; JH, 17 March 1899, CHL.

⁹⁷ Church Board of Education Minutes, 11 September 1899, box 1, Church Board of Education Minutes 1879-1970, Special Collections, HBLL.

different, ultimately the idea was rejected because, in the minds of the committee, there continued to be a strong anti-Mormon sentiment at the end of the nineteenth-century.⁹⁸

The committee's findings, combined with the strong commitment by Church officials to save the Latter-day Saints' College, killed the proposal presented by George M. Cannon and Joshua H. Paul. Within fifteen years a similar plan proposed by University of Utah professor Joseph F. Merrill would become the template for Mormonism's twentieth-century educational policy. In the interim, however, Church leaders continued to extend the reach of supplementary religious education by expanding of the Religion Class program.

Beginning in 1897, the Religion Class program had experienced "a fresh start," spurred on by greater organizational development and a variety of efforts to publicize the program.⁹⁹ The organizational developments included the formation of a general presidency to oversee the classes and implementation of a systematized program of study.¹⁰⁰ During the last three years of the nineteenth century, Karl G. Maeser and L. John Nuttall traveled throughout the Mormon Corridor encouraging stake presidents and bishops to organize Religion Classes.¹⁰¹ Their efforts paid dividends and by 1900 thirty-one of the forty-two organized stakes had established Religion Classes, serving 19,701 students.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Church Board of Education Minutes, 1 December 1899, box 1, Church Board of Education Minutes 1879-1970, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁹⁹ Karl G. Maeser to Wilford Woodruff, 10 February 1897, in Church Board of Education Minutes, 10 February 1897, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL.

¹⁰⁰ Anthon H. Lund, Karl G. Maeser, and Rudger Clawson were appointed to act as the presidency of the Religion Class Program in January 1900. Maeser to Woodruff, 10 February 1897, in Church Board of Education Minutes, 10 February 1897, BL; General Board of Religion Class Minutes, 19 January 1900, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL.

¹⁰¹ Lund, Discourse, 6 April 1916, 10; L. John Nuttall Diary, 5, 12, 14 August 1899; Special Collections, HBLL; Charles Coleman, et al., "History of Granite Seminary," CHL; Karl G. Maeser, "Church School Department," *Juvenile Instructor*, 15 February 1901, 117-18.

¹⁰² Church Board of Education Minutes, 31 August 1900, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL.

As a part of the effort to expand the Religion Class program, Anthon H. Lund met with two professors from the University of Utah, Richard R. Lyman and Joseph F. Merrill, to discuss “the possibility of getting a Bible Class or a Mutual Class started in the University” for Mormon students. Lyman responded that he believed the University’s President, Joseph Kingsbury, “would be quite willing to give his consent.” Available documents suggest that the idea for this class had either originated with, or was heartily endorsed by, a group of Latter-day Saint students at the University. Hence, to avoid suspicion of Church interference, Religion Class officials decided that the initiative would be best received if it came “first from the Students themselves.”¹⁰³

Eight days following the meeting with Lund, Lyman reported to the Religion Class Board that “Kingsbury feared that it would raise a storm against the University if we were to occupy a room in the building for Bible Class purposes.”¹⁰⁴ According to Lyman, although Kingsbury “favored such meetings, if they can be held outside the University,” he could not support any proposition that allowed University classrooms to be used for a Mormon Bible class with sectarian instruction.¹⁰⁵ Church leaders decided that rather than push the issue, they would “urge all University students to attend Sunday Schools.”¹⁰⁶

Each of these efforts to extend the Mormon program of supplementary religious education revealed that the Church’s principal concerns at the end of the 1890s centered on the growing number of students in state universities and public schools. Ultimately none of these

¹⁰³ The minutes for the meeting read that “it was deemed expedient to have the students make their application to the President of the University for the use of a room for the purpose of such an organization during the coming week, and find what can be done and the name it shall take.” Lund Diary, 10 September 1901, *Danish Apostle*, 143; General Board of Religion Class Minutes, 10 September 1901, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL.

¹⁰⁴ Lund, Diary, 18 September 1901, *Danish Apostle*, 144.

¹⁰⁵ General Board of Religion Class Minutes, 18 September 1901, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL.

¹⁰⁶ Lund, Diary, 18 September 1901, *Danish Apostle*, 144.

efforts to create religious education programs at the high school and the University proved to be successful because of concerns that they would be viewed as Mormon efforts to introduce religion into the public schools. Such concerns grew out of the prevalent suspicions of many non-Mormons that Mormon leadership was covertly disregarding its agreements to suspend the practice of plural marriage and to avoid interfering in political affairs.¹⁰⁷ Although such accusations by non-Mormons were often exaggerated, they were also based in at least some truth as Mormon leaders found it difficult to immediately change principles and practices which were “firmly engrained in the Mormon community.”¹⁰⁸

Questions concerning the legal status of the Church’s religious education programs continued to surface throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. As the Church Board of Education had originally worried, the Religion Class program did indeed raise “a hue and cry” over the teaching of religion in the public schools. While this does not seem to have been an issue during the 1890s, it became a matter of sharp criticism during the first several years of the new century.

Church and State Controversy

One of the fundamental premises for the Religion Class program was that the schools would be “under the direction of those of our faith and no influence contrary to our faith will be felt.”¹⁰⁹ As the majority population in Utah, Mormons made up the vast majority of the State’s teaching force. Taking advantage of this majority, Mormon leaders encouraged local wards and stakes to petition school officials for permission to rent the public school buildings for Religion

¹⁰⁷ “That Lyman Harangue,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 15 August 1899; “The Church and Polygamy,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 13 September 1899; “President Snow’s Card,” *Salt Lake Herald*, 9 January 1900; Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 7-15.

¹⁰⁸ Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 377; Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 11.

¹⁰⁹ Maeser, “Church School Papers—No.16,” 607.

Class purposes. This practice was not without precedent among either Mormons or Protestants.¹¹⁰ Indeed, a number of states, including Utah, “permitted schoolhouses to be used for a variety of purposes which [were] of educational and moral benefit to the community,” including a number of activities which would not have been legal for a school district to perform.¹¹¹ Mormon leaders felt that the use of the public school buildings would alleviate “the inconvenience and discomforts that are felt in the meeting houses, which are difficult to warm and more imperfectly heated” thus saving the local wards and stakes money. Mormon leaders did suggest, however, that in areas populated by large numbers of non-Mormon residents, Bishops ought to use caution so as to avoid any “unnecessary contention” in the matter.¹¹²

In addition to the use of public school buildings, local Religion Class leaders were encouraged to call faithful Latter-day Saint school teachers to teach the Religion Classes. Indeed, Joseph W. McMurrin argued that Mormon teachers should “be pressed into service,” to “instruct the children in the principles of the Gospel after school is dismissed, and before the children leave the schoolroom.”¹¹³ Church felt that the use of such teachers was necessary because trained teachers were “familiar with the best methods and training,” and because “their qualifications naturally fit them best to conduct the work in the wards where they may be engaged in the public school service.” Mormon officials claimed that calling Latter-day Saint

¹¹⁰ Primary Meeting Minutes, 30 July 1904, Wasatch Stake Melchizedek Priesthood Quorum and Auxiliary Organization Minutes 1903-1908, CHL.

¹¹¹ Utah’s constitution permitted school buildings to be “used for any purpose which will not interfere with the seating or other furniture or property” provided an appropriate rent was paid for the use of the building. Hence, in the eyes of Mormon leaders, the Church had “a perfect right to ask for the use of these buildings...for the purpose of religious instruction.” Daniel R. Hodgdon, “School Property,” *Review of Educational Research* 3, no. 5 (December 1933): 413; Revised Statutes, Sec. 1822, quoted in “Laws and Religion Classes,” JH, 19 October 1904, CHL; Joseph W. McMurrin, Discourse, 6 April 1902, *Conference Report* (April 1902): 57.

¹¹² General Superintendency of Religion Classes to Stake Superintendents of Religion Classes, 6 September 1901, folder 2, box 1, Church Educational System Circular Letters 1889-1973, CHL.

¹¹³ McMurrin, Discourse, 6 April 1902, 57.

teachers into the Religion Class program would also benefit the public schools because they would be “better public school teachers if their faith and their inspiration are strengthened by their activities in religion class work.”¹¹⁴

Some Church leaders failed to see eye-to-eye with the non-Mormons who complained that the Religion Classes were encroaching upon the state’s schools. Although Church leaders insisted that they had no intention to “interfere with the state schools,” and that they would “be perfectly willing for the Catholics, Presbyterians, or any other religious denomination to instruct their children in their religion should they desire to do so,” such assurances did little to assuage the concerns of the state’s non-Mormon population that the Church was trying to Mormonize the public schools.¹¹⁵

While non-Mormons agreed that the law technically permitted Mormons to rent schoolhouses for Religion Class purposes, they argued that the law was unconstitutional. The *Salt Lake Tribune* called the law an “obnoxious intrusion of the church into the domain of the State,” and argued that it had been “enacted by church influence for its own advantage in using the public property for its sectarian purposes.” Non-Mormons accordingly argued that the practice of holding Religion Classes in public school buildings was unconstitutional and should be discontinued.¹¹⁶

The dispute over holding Religion Classes in the schoolhouses boiled over in Richfield, Utah, in January 1900.¹¹⁷ Non-Mormon residents signed a petition protesting the local school

¹¹⁴ General Superintendency of Religion Classes to Stake Superintendents of Religion Classes, 6 September 1901, CHL.

¹¹⁵ Anthon H. Lund, Discourse, 6 October 1902, *Conference Report* (October 1902): 79; McMurrin, Discourse, 6 April 1902, 57.

¹¹⁶ “Church Use of Schoolhouses,” JH, 20 October 1904, CHL; Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 149.

¹¹⁷ “Religion Classes,” JH, 10 January 1900, CHL.

board's decision to allow the Religion Class to be held in its building. Claiming that the class had been organized by the school trustees and teachers, opponents vowed to take "more vigorous measures," promising even to test the classes in the courts, if their petitions were ignored.¹¹⁸ The Church responded that the class did not constitute the teaching of religion in the public schools, but that if a court deemed the action illegal, "the ward ecclesiastical authorities who inaugurated it...will willingly discontinue the same."¹¹⁹ The trustees of the Richfield school agreed to hear the complaints of the petitioners, but requested that they "offer proof that the trustees are responsible for the introduction of the class."¹²⁰ According to one report of the meeting, only two people who had signed the petition attended the meeting and they "expressed themselves as having been deceived and were now opposed to the petition." Others who signed the petition claimed that they chose not to attend the meeting because they "could see no good in discussing the matter." The meeting resulted in a unanimous resolution that censured the petitioners and declared that their assertions were "unwarranted and false." Those in attendance conceded that if Religion Classes were deemed to violate the law, they would accept the decision; however, if the classes were found to be legal, "the sentiment of the majority should prevail."¹²¹

Although Religion Classes continued to operate within the Richfield school building, church-and-state concerns over the classes continued. Even high-ranking Church officials began question the value of holding Religion Classes in the school buildings. In 1904, B. H. Roberts wrote to the First Presidency about his concerns regarding a "rising tide of public feeling among the Gentile citizens regarding the use of the public school property." He expressed his fear that

¹¹⁸ "Religion in Public Schools," *Salt Lake Herald*, 7 January 1900; "Religion Classes," JH, 10 January 1900, CHL.

¹¹⁹ "Religion Classes," JH, 10 January 1900, CHL.

¹²⁰ "Trustees Will Hear Complaints Against Religion Classes," *Salt Lake Herald*, 23 January 1900.

¹²¹ "Richfield," *Deseret News*, 27 January 1900.

the Religion Classes were “needlessly irritating people not of our faith by the use of school buildings for imparting religious instruction” and encouraged fellow church leaders to reconsider the use of the buildings. During the discussion that followed, Church leaders discovered that Roberts’ opinion reflected “the sentiments of most of the brethren.”¹²²

These sentiments reflected the growing political problems that faced the Church as a result of the election of Mormon Apostle Reed Smoot to the United States Senate. Following Smoot’s election, the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections held a lengthy trial to determine whether a Mormon Apostle could be seated in the United States Senate. Although the stated purpose of the trial was to determine Smoot’s eligibility for the office, the trial became turned into an unofficial referendum upon the doctrines and practices of Mormonism.¹²³ With the Church on trial before the American people, Mormon leaders had made a concerted effort to prove that they complied with the laws and regulations of the United States. In response to the hearings, Church president Joseph F. Smith issued a “Second Manifesto” at the April 1904 General Conference to put an end to additional plural marriages. The manifesto declared that any Church member who agreed to “solemnize or enter into any such marriage will be deemed in transgression against the Church, and will be liable to be dealt with, according to the rules and regulations thereof, and excommunicated therefrom.”¹²⁴ For many, however, this statement came too late and did little to allay their concerns about the continued practice of polygamy.¹²⁵

¹²² JH, 1 December 1904, LDS Church Archives.

¹²³ For information on the Smoot hearings, see Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity*; Harvard S. Heath, “The Reed Smoot Hearings: A Quest for Legitimacy,” *Journal of Mormon History* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 1-80; Michael H. Paulos, *The Mormon Church on Trial: Transcripts of the Reed Smoot Hearings* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008), vii-xxxiii.

¹²⁴ Joseph F. Smith, Official Statement, *Conference Report* (April 1904): 75.

¹²⁵ Heath, “The Reed Smoot Hearings,” 34.

Hence, in spite of the Second Manifesto, the detailed investigation of Mormonism by the Senate continued until 1907, when Smoot was finally seated.

The Smoot hearings probed nearly every corner of Mormon thought and practice, including the usage of public school buildings and teachers for Religion Classes and the program's curriculum.¹²⁶ The committee questioned a variety of Utahns regarding the status of the classes and the nature of its relationship to the public schools. When Smoot was questioned about the program, he tried to deflect any responsibility for them by responding that he was "not interested in them at all."¹²⁷ Further, he criticized the decision to hold classes in the public school buildings, claiming that he had "always thought it would be best" to remove the Religion Classes from the school buildings, regardless of "whether it was after the close of the day's exercises or not."¹²⁸ Much of the committee's concern about the classes seemed to revolve around a fear that the Religion Class curriculum encouraged a continued devotion to polygamy. They noted that the curriculum included plans for children to be taught about the lives of a number of contemporary Church leaders who practiced polygamy, some of whom even participated in and advocated the practice after 1890.¹²⁹ Although Smoot denied that these biographical sketches would "speak of them as polygamists" or teach the principle of polygamy

¹²⁶ *Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections*, 1:1005; 2:105-38, 366-74; 3:77-78, 201-203.

¹²⁷ *Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections*, 3:201.

¹²⁸ *Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections*, 3:201, 203.

¹²⁹ The list of leaders to be studied included Joseph M. Tanner, Mathias Cowley, Mariner W. Merrill, John W. Taylor, and George Teasdale. Each of these leaders had either participated in or encouraged the continued practice of plural marriage up to the time of the Smoot hearings. *Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections*, 3:263; Annie Clark Tanner, *A Mormon Mother: An Autobiography of Annie Clark Tanner* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991), 223, 267-68.

to Religion Class students, the Senate committee nevertheless feared that such lessons would strengthen the Latter-day Saint commitment to the practice.¹³⁰

A. C. Nelson, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, was among those questioned by the Senate regarding Religion Classes. Nelson's interview revealed that the Religion Class usage of public school buildings was pervasive throughout Utah and that the classes were often taught by "the regularly employed teacher of the school."¹³¹ Although a Mormon himself, Nelson reported that this condition was problematic because it could "be expected that a large percentage of the children will look upon all of their class exercises as the school work of the day," including Religion Classes. Accordingly, Nelson deemed the practice to be a "violation of the spirit of the constitution and the statutes of the State of Utah."¹³² Shortly following Nelson's appearance before the Senate committee, Utah's Attorney General declared that the use of public school buildings for religious instruction was a violation of the Utah State Constitution and had to be discontinued.¹³³

Determined to follow government regulations, the First Presidency advised ward and stake leaders to remove Religion Classes "from the public school buildings, wherever they are being used by them, and hold such classes in other places that may be available." Although the First Presidency maintained that the church had not violated the separation of church and state, they stated a desire "to be in harmony with the statutes of our state and nation" and to avoid offending other citizens.¹³⁴ These measures largely served to quiet non-Mormon complaints

¹³⁰ *Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections*, 3:263.

¹³¹ *Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections*, 2:369-70, 372.

¹³² *Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections*, 2:369-70, 373.

¹³³ Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:101.

¹³⁴ First Presidency Circular, February 1905, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:101-02.

about the Religion Class program. While some wards continued to hold Religion Classes in the public school buildings contrary to Church policy, these violations were largely overlooked and were never prosecuted.¹³⁵

Organizational Overlap and Internal Controversy

With the Religion Class program's church and state issues apparently corrected, the Church began making efforts to correct the program's continued problems of organizational overlap. Although the church and state issues with the program had taken center stage during the first five years of the twentieth century, Religion Classes continued to have disputes with the other Church auxiliaries. Some wards claimed that the classes were "injuring the other organizations."¹³⁶ Some referred to Religion Classes as "the fifth wheel," an unnecessary organization that hindered rather than helped the auxiliary structure of the Church.¹³⁷ Religion Class advocates responded that the program was actually "the most important organization in the Church." It was clear, however, that many continued to question how essential the classes were to the Church.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Despite the 1905 First Presidency directive, some local and general Mormon officials remained convinced that Religion Classes should be held within the local schoolhouses. In 1912, Adolf Merz, president of the North Sanpete Stake, reported that "the best reports of [Religion Class] attendance were from the Wards in which the schoolhouses are used for holding the classes. Two years later, Carl R. Marcusen, superintendent of the Carbon County schools, complained to Church and state officials that "in a number of School Districts of Carbon County religion classes are being held in the school houses and that often the teacher of the District School is the teacher of the religion classes." Further, throughout the 1920s, members of the Church Board of Education often questioned whether it would be advisable to seek permission to hold the classes within public school buildings. General Board of Religion Class Minutes, 6 November 1912, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL; Carl R. Marcusen to School Boards of Carbon County, 21 January 1914, in General Board of Religion Class Minutes, 3 June 1914, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 3 January 1923, folder 4, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Commission of Education Minutes, 17 May 1922, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers; BL; Esplin, "Education in Transition," 143.

¹³⁶ "Religion Class Department," *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 January 1903, 26; "Religion Class Department," *Juvenile Instructor*, 15 February 1903, 116.

¹³⁷ "Religion Class Department," *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 January 1907, 13-14.

¹³⁸ "Religion Class Department," (1 January 1907): 14.

The program's inter-organizational conflicts were most acute with the Primary association, which also charged to provide elementary aged youth with religious instruction. Although the two organizations held their weekly meetings on different days of the week, conflict instantly developed as "the same children were recruited by both groups."¹³⁹ Primary and Religion Class leaders found it difficult for the two programs to coexist.

The minutes of a 1901 meeting of the General Board of the Primary Association reveal the sense of antipathy that had developed between the two programs:

In answer to a question in regard to adjourning Primary meetings and let[ting] the children go to the Religion Class in the Winter, President [Louie B.] Felt [General President of the Primary Association] stated that it would not do to lose the children in our Primary meetings.... A sister from Juab Stake reported that Religion Classes were for the purpose of getting the children who did not attend the Primary and through their influence attendance in Primary was increased. Sister Rogers corrected those remarks, but thought they should not conflict with Primary. Sister Clayton stated the original purpose for organizing the Religion Class was to gather boys and girls between the ages of twelve and fourteen who would not attend Primary.¹⁴⁰

While some of the Primary leaders apparently disagreed that the two organizations were intended to train children within the same age groups, the similar purposes of the two programs seem to have been at the center of the difficulties between the two organizations. By teaching the same age group as the Primary, the Religion Classes not only infringed upon the Primary's pool of children, but also infringed upon its pool of potential teachers. In some stakes, this problem escalated as members were asked to split their time between the two programs. Ultimately Primary officials complained to the First Presidency about the diminished number of effective

¹³⁹ Harward, "A History of the Growth and Development of the Primary Association," 131; Berrett and Hirschi, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education*, 22.

¹⁴⁰ Stake Officers and General Board Minutes of the Primary Association, 6 April 1901, as quoted in Harward, "A History of the Growth and Development of the Primary Association," 131.

Primary teachers only to have George Q. Cannon respond by reaffirming the importance of Religion Classes.¹⁴¹

Heightening the contention between the two programs was the fact that while the Primary was led and staffed principally by women, the Religion Class program was a male-dominated organization.¹⁴² Since both programs were concerned with the teaching of Mormon youth, this rivalry came down to a question of which gender was best suited to the training of children. While most Mormon leaders agreed that elementary-aged children should be “taught, as a general rule, by lady teachers,” they were likewise clear that when it came to the leadership of the Religion Classes, stake presidents should “appoint MEN only.”¹⁴³ While women generally taught the Religion Classes, the organizational leadership was entirely male.¹⁴⁴ Hence the inter-organizational conflicts that defined the rocky relationship between the Religion Classes and the Primary were also complicated by turn-of-the-century Mormonism’s constructs of gender roles and identity.

To solve these issues of organizational overlap, the First Presidency initiated efforts to correlate the various efforts of the auxiliary programs of the Church and bring them into line with the priesthood quorums.¹⁴⁵ In 1906, a committee was organized with representatives from

¹⁴¹ Harward, “A History of the Growth and Development of the Primary Association,” 132.

¹⁴² While the Religion Class leadership was entirely male, many of the teachers within the organization were female.

¹⁴³ Church Board of Education Minutes, 2 June 1890, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL; Edwin S. Sheets to John F. Tolton & Counsellors, 3 September 1914, folder 11, John F. Tolton Correspondence 1907-1917, CHL.

¹⁴⁴ Religion Class Minutes, 8 November 1904 and 26 October 1905, Wasatch Stake Melchizedek Priesthood Quorum and Auxiliary Organization Minutes, 1903-1908, CHL; Boise Stake Religion Class Minutes, 26 September 1919, Boise Stake Minutes 1919-1921, CHL; Logan Third Ward Religion Class Minutes, 29 September 1915, Logan Third Ward Religion Class Minutes, 1915-1916, CHL.

¹⁴⁵ Dale C. Mouritsen, “Efforts to Correlate Mormon Church Agencies in the Twentieth Century: A Review,” CHL.

the Young Men's and Young Women's Mutual Improvement Associations, the Primary, the Religion Classes, and the Sunday Schools to investigate "the need of correlation and adjustment of the work pertaining to the several auxiliary organizations of the Church." Church leaders ultimately hoped to lessen the work being done by the auxiliaries so that it could be "done by the regular quorums of the Priesthood."¹⁴⁶ In the meantime, they hoped to settle the controversies between the auxiliary programs through an equitable division of responsibilities among the various programs. In an era characterized by anti-trust legislation, Mormonism's correlation efforts reflected tendencies toward both trust building and trust breaking.

In 1906, a committee consisting of leaders from each of the youth-focused auxiliaries was established to look into Mormonism's organizational overlap and initiate efforts toward the correlation of these programs. In July 1907, the committee submitted a report to the First Presidency detailing suggested changes. The committee proposed that the Church combine the Religion Classes and the Primary "into one organization whose field shall be the teaching of manners, morals, and religion." The committee advised that the resulting program be governed by a general board "comprising both women and men," perhaps implying that those on the committee was aware of the role that gendered conflicts played in the Primary and Religion Class conflicts.¹⁴⁷

The main thrust of the committee's recommendations moved towards the consolidation of the various auxiliaries and the elimination of unnecessary duplication. One important suggestion was that the Church should acknowledge the home as the institution which was "most

¹⁴⁶ Joseph F. Smith, Discourse, 6 April 1906, *Conference Report* (April 1906): 3; J. Golden Kimball, Discourse, 6 April 1906, *Conference Report* (April 1906): 19.

¹⁴⁷ James E. Talmage and Mae T. Nystrom to First Presidency, 29 June 1907, folder 21, box 9, Scott G. Kenney Collection, Special Collections, HBL.

valuable for the instruction of the youth in religion, morals, polite deportment, and patriotism.”¹⁴⁸ This suggestion was in response to the criticisms of some parents and leaders that the numerous auxiliaries had made it difficult for parents to participate in the religious instruction of their children.¹⁴⁹ On the basis of such recommendations, the Church formally adopted the family home evening program in 1915.¹⁵⁰ Bishops and stake presidents were asked to earmark “at least one evening each month” where parents could “gather their boys and girls about them in the home and teach them the word of the Lord.”¹⁵¹ The idea that the family ought to be the center of teaching in the Church shaped Mormon organizational and educational policy throughout the remainder of the twentieth century.¹⁵² Indeed, this premise would have a dramatic effect upon the future of Mormon supplementary religious education, leading to both the adoption of the seminary program in 1912 and the dissolution of the Religion Class program in 1929.

By 1910, in spite of its problems, supplementary religious education had become a staple within the Mormon educational program. The increased availability of public schools, together with the difficult financial circumstances that had plagued the Church and its membership for nearly three decades, ensured a continued place for supplementary religious education programs within the Church’s organizational structure.

¹⁴⁸ Talmage and Nystrom to First Presidency, 29 June 1907, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁴⁹ Frank Y. Taylor, Discourse, 5 April 1913, *Conference Report* (April 1913): 50.

¹⁵⁰ The family home evening program had originally been organized by the Granite Stake in 1909. Joseph F. Smith, “Sermon on Home Government,” *Home Evening: With Suggested Exercises and Explanations Also a Sermon on Family Government by President Joseph F. Smith and a Special Message from the First Presidency of the Church and the Presidency of Granite Stake* (Salt Lake City: Granite Stake of Zion, 1927), 43.

¹⁵¹ First Presidency to Dear Brethren and Sisters, 27 April 1915, in *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4: 338.

¹⁵² Mouritsen, “Efforts to Correlate Mormon Church Agencies,” CHL.

The Church's experimentation with supplementary religious education between 1890 and 1910 reveals a turn-of-the-century Mormonism that was traditional as well as innovative, stationary as well as dynamic. While the central purpose of these programs continued to be the Mormonization of Latter-day Saint youth, such programs likewise ensured the Americanization of those same youth by validating the acceptability of the American public schools and universities. By 1905 Mormon leaders were beginning to reconcile themselves to the idea that adherence to the laws governing the separation of church-and-state was a part of the non-negotiable price of Americanization.¹⁵³ By experimenting with supplementary religious education programs, Mormon leaders openly acknowledged that one could be both a Mormon and an assimilated American.

As a part of this assimilative process, Mormon concerns and practices started to become increasingly similar to the concerns and practices that shaped America as a whole. By 1910, Mormonism was steadily moving away from the exceptionalism that had defined it during the nineteenth century. The concerns that dominated Mormon education followed this same trend. Whereas in 1890 Mormon leaders were primarily concerned about the Protestantization of Mormon youth in the public schools, by 1910, their apprehensions were firmly centered upon the wider concerns of modernism and secularization.

¹⁵³ This is not to suggest that Mormonism maintained complete political neutrality from 1905 forward. Indeed, at certain periods throughout the twentieth-century the Church maintained a heavy influence within Utah politics. On the whole, however, Mormonism's political activities were highly limited when compared with the Church's role in governing the Great Basin Kingdom during the nineteenth-century.

CHAPTER 4

A PERIOD OF REGULATION AND SYSTEMATIZATION: MORMON SUPPLEMENTARY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 1910-1919

By the time the Church's first seminary was established at Granite High School in 1912, Mormonism had already had two decades of experience with supplementary religious education. That program's success, however, had been marginal at best. The only real successes in supplementary religious education had come through the vacillating Religion Class program, which was primarily directed towards elementary-age children.¹ Even the successes of the Religion Classes were debatable, as the program's leaders often struggled to convince local leaders and the other auxiliaries of the program's legitimate value to individual wards and stakes. Additionally, Religion Classes had come into frequent conflict with the American conception of the separation of church and state. Beyond the structural issues of the Religion Class program, all of the Church's efforts to expand religious education to the secondary and university levels had been ineffective. Further, the majority of Mormonism's leadership continued to prefer the Church's private academies to the public schools. Hence, although the Religion Classes seemed to be secure within the Church's auxiliary structure, at the beginning of the 1910s, there did not seem to be many prospects for the future growth of Mormon supplementary religious education.

Nevertheless, a number of factors ensured that supplementary religious education would remain a topic of conversation within Mormonism. The growing number of

¹ The term Religion Class is capitalized throughout this chapter to distinguish the program from other classes, such as classes in the BYU Religion department, which have likewise been called religion classes, but which had no relationship to the Religion Class program.

Latter-day Saint students in the public school systems combined with the litany of social and religious problems of the Progressive Era reminded Mormon leaders of the continued need for supplementary religious education. The answer to such problems came in October 1911 when Joseph F. Merrill, a University of Utah professor, presented an idea for a theological seminary at the Granite High School during meeting of the Granite stake presidency. From October 1911 to early 1919, Merrill's idea grew from a theoretical idea into a program composed of fifteen seminaries at the high school level that was poised to alter the very foundations of Mormon education. In this process, the seminary proved itself to be eminently more viable than its close cousin, the Religion Class program. While the Religion Classes had experienced numerous problems both within and without the Church, the seminary found a ready cadre of supporters in both the Church and the State, and thus cemented its place within Mormonism's educational program in less than a decade.

Historiography of the Seminary Program

Unlike the story of the Religion Classes, which has remained largely ignored within the pages of Mormon history, the founding story of the seminary has been written numerous times. The first real attempt to write the history of the seminary program was undertaken by a group of Granite Seminary students in 1930.² Although this history was a largely non-interpretive account of the Granite Seminary, omitting recognition of other seminaries and the larger Church program, it remains an important source of information on the early seminary program.

Eight years after the "History of the Granite Seminary" was written, Joseph F. Merrill, wrote an article about founding of the first seminary for the Church's chief magazine, *The Improvement Era*. Merrill's article placed the establishment of the Granite Seminary within the

² Charles Coleman, et al., "History of Granite Seminary," LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereinafter cited as CHL).

context of the wider seminary movement, suggesting that the Granite Seminary had always been considered to be the beginning of a larger system of seminaries.³ Merrill's article is written with a personal tone that emphasizes his own involvement in the idea and his conclusion that the program had been divinely inspired. Because Merrill wrote the article from the perspective of twenty-five years of successful seminary operation, however, at times it is difficult to discern what Merrill's thoughts about the future of the program had been when he originally it in 1912. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that Merrill had purposefully set out to revolutionize Church education when he founded the Granite seminary. Merrill's article, however, remains the most intimate account of the founding of the seminary program.

Corresponding with Merrill's account of the administrative beginnings of the seminary, Thomas J. Yates wrote a short autobiographical account of his experience as the seminary's first teacher. Yates describes his efforts to develop the curriculum for the first seminary and the program's first year of operation, including a listing of 46 of the original 70 students.⁴ He discusses the general attitude of optimism concerning the seminary program, suggesting that those who initiated the program "could see wonderful possibilities" for it, not least of which was "a complete change in the Church School Education System."⁵ Such statements correlate with other statements made by Merrill and the Church Board of Education; however, the ascendancy of the seminary program

³ Joseph F. Merrill, "A New Institution in Religious Education," *Improvement Era*, January 1938, 12, 55-56.

⁴ Thomas J. Yates, "Autobiography and Biography of Thomas Jarvis Yates," 79-81, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereinafter cited as Special Collections, HBLL).

⁵ Yates, "Autobiography and Biography," 79, Special Collections, HBLL.

between 1912 and the 1950s when Yates wrote his autobiography probably helped to shape Yates' recollection of such optimism.

Formal studies of the seminary program since Merrill's 1938 article have not yielded yielded much additional information concerning the program's founding. Theodore Tuttle's Tuttle's 1949 thesis and Leon Hartshorn's 1965 dissertation summarized the founding of the the seminary, but their works were generally interpretations of Mormonism's educational practices from 1940 to 1960 rather than detailed examinations of the origins of the seminary program.⁶ Tuttle's thesis, however, does include some valuable information gleaned from a personal interview with Merrill in 1948.

In 1968, Ward Magleby, a Church Educational System employee, wrote a short article detailing the founding of the Granite Seminary, which was essentially a recapitulation of the 1930 history of the Granite Seminary.⁷ As the 1930 history would not have been widely available at the time, however, Magleby's article served to make the details of the program's establishment more widely known.

William Berrett's 1988 history of Church education, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education*, discussed the founding of the seminary, but devoted a relatively small amount of space to the topic.⁸ Similar to Tuttle and Hartshorn, Berrett emphasized the program's post-1930 history far more than its founding. In his short discussion of the seminary founding, however,

⁶ Albert Theodore Tuttle, "Released Time Religious Education Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," (MA Thesis, Stanford University, 1949); Leon Roundy Hartshorn, "Mormon Education in the Bold Years," (EdD. Dissertation, Stanford University, 1965).

⁷ Ward H. Magleby, "Granite Seminary 1912," *Impact: Weekday Religious Education Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1968): 8-9, 15.

⁸ William E. Berrett and Frank W. Hirschi, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education: A History of the Church Educational System, Being an Account of Weekday Religious Education of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and especially of the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Printing Center, 1988).

Berrett included a useful discussion of the role that the growth of public high schools played in the movement, as well as some valuable statistical information regarding the early seminary program.

One thing missing from each of these histories is an effort to place the founding seminary within a larger context. Influencing the founding of this program were Mormon, American, and educational developments, each of which shaped the program came to define the Church's educational efforts in the twentieth century. An understanding of this wider context reveals that the founding of the seminary was a part of a larger movement by various religious groups to establish supplementary religious education throughout the country during the 1910s. Accordingly, the establishment of the seminary movement is an important indicator that Mormonism had become a profoundly American religion by the early 1910s. At the same time, the fact that the constitutionality of such an institution went generally unchallenged shows that by this period the country had made a place for the twentieth century version of Mormonism.⁹

Contextual Setting

The 1910s were a period of social and political transformation within the country. While the latter-half of the decade was defined by war, the first half of the decade had been a time of social and moral change. The industrialization that had characterized the country since the end of the Civil War had led to a massive influx of immigrants, most of whom came from Eastern and Southern Europe, making them ethnically different from

⁹ This is not to suggest that the constitutionality of the seminary program was never called into question. Indeed, in 1930 Isaac L. Williamson, a state high school inspector, issued a report that was highly critical of the program and questioned its legal basis. Casey Paul Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill and the 1930-1931 LDS Church Education Crisis," *BYU Studies* 49, no. 1 (2010): 93-134.

the majority of Americans.¹⁰ In addition to their ethnic diversity, the immigrants brought a number of different religious and political ideas and practices to the United States.

Because of their differences, immigrants made a ready scapegoat for many of the problems that plagued the country. Much of this blame came because the immigrant groups worked to maintain their national distinctiveness and culture rather than fully integrating themselves into American culture. As such, nativists viewed immigrants as being un-American.¹¹ In addition to their unique cultural ideas, many of the immigrants subscribed to vastly different political ideas. Forming a large portion of the working class, the new immigrants enthusiastically supported labor unions. Included among the various unions that received strong support from the immigrant community was the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a radical union motivated by socialist ideas. Because of its radicalism, the IWW generally provoked anger from middle class Americans and the state, leading to a series of violent encounters.¹²

The rapid influx of immigrants contributed to the growing urbanization of the United States. Because of the longstanding American fear of urban centers, the country's urban growth was blamed by many for what was viewed as the country's pervasive degradation and moral decline.¹³ As Paul Boyer has observed, the country's "fears about industrialization, immigration, family disruption, religious change, and deepening class divisions all focused on the growing

¹⁰ Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 5, 77.

¹¹ Diner, *A Very Different Age*, 92-93.

¹² Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 140-45.

¹³ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 530-32; Carol Sheriff, *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817-1862* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 36-44.

cities.”¹⁴ Along with the growth of urban America came the creation of slums and higher crime rates. Increased alcohol consumption and prostitution likewise seemed to be a part of the urban environment.¹⁵ Such problems seemed particularly dangerous to the country’s youth, who were expected to perpetuate the country’s principles in the future. Hence, during the Progressive Era, there was a prevalent idea that any response to the nation’s problems would have to focus upon the cities, and primarily upon the youth within those cities.

Progressives worked to enact social change among the youth through the public schools. Such change, however, required a complete revamping of the nation’s school systems and outdated modes of education. In the estimation of many contemporary observers, the nation’s schools were in shambles, the result of immigration, urbanization, educational incompetence, and political corruption.¹⁶ The leading educators of the period argued that the educational methods of the time “could no longer equip youth to deal either with the changed demands of agriculture itself or with the complex nature of citizenship in a technological, urban society.”¹⁷ Beginning in the late nineteenth century, a number of educators, led by John Dewey, began a complete overhaul of the nation’s schools. This movement, commonly known as the progressive education movement, attacked the rigid formalism of the traditional schools by emphasizing “child-centered pedagogy and curricular experimentation.” As a result of these efforts the reach

¹⁴ Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America: 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), vii.

¹⁵ Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order*, 189-204.

¹⁶ Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 4-5.

¹⁷ David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 14.

and influence of the public schools was dramatically extended throughout the country, forming the foundations of the modern American school system.¹⁸

With this educational innovation, however, came a number of problems. Non-sectarianism became an important principle of public education throughout the country. By the early 1900s, the crisis in religious education that had perplexed Mormon leaders in the 1890s had spread to other denominations. America's growing sense of religious pluralism together with the educational shift toward secularism at the collegiate level and non-sectarianism at the grade level had left the religious leaders from a variety of denominations scrambling to find solutions to what they perceived as the country's growing irreligion. While the "daily reading of a few [Bible] verses without comment" continued to be a common practice, many religious leaders deemed the practice insufficient "to preserve the religious heritage and to keep the nation from succumbing to secularism."¹⁹ Protestant leaders argued that the preservation of democracy required "that all children be educated in the public schools," but also that "the preservation of...religious ideals and institutions demands that all children be given an education which the public schools cannot give."²⁰ To combat this lack of religiosity, America's religious leaders turned to a variety of efforts that would maintain the integrity of the public schools, while providing the needed religious instruction to American youth.

In 1905, a coalition of thirty Protestant denominations convened at the Inter-Church Conference on Federation and passed a resolution urging "the public school authorities of the country...to allow the children to absent themselves without detriment from the public

¹⁸ William J. Reese, *America's Public Schools: From the Common School to "No Child Left Behind"* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 79, 119.

¹⁹ Robert Michaelson, *Piety in the Public School: Trends and Issues in the Relationship Between Religion and the Public School in the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970), 170, 172.

²⁰ Walter Scott Athearn, *Religious Education and American Democracy* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1917), 49.

schools... for the purpose of attending religious instruction in their own churches.”²¹ In an attempt to implement this idea, various states and communities throughout the country developed plans for week-day religious education in the public schools. Perhaps the most famous of these plans, the “Gary Plan,” was developed in Gary, Indiana, in 1914.²² On the initiative of William Wirt, Gary’s superintendent of schools, religious leaders from eight of the local churches worked together to create a program whereby students would be excused, with parental approval, from school two or three times a week for religious instruction according to their various denominations.²³ In addition to released time, many of these early programs pushed for the public schools to award academic credit to students for their participation in their religious education courses. School officials agreed to award the credit on the conditions that state and public school buildings would not be used, and that public school teachers would not participate in teaching the classes.²⁴

Where some saw released time and credit for Bible study as the answer to the country’s problems, others saw a dangerous program that violated the separation of church and state and the ultimate introduction of religious divisiveness into the public

²¹ Michaelsen, *Piety in the Public School*, 171; For an excellent bibliography of materials dealing with Religion and the Public Schools, see Albert J. Menendez, *School Prayer and Other Religious Issues in American Public Education: A Bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985).

²² The Gary Plan is generally credited as being the first formal program of released time religious education. Although it was the first such Protestant program, Mormonism’s seminary program predated the Gary Plan by two years. Although, as Michael Quinn suggests, the Religion Class program was the country’s first program of weekday religious education, it did not include a released time component like the Gary Plan and the seminary program. Michaelsen, *Piety in the Public School*, 174; D. Michael Quinn, “Utah’s Educational Innovation: LDS Religion Classes, 1890-1929,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (Fall 1975): 387.

²³ Athearn, *Religious Education and American Democracy*, 116-25; Michaelsen, *Piety in the Public School*, 174.

²⁴ Michaelsen, *Piety in the Public School*, 182.

schools.²⁵ Opposition to such classes led to a number of battles in both state and national courts. For instance, opponents of the classes in the state of Washington challenged the constitutionality of religious credit in 1918, and won by a unanimous decision of the state Supreme Court.²⁶ Contrastingly, courts in other states like Idaho upheld the constitutionality of credits for religious instruction.²⁷ Even in states that granted academic credit for religious instruction, however, there remained questions regarding the constitutionality of the practice.²⁸ Ultimately, the question of released time religious instruction in the public schools was brought before the United States Supreme Court in two landmark cases. In a controversial decision in 1948, the Court ruled that a released time religious education program in the Champaign, Illinois school system constituted “a breach in the wall of separation between church and state.”²⁹ Four years later the court clarified its position on weekday religious education in *Zorach v. Clauson*, ruling that religious education programs were constitutionally acceptable, provided they were “held off the school

²⁵ Michaelsen, *Piety in the Public School*, 171-72.

²⁶ Michaelsen, *Piety in the Public School*, 184-85.

²⁷ The effort to secure academic credit for religious courses in Idaho took place over a number of years. The movement was spearheaded by the Seventh Day Adventists, but included a coalition of a number of religions. In 1927, Adam S. Bennion reported to the Church Board of Education that the “State Board of Education and Board of Regents of the University of Idaho authorize boards of trustees of high schools to give credit for graduation to such students of their respective high schools who may be enrolled or may hereafter enroll for courses in Biblical literature or Biblical history in private schools giving such courses” provided the course remained completely non-sectarian. Church Commission of Education Minutes, 19 January 1920, folder 7, box 25, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 7 February 1923, folder 3, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 2 February 1927, folder 5, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

²⁸ In 1926, school officials in Idaho Falls, Idaho challenged the propriety of granting credit to Mormon seminary students, asserting that it was “equivalent to the giving of sectarian teaching in the school, which is contrary to the Constitution.” Although this decision was overturned two months later by the Idaho State Board of Education, it reveals vastly differing opinions on the topic of credit. Church Board of Education Minutes, 1 December 1926, folder 4, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

²⁹ Donald E. Boles, *The Bible, Religion, and the Public Schools* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1965), 172-73.

premises, that all costs...be borne by the [religious] organizations.”³⁰ In explaining the Court’s decision, William O. Douglas explained that while “the First Amendment reflected the ‘philosophy’ of separation and that ‘the separation must be complete and unequivocal,’” it did not suggest that church and state had to be “‘aliens to each other.’”³¹ Accordingly, by the 1950s, after a relatively inauspicious American beginning, supplementary religious education had become a national movement that was both regulated and legitimized by the courts.

Many of the problems that motivated Protestant educational reform in the Progressive era affected Mormons too. By 1910, Salt Lake City had grown into a typical American city, complete with all the panoply of urban problems. As Richard Kimball has written, “The impacts of urbanization, immigration, and industrialization shaped the Mormon capital in the decades after 1890 as much as they did other ‘Progressive’ cities.”³² Along with urbanization, Utah experienced an influx of immigrants, who composed as much as 69 percent of Salt Lake City’s population during this period. While many of these immigrants were Mormons of northern and western European descent, by 1890 Utah had begun to receive larger numbers of non-Mormon immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.³³ The influx of immigrants brought a number of distinct changes to Utah including new languages, religions, ideas, and practices. Due to the

³⁰ Frank J. Sorauf, “Zorach V. Clauson: The Impact of a Supreme Court Decision,” *American Political Science Review* 53, no. 3 (September 1959): 778.

³¹ Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 6-7.

³² Richard Ian Kimball, *Sports in Zion: Mormon Recreation, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 5-6.

³³ Kimball, *Sports in Zion*, 7.

number of immigrants, even the radical IWW had an important place within Utah during this period.³⁴

Amidst such changes, Mormon leaders became concerned about the influence that the changing society would have upon LDS youth. Noting such problems, Heber J. Grant informed the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association that "there are at least forty per cent of [the youth] who are not attending any of our organizations between the ages of say of say fourteen and seventeen."³⁵ Further, the prevailing social problems led to high levels of immorality among Mormon youth. In 1914, LeGrand Richards, the president of the Netherlands mission, reported to his father that "15% of the Elders in the Netherlands during the past two years, have been guilty of immoral practices, and that a much greater percentage of Elders had been exposed to these evils."³⁶ Church president Joseph F. Smith decried the "most [despicable] condition" described by Richards' report, and noted that "the same condition existed to an alarming extent among the Elders of the Swiss and German mission."³⁷ While such moral conduct was not unprecedented among Mormon missionaries, it was extremely concerning to Mormon leaders.³⁸ In addition to these moral problems, some complained that many within the

³⁴ John S. McCormick and John R. Sillito, "We are not seeking trouble and so will just go along quietly just now": The IWW's 1913 Free-Speech Fight in Salt Lake City," *Utah in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Brian Q. Cannon and Jessie L. Embry (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2009), 263-84.

³⁵ Heber J. Grant, "The Place of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations in the Church," *Improvement Era*, August 1912, 877.

³⁶ Quorum of Twelve Meeting Minutes, 29 September 1914, Scott G. Kenney Collection, MSS 2022, box 12, folder 12, Special Collections, HBLI.

³⁷ It should be noted, however, that such problems were not in the majority. Smith later informed one inquirer that "most of the members of the Church are clean morally and the Elders sent out are not an exception" despite the fact that there were "some...who are not faithful in their religious duties." Joseph F. Smith to Hyrum M. Smith, 7 November 1914, box 36, Joseph F. Smith Collection, CHL; Joseph F. Smith to S. D. Wilson, 21 January 1915, box 36, Smith Collection, CHL.

³⁸ Amasa Lyman, Charles C. Rich, and George Q. Cannon to Brigham Young, 28 February 1861, folder 7, box 38, reel 51, Brigham Young Office Files, CHL.

missionary force were guilty of drinking alcohol, smoking, and gambling, as well as being unlearned and “neither acquainted with the Bible nor their own church books.”³⁹

Considering that such problems existed among even active Mormon youth, it clear to Latter-day Saint leaders that the Church was not doing enough to help its youth to the modernizing world. Such concerns emphasized the need for additional efforts Church’s adolescent boys. Grant observed that while the Church maintained “three splendid organizations...to get the children in line,” the Church had only one adolescent boys, the group that seemed to be at the greatest risk.⁴⁰ Responding to such concerns, the Granite Stake overhauled their Mutual Improvement Associations in 1911 in hopes that a “new plan...might interest the many people that have not been attending meetings.”⁴¹ Mormon leaders hoped that new Church programs would combat the problems of youth living in Salt Lake City during the 1910s.

LDS educational reforms were also shaped by the progressive education movement’s nationwide restructuring of education. Prominent educators, including John Dewey, frequently lectured at Brigham Young University during the early 1900s on the progressive education movement’s new teaching techniques.⁴² Further, Mormon students who had been educated in eastern universities returned to Utah and began disseminating the new ideas that they had

³⁹ Although Joseph F. Smith doubted the accuracy of these claims, he instructed mission officials to “thoroughly investigate” the claims. Smith noted with some candor, “We cannot afford to send out missionaries to the world who bring reproach upon the Church and the Work of the Lord doing more harm through evil actions and deportment than can be overcome in many years by faithful Elders who adhere to the instructions of the Priesthood and the commandments of the Lord.” “C. A. Butterworth to Editors,” *Saints’ Herald Magazine*, 11 August 1915, 778; Smith to Smith, 7 November 1914, CHL; Joseph F. Smith to John A. Nelson, Jr., 17 August 1915, box 36, Smith Collection, CHL; Joseph F. Smith to Samuel E. Woolley, 17 August 1915, box 36, Smith Collection, CHL.

⁴⁰ Grant, “The Place of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Associations in the Church,” 877.

⁴¹ Granite Stake Priesthood Meeting, 24 September 1911, reel 2, Granite Stake General Minutes, CHL.

⁴² Ernest L. Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 268-70, 368.

learned. The students who returned from eastern universities made several important contributions to a general increase in the level of education in the Church, making their largest impact at BYU in Provo. Professors like John Widtsoe brought an added measure of respectability to the fledgling university.⁴³ The rush to secure academic qualifications, however, likewise created problems for the school. In early 1911, BYU became embroiled in controversy when three of the school's most highly trained teachers began teaching Darwinian evolution and biblical criticism in theology classes.⁴⁴ Parents and Church officials objected to many of the ideas being presented and the resultant loss of faith that they seemed to create.⁴⁵ Ultimately, the three offending professors were given an ultimatum regarding their continued teaching at the school. The three teachers chose to leave the university rather than to conform.⁴⁶

Questions concerning the role of evolution and modern ideas were not isolated to BYU. In 1913, Ezra Dalby was released as principal of the Ricks academy for "teaching unsound doctrine" and in 1917 the Church Board of Education declined a request by William H. Chamberlain, who had been somewhat involved in the BYU's 1911 controversy, to secure a

⁴³ While Widtsoe is best known for his academic work at the Utah Agricultural College and the University of Utah, he likewise taught agriculture at BYU from 1905 to 1907. In this capacity, Widtsoe was BYU's first professor with a Ph.D. from a major university. Alan Parrish, *John A. Widtsoe: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2003), 137-50.

⁴⁴ Jacob Olmstead has written an informative article detailing the role that modernism and secularism played in the development of Mormon education during the 1910s and 1920s. Jacob W. Olmstead, "Institutes of Religion, 1926-1929: Part I," Unpublished Essay, Education in Zion Exhibit, Joseph F. Smith Building, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereinafter cited as EIZ, BYU).

⁴⁵ According to Horace Cummings, "Students ceased to pray, and the teachers did not pay their tithing as before." He noted that one father "came to the school in a rage, and told of the loss of his sons faith and the change in his life that this caused. He had gone completely to the bad and the father cursed the day he had let his son come to that school." Church Board of Education Minutes, 28 December 1910, folder 10, box 23, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 3 February 1911, folder 1, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Horace H. Cummings, *Diary and Autobiography*, Chapter 41, 1-7, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁴⁶ Henry Peterson says that the teachers were told that they had to choose between teaching "the permitted doctrine only" and leaving the school. To make a public statement, the teachers left the university, and were then informed that their contracts would not be renewed. Henry Peterson, *Henry Peterson, Educator, 1868-1957* (Utah: no publisher, 1982), 131-32.

position in the Church Schools due to his modernist leanings.⁴⁷ Such concerns were even more magnified in the public schools. In 1913, Horace Cummings encouraged the Box Elder Stake to establish a Religion Class for the high school students in order to counteract the effects that the teaching of evolution had upon the students.⁴⁸ During the October 1915 General Conference, Joseph F. Smith complained about the fact that religion and the Bible were being excluded from the schools.⁴⁹ Such problems likewise extended to the University of Utah where, according to some University officials, the students were “losing interest in the gospel and becoming tainted with erroneous ideas and theories.”⁵⁰

Coupled with these social problems was the rapid growth of the state’s public system. The public schools offered a number of distinct advantages over the Church for both students and teachers. While the Church’s educational model called for an academy in each stake with additional schools established in other communities as needed, economic realities had severely limited the number of schools that could be built and maintained. As such, Mormon youth who attended the academies often had to leave their homes and board in distant communities. In addition to the costs of room, board,

⁴⁷ William Chamberlain was not among the three professors who resigned in 1911. Wendell to Gustive O. Larson, 8 February 1931, folder 3, box 9, Gustive O. Larson Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 29 December 1913, folder 5, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 27 June 1917, folder 4, box 10, Kenney Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁴⁸ Oleen N. Stohl Daybook, 26 October 1913, folder 39, box 3, reel 2, CHL.

⁴⁹ Smith stated that the removal of religion from the schools left the Church with only one option, to increase “the burdens of taxation...upon the people” to “establish Church schools or institutions of our own.” Joseph F. Smith, Discourse, 3 October 1915, *Conference Report* (October 1915): 4.

⁵⁰ Church Board of Education Minutes, 12 May 1912, folder 4, box 10, Kenney Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 23 November 1917, folder 4, box 10, Kenney Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; Joseph Horne Jeppson, “The Secularization of the University of Utah, to 1920” (PhD. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1973).

and transportation, academy students had to pay the costs of books and tuition. The public schools, on the other hand, did not charge for books and tuition. Further, public schools could be built and maintained in rural communities like Morgan and Box Elder, thus allowing parents to keep their children at home while still providing them with a quality education.⁵¹

Public schools likewise offered significant benefits to Latter-day Saint teachers who who might have become teachers in the academies. The public schools boasted a wider array of array of career opportunities as well as salaries that were generally better than the Church could afford to pay.⁵² As the realities of financial survival became ever more apparent, it became increasingly difficult for the Church system to retain its most talented teachers. Further exacerbating the situation was the realization of many Mormon leaders that it was perhaps beneficial for the Church to play a role in the training of teachers for the public schools.⁵³ Accordingly many of the academies moved away from the field of secondary education toward collegiate level teacher training programs, thus further diminishing the number of the Church's private schools.⁵⁴ The need to extend the supplementary religious education program had become critically important.

⁵¹ Church Board of Education Minutes, 26 June 1914, folder 6, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁵² Church Board of Education Minutes, 23 July 1907, folder 4, box 23, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; George H. Brimhall to Heber J. Grant, 16 December 1919, folder 4, box 28, George H. Brimhall Presidential Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Heber J. Grant to George H. Brimhall, 11 February 1920, folder 4, box 28, Brimhall Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁵³ Church Board of Education Minutes, 31 May 1911, folder 1, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 23 July 1907, folder 4, box 23, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 26 January 1916, folder 10, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁵⁴ Church Board of Education Minutes, 25 April 1917, folder 1, box 25, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

The Founding of the Seminary

In addition to these wider context in which the seminary program was organized, important to note that the idea of the LDS seminary had a long history of its own. By place for supplementary religious education in the Church, the Religion Classes paved for the seminary program. While the seminary and the Religion Classes shared some similarities, Joseph F. Merrill categorically stated that in the early days of the seminary movement, “the seminary...had no organic connection with the Religion Class [program].”⁵⁵ Hence, the history of the Religion Class program alone cannot be used to explain the development of the seminary. Rather than growing out of the existing programs of the Church, much of the idea for the seminary can be directly traced to the life experiences of Joseph Merrill.

Something of an enigma, Merrill’s life provides not only useful information on the development of a critical and church-altering program, but it likewise gives historians an important glimpse into the changes that marked the generation of Mormonism from 1890 to 1930. Just as Reed Smoot has been described as the archetype of Mormon assimilation in American politics, Merrill might be viewed as an archetype of Mormonism’s assimilation into American public education.⁵⁶ Merrill’s life creates something of a paradox. Similar to Reed Smoot, Merrill “was to all appearances very much a man of his time, not his place.”⁵⁷ His father was Mormon Apostle Marriner W. Merrill, who had been subpoenaed by the Senate to testify about his connections to post-

⁵⁵ Joseph Merrill, Untitled Article, “History of the South High Seminary 1931-1934,” folder 1, box 1, CHL.

⁵⁶ Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 40-41.

⁵⁷ Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity*, 35.

manifesto plural marriage during the Smoot hearings. Although Joseph Merrill was a devout Mormon and came from a polygamous family, however, he never practiced plural marriage.⁵⁸ Despite his family's deep commitment to Mormonism, Merrill did not attend any of the Church-sponsored academies, but spent the whole of his academic career in the public schools. Still, his experience in the public schools enhanced rather than diminished his interest in religious education. While many Mormons of the period may have assumed that Merrill's commitment to the public schools would be detrimental to his Mormon devotion and his work with the Church Schools, these experiences actually increased his faith. Thus, in a sense Merrill embodied the changes that characterized Mormonism during these years. His life demonstrated a constant devotion to his religion, while at the same time benefitting from his academic connections to the non-Mormon world. Merrill's experiences in public education profoundly shaped him and helped to develop his later views on religious education. Shortly after being appointed to be the Commissioner of Church Education in 1928, Joseph Merrill stated that "he had always been interested in week-day religious training and had concerned himself with it more than the average person had known."⁵⁹

Because of his father's high ecclesiastical position within the Church, Merrill was consistently exposed to religion as a boy.⁶⁰ Perhaps equally important, however, was the emphasis that his father placed upon education. Merrill's father had concluded that while he could not leave a substantial inheritance for his children, he could at least provide them with a

⁵⁸ Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity*, 51, 71, 192; Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education," 32.

⁵⁹ "The Religion Class Convention," *Juvenile Instructor*, May 1928, 276.

⁶⁰ Casey P. Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education, 1928-1933," (MA Thesis, Brigham Young University, 2007), 23.

proper education.⁶¹ Despite his family's proximity to the Brigham Young College in Logan, Merrill never attended the school. Rather, his early education took place chiefly in his family's private school and in the nearby district schools.⁶² In 1887, Merrill began attending the University of Deseret in Salt Lake City, where he earned a teaching certificate.⁶³ During these years, Merrill became intimately acquainted with the difficult relationship between the Church and the University of Deseret. He later reflected, "We at the University felt that we were between 'the devil and the deep blue sea.'" "The Gentiles," Merrill wrote, "regarded [the University] as a Mormon institution," while "the Mormons, (some of them) looked upon our school as an 'infidel factory.'"⁶⁴ Merrill understood firsthand the discomfort of being situated between church and state.

Upon graduation, Merrill went east to further his education and eventually attended four prestigious schools: the University of Michigan, the University of Chicago, Cornell University, and Johns Hopkins University.⁶⁵ Merrill's education culminated when he became the first Utahn to receive a doctorate, graduating from Johns Hopkins in 1899.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education," 20; Melvin Clarence Merrill, *Utah Pioneer and Apostle Marriner Wood Merrill and His Family* (Privately published, 1937), 341.

⁶² Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education," 22.

⁶³ Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education," 24.

⁶⁴ Joseph F. Merrill, "The Lord Overrules," *The Improvement Era*, July 1934, 413. Jacob S. Boseman, the Territorial Commissioner of Schools during 1889, confirmed Merrill's statement that the University of Utah was often regarded by outsiders as a Mormon institution. In a report to Congress, Boseman wrote, "The chancellor and nine of the regents are Mormons, the other three regents being non-Mormons. The institution is therefore under Mormon control, and as near as I can learn the students are almost all of Mormon parentage." Congress, *Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, transmitting a letter of the Governor of Utah and a report of the Commissioner of Public Schools*, 51st Cong., 2d sess., 1891, S. Exec. Doc 46, Serial 2818.

⁶⁵ Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education," 24-25.

⁶⁶ Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education," 25.

In addition to the academic benefits of Merrill's studies, this period proved crucial in Merrill's spiritual development. In 1891 Merrill was called by the First Presidency to preside over the Ann Arbor branch of the Church, succeeding Benjamin Cluff who had returned to Provo.⁶⁷ In this capacity, Merrill was charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the LDS students at the University were not "exposed to influences that are destructive of faith in the gospel."⁶⁸ This early experience undoubtedly caused Merrill to begin to consider the relationship between faith and reason and the need for some form of religious education to coincide with academic pursuits.

Perhaps with his duties and experiences at the University of Michigan in mind, Merrill's Merrill's time at the University of Chicago seems to have likewise stoked his thinking about the nature of religious education within the public schools. According to one of Merrill's daughters, much of his plan for weekday religious education was influenced by the theological seminaries that he saw while attending the University of Chicago in the mid-1890s.⁶⁹ Several years later, when Merrill desired to increase the academic rigor of the seminary system, he chose to send several teachers to the University of Chicago.⁷⁰ What precisely about Chicago stood out to

⁶⁷ First Presidency to Joseph F. Merrill, 10 October 1891, reel 21, First Presidency Letterbooks, CHL. See also: First Presidency to Joseph F. Merrill, 10 October 1891, folder 8, box 2, Kenney Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; First Presidency to Joseph M. Tanner, 13 June 1891, folder 8, box 2, Kenney Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁶⁸ First Presidency to Merrill, 10 October 1891, Special Collections, HBLL; First Presidency to Tanner, 13 June 1891, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁶⁹ Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 168, 347 nt. 39.

⁷⁰ In addition to Merrill's prior experiences at the University of Chicago, another possible factor in the selection of the school was, ironically, the school's liberality. Unlike many of the other Divinity Schools, the University of Chicago welcomed Mormons, and maintained "a divinity school tradition not to probe into the private beliefs and religious convictions of fellow students." Hence, according to Russel Swensen, the Mormon students were not "subjected to blunt inquiries as to [their] faith and theology." Russel B. Swensen, "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School: A Personal Reminiscence," *Dialogue: Journal of Mormon Thought* 7, No. 2 (Summer 1972): 37-47; Joseph F. Merrill to T. Edgar Lyon, 31 January 1931, folder 15, box 17, T. Edgar Lyon

Merrill is not clear, but it may have been the idea of academic credit for theological training, an issue which he would come to see as crucial to the success of the seminary program.

Ironically, although Merrill seems to have been attentive to the importance of and religious education during his years in the East, he had decided that upon his return he would “remain faithful privately,” attending Church services, but not actively serving Church callings.⁷¹ Although Merrill had engaged in such service in the East, he was convinced that in Utah he would need to remain publically neutral to the Church in order to best serve the University and the community. He changed his mind, however, as the result of a spiritual manifestation that occurred upon learning of the call of fellow academician Richard R. Lyman to an important Church post. Merrill later explained that the experience had shown him that his “conclusions were wrong and that without fear of the consequences [he] should accept whatever Church call came to [him].” As a result of this experience, Merrill went on to serve in a variety of important Church leadership positions while working at the University of Utah.⁷² Following his career at the University, Merrill became the head of Church education in 1928, and then an Apostle in 1931.

Merrill’s overt commitment to Mormonism extended to his family life as well. This dedication to family life likewise played an important role in the development of the seminary program. According to Merrill, his serious thinking on the problem of

Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; Joseph F. Merrill to Russel B. Swensen, 10 March 1930, folder 12, box 2, Russel B. Swensen Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁷¹ Griffiths, “Joseph F. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education,” 29.

⁷² Griffiths, “Joseph F. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education,” 28-30; Merrill, “The Lord Overrules,” 413, 447.

supplementary religious education began during the period from 1909 to 1911, when the leaders of the Granite Stake were attempting to reinstitute the place of the home as “the institution most valuable for the instruction of youth” through the establishment of the Family Home Evening program.⁷³ The program was intended to provide families with one night a week wherein, according to Granite Stake President Frank Y. Taylor,

[E]very man, woman, and child could be free to spend at least one evening a week at home; where they could become acquainted with one another; maintain proper family government; sing songs together, have refreshments, and arrange for the father and mother and children to become more closely knitted together.⁷⁴

These weekly gatherings asked parents to teach the principles of Mormonism directly to their children, without depending upon the Church’s auxiliaries.⁷⁵ The Merrill family took this suggestion to heart, and began holding a weekly home evening. In these meetings, as well as during the family’s evening prayers, Merrill’s wife, Annie, “would tell Bible & B[ook] of M[ormon] stories one after the other without end.”⁷⁶ Intrigued by his wife’s recollection of so many scriptural stories, Joseph Merrill asked her where she had learned them. She replied that she had learned them as a student under James Talmage at the Salt Lake Stake Academy in the early 1890s.⁷⁷

This Family Home Evening seems to have changed Merrill’s opinions about Church schools. Although he was a product of public schools and public universities, he readily assented to his wife’s “wish that every one of her children should attend the [Latter-day Saints

⁷³ Merrill, Interview 27 May 1948, EIZ, BYU; *Home Evening: With Suggested Exercises and Explanations Also a Sermon on Family Government by President Joseph F. Smith and a Special Message from the First Presidency of the Church and the Presidency of Granite Stake* (Salt Lake City: Granite Stake, 1927).

⁷⁴ Frank Y. Taylor, “Remarks,” *Home Evening*, 28.

⁷⁵ Taylor, “Remarks,” *Home Evening*, 28-30.

⁷⁶ Merrill, Interview 27 May 1948, EIZ, BYU; Merrill, “A New Institution in Religious Education,” 12.

⁷⁷ Merrill, Interview 27 May 1948, EIZ, BYU; Merrill, “A New Institution in Religious Education,” 12.

University].”⁷⁸ Merrill then began to consider “the idea of all L.D.S. children getting the same training” and enjoying the same privileges offered to students in the academies.⁷⁹

After a serious consideration of the matter, Merrill came up with a new idea for supplementary religious education, the creation of a theological seminary for the Mormon students at Granite High School. The seminary would allow LDS students to receive religious training from a qualified teacher at a building adjacent to the high school. The rationale for the seminary not only accepted the public schools, it embraced them.

The plan called for bold measures such as released time and high school credit for Bible courses, both of which had the potential to test the calming relationship between church and state in Utah. The seminary program did make some concessions to the state. Unlike the Religion Classes, seminaries were to have their own buildings, separate from the public schools. Additionally, the seminary was to have its own teachers, whose credentials would match the teachers in the high schools. Merrill hoped that the teachers would “be universally regarded as the inferior of no teacher in the high school.”⁸⁰ Hence, there would be no reason to claim that teachers in the public schools were serving the Church while receiving payment from the State. Correspondingly, in exchange for a unit of high school credit, the seminary courses on the Old and New Testaments were to be taught in a non-sectarian manner, including no Mormon-specific teachings.⁸¹ The

⁷⁸ Merrill, “A New Institution in Religious Education,” 12.

⁷⁹ Merrill, Interview 27 May 1948, EIZ, BYU. Merrill was particularly concerned about LDS students who were compelled to attend the public schools because of the increased costs of the academies. Merrill, “A New Institution in Religious Education,” 12.

⁸⁰ Joseph F. Merrill to Horace H. Cummings, 23 April 1912, quoted in Merrill, “A New Institution in Religious Education,” 55.

⁸¹ It should be noted that while Church leaders had agreed to a non-sectarian approach to teaching the Bible to adhere to the standards for credit, not all of the teachers within the system complied with this requirement. In

seminary, in essence, was a compromise between church and state. It was also evidence that a profound change had taken place in Mormonism.

The unnamed Mormons to whom Merrill initially presented the idea for the seminary seminary doubted its practicality and “no one...seemed greatly interested.”⁸² Unfortunately, he did not specify the reasons for such dissent. A host of possible explanations exist. For example, it is probable that some objected to the costs that the seminary would incur to the Granite stake’s membership, while others undoubtedly questioned the favorability with which the government would view a Mormon religious education program for public school students.

Improving on the Religion Class Program

At least some of the initial questions may have originated in the ambivalence that many leaders felt toward the Religion Class program. At least some of those who first heard Merrill’s idea linked the idea of the seminary with the Religion Class program. Indeed, from 1912 to 1919, the seminary was administered by the General Board of Religion Classes rather than the Church Board of Education.⁸³ Given the checkered history of the Religion Classes it is not surprising that some would have objected to the idea of another supplementary religious education program. During this period stake presidents and bishops continued to reject the Religion Classes based on the belief that the Church had too many organizations.⁸⁴ Despite

responding to claims that the seminary violated the separation of church and state in 1931, Merrill reaffirmed the Church’s commitment to non-sectarianism while at the same time admitting that “the teaching of the Bible has not always been free from sectarianism.” Merrill, “A New Institution in Religious Education,” 55; Griffiths, “Joseph F. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education” 113; M. Lynn Bennion, *Recollections of a School Man: The Autobiography of M. Lynn Bennion* (Salt Lake City: M. Lynn Bennion, 1987), 95.

⁸² Merrill, “A New Institution in Religious Education,” 55.

⁸³ Church Board of Education Minutes, 15 September 1915, folder 4, box 11, D. Michael Quinn Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (hereinafter cited as BL); Church Board of Education Minutes, 27 December 1916, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 27 August 1919, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL.

⁸⁴ Heber J. Grant, “The Place of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Associations in the Church,” 871.

continuous efforts to improve the program's efficiency, the success of Religion Classes varied from stake to stake, leading Church authorities to continually plead for greater support for the program.⁸⁵ Although the Granite Stake had boasted some of the Church's most devoted supporters of the Religion Classes, feelings of ambivalence toward the program had not been uncommon within the stake.⁸⁶ Therefore it is not unlikely that some within the stake might have questioned the value of organizing a similar program.

If, as some may have supposed, Merrill's plan was merely an extension of the Religion Classes it was at least a significant improvement upon the classes. Indeed, Merrill's plan answered every major flaw within the Religion Class program. While there was little difference between the curriculums of the two programs, the organizational structure of the seminary was vastly superior to the Religion Classes.

In an era during which Mormon leaders had become increasingly conscientious about correlating Church programs and avoiding auxiliary overlap, the seminary managed to fill a unique niche without creating problems with the other Church organizations.⁸⁷ Unlike the Religion Classes, the seminary was not organized as a Church auxiliary; rather it was established as an educational program with a professional

⁸⁵ In the April 1913 General Conference, Anthon Lund urged Church members to "Encourage the Religion Classes, encourage the children to attend them, encourage the teachers that are willing to go and teach your children and let us see this auxiliary organization prosper as well as all the others." Similarly, a year later, Joseph W. McMurrin responded to reports that the program was still not "altogether given" in some wards, by stating that "The time for discussion as to the advisability of the establishment of the organization has passed away many years ago" and members were "to lend their very best efforts to the accomplishment of the work allotted to them, that the truth of God may be planted in the hearts of the children who are in the public schools." Anthon H. Lund, Discourse, 4 April 1913, *Conference Report* (April 1913): 12; Joseph W. McMurrin, Discourse, 6 October 1914, *Conference Report* (October 1914): 116, 120; General Board of Religion Class Minutes, 4 December 1912 and 4 November 1914, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL.

⁸⁶ Cummings, *Diary and Autobiography*, Chapter 27, 1-4, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸⁷ James E. Talmage and Mae T. Nystrom to First Presidency, 29 July 1907, folder 21, box 9, Kenney Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; Dale C. Mouritsen, "Efforts to Correlate Mormon Church Agencies in the Twentieth Century: A Review," CHL; Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 140-142.

faculty. Because seminary teaching was a job rather than an ecclesiastical calling, the seminary program did not need to compete with other programs such as the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association to secure adequate teachers.⁸⁸ Cordial relationships with the auxiliary programs became an important aspect of the seminary system. Nearly twenty years later in 1929, when Merrill was placed in charge of the Church's educational system, he continually reminded seminary teachers and principals of the need to act in unison with the local wards and stakes.⁸⁹ Accordingly, whereas the teachers and administrators of the Religion Classes had come into continual conflict with local leaders, the seminary gained the general support of stake presidents, bishops, and auxiliary leaders.⁹⁰

The "released time" program helped the seminary to avoid conflicts with other Church programs. Merrill deemed released time to be one of the most crucial aspects of the program because it allowed the students to avoid conflicts with other Church programs.⁹¹ In addition to maintaining cordial relationships with the Church's auxiliaries, released time also meant that students were not taken away from their household chores and family responsibilities. It thus helped the seminary to garner and maintain parental support, an area where the Religion Classes had frequently fallen short.

Finally, Merrill's plan preserved the support of both the students and the state by offering academic credit for courses on the Old and New Testament. Credit provided both an incentive to

⁸⁸ The wisdom of the seminary's non-auxiliary status became quickly apparent to leaders of the Religion Class Program, who subsequently engaged in a long effort to declare that their program was also "a part of the Church School System and not strictly a ward organization as are the auxiliary associations." General Board of Religion Class Minutes, 14 February 1913 and 17 October 1913, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL.

⁸⁹ Joseph F. Merrill to Stake Boards of Education, 1 June and 15 August 1929, Church Educational System Circular letters 1889-1973, folder 3, box 1, CHL.

⁹⁰ Frank Y. Taylor to George H. Brimhall, 13 March 1922, folder 13, box 18, John M. Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereinafter cited as Special Collections, JWML).

⁹¹ Merrill, "A New Institution in Religious Education," 55.

the students and a cover of legitimacy to the state. Both the incentive for the students and the academic legitimacy for the state were crucial to the initial success of the seminary. While in later years the Church questioned whether credit had been worth the price of non-sectarian instruction, Merrill was adamant about its importance to the seminary program.⁹²

Although Merrill's reasons for believing that credit was essential to the seminary program are not entirely clear, there are at least three possible explanations. First, Merrill believed that the seminaries would not have been granted released time without the corresponding permission for credit.⁹³ High school credit ensured that the seminary would be held to higher academic standards than the Religion Classes, and that at least two out of the three years of the seminary experience would be taught in a non-sectarian manner, thus complying with the provisions for moral and religious study outlined in the Free Schools Act of 1890 while still allowing for one course to emphasize the distinctive aspects of the Mormon faith.⁹⁴ Accordingly, academic credit invested the seminaries with a measure of credibility and provided a reasonable excuse for religious study during school hours. Second, during this era, a number of other religions throughout the country received both released time and academic credit for courses of religious instruction.⁹⁵

⁹² Griffiths argues that Merrill did not request credit for the seminary, but that it was rather offered by the Granite School Board. This, however, does not correspond with Merrill's own account in which he states that he "asked that the board authorize the public high school to accept toward graduation one unit of credit in Bible history," and that the Granite School Board "approved [his] request." Accordingly credit seems to have been Merrill's own idea rather than the idea of the Granite School Board. Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill and the 1930-31 LDS Church Educational Crisis," 96; Merrill, "A New Institution in Religious Education," 55.

⁹³ Merrill, "A New Institution in Religious Education," 55.

⁹⁴ *An Act to Provide for a Uniform System of Free Schools Throughout Utah Territory Passed at the Twenty-ninth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah, 1890*, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁹⁵ Michaelsen, *Piety In The Public School*, 170-75, 181-85; Athearn, *Religious Education and American Democracy*, 66-68.

Merrill had witnessed such an arrangement while attending the University of Chicago, and a number of other universities, including the University of Utah.⁹⁶ For Merrill to have applied for academic credit for the study of religion was not an uncommon event during this period. Indeed, in some ways the request for academic credit demonstrate how profoundly American Mormonism had become. Only a few years earlier, such a request would have been met with stinging editorials and non-Mormon protest. While some did oppose the idea of credit for religious instruction, such opposition was decidedly less pronounced than the criticisms directed at the Religion Classes.⁹⁷ Finally, credit provided a needed incentive for students to attend seminary. One of the principal objections to George M. Cannon's 1899 plan was that students would not be inclined to take courses in religious education without academic credit.⁹⁸ Having been one of the few professors at the University in the late 1890s, it is possible that Merrill had been aware of Cannon's idea as well as the credit-based objections to the plan. Whatever his particular reasons may have been, Merrill viewed academic credit as being integral to his plan to revitalize supplementary religious education in the Church. His commitment to the idea of credit never waned in spite of the fact that it created several problems for Church leaders in later years.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 168; Merrill, "A New Institution in Religious Education," 55.

⁹⁷ The Salt Lake School District consistently rejected the Church's petitions for released time and academic credit for seminaries at East, West, and South high schools. Ogden was similarly a battleground over the idea of released time and academic credit, with the lines generally being drawn between Mormon and non-Mormon contingents. Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill and the 1930-1931 Church Educational Crisis," 100-103; William E. Berrett and Hirschi, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education*, 29; William E. Berrett to Ernest L. Wilkinson, 20 July 1955, folder 6, box 2, reel 2, William E. Berrett Research Files, CHL.

⁹⁸ Willard Done to Church Board of Education, 31 March 1899, Centennial History Project Papers, box 18, folder 11, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁹⁹ In later years, many Church leaders including Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Joseph Fielding Smith, and John A. Widtsoe seem to have grown weary of the non-sectarian Bible courses taught within the seminary. Harkening back to Mormonism's earlier educational philosophies, they consistently questioned whether the Church should support programs that were not specifically designed to build faith in Mormonism. The implementation of

Merrill's plan began to materialize on August 27, 1911 when he was called as second counselor to Frank Y. Taylor in the Granite Stake Presidency. In October of that year, Merrill presented his idea for the seminary to Taylor who authorized Merrill to "go ahead as he had outlined" and begin the initial steps toward establishing the seminary.¹⁰⁰ Merrill had found an important advocate in Taylor. Taylor had long worried about the religious devotion of Mormon youth, and had proven himself to be a willing and adept innovator in addressing such issues.¹⁰¹ Shortly after his call as president of the Granite Stake, Taylor attended a meeting with Karl G. Maeser on the virtues of Religion Classes. In the course of the meeting, Maeser called in a number of boys who were out working in the fields and conducted a religion class with them. Impressed by what he saw, Taylor became "converted to the idea of religious education."¹⁰² When Merrill approached him with the idea for the seminary, Taylor was highly supportive of the idea and authorized Merrill to move forward.

With Taylor's approval, Merrill began making the initial preparations to establish the seminary. He first met with B. W. Ashton, superintendent of Granite School District,

such ideas would necessarily have brought an end to academic credit for seminary. In spite of these criticisms, in 1938 Merrill ardently defended the decision to teach non-sectarian Bible courses for academic credit. See: Merrill, "A New Institution in Religious Education," 55; Heber J. Grant, "Teach That Which Encourages Faith: Address by President Heber J. Grant to Seminary Teachers, July 13, 1934," *The Deseret News*, 8 September 1934; J. Reuben Clark, Jr., "The Charted Course of the Church in Education," 8 August 1938, in J. Reuben Clark, Jr., *J. Reuben Clark Selected Papers: On Religion, Education, and Youth*, ed. David H. Yarn (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1984), 254-55; Joseph Fielding Smith, "Closing Remarks of Elder Joseph Fielding Smith to Seminary Teachers, July 13, 1934," *Deseret News*, 11 May 1935; John A. Widtsoe, "Opening Remarks by Dr. John A. Widtsoe," Seminary Teachers' Summer School, 12 June 1934, folder 6, box 213, John A. Widtsoe Collection, CHL; Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill and the 1930-1931 Church Education Crisis," 118-19, 132 nt. 88.

¹⁰⁰ Merrill, Interview 27 May 1948, EIZ, BYU; Granite Stake Conference Minutes, 27 August 1911, reel 2, Granite Stake General Minutes, CHL; Merrill, "A New Institution in Religious Education," 55.

¹⁰¹ Granite Stake Priesthood Meeting, 24 September 1911, CHL; Frank Y. Taylor, Discourse, 5 October 1902, *Conference Report* (October 1902): 58-59; Taylor, "Remarks," *Home Evening*, 28-30.

¹⁰² Coleman, et al., "History of Granite Seminary," CHL.

who relayed Merrill's idea to the school district's Board of Education on February 23, 1912.¹⁰³ Ashton informed the Board that the seminary would accommodate students who wished for "the privilege of studying Theological and Historical subjects."¹⁰⁴ After some discussion, Merrill was invited to present the idea to the Board on March 8, 1912. At the March 8th meeting, the Board approved the establishment of the seminary "so far as it did not conflict with regular high school work."¹⁰⁵ Following the approval of the school board, Merrill then presented his plan to the Granite Stake High Council which subsequently endorsed the seminary.¹⁰⁶ On March 28, Merrill addressed a letter to A. C. Nelson, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, explaining the seminary. In his letter, Merrill described that the seminary would benefit, not only the Church, but Granite High School as well. He wrote that "the thought behind the whole proposition...is to devise a scheme to which no one can object that shall secure united support for the Granite High School and thus build up the school."¹⁰⁷ The following month the State Board of Education passed a resolution that allowed the state to accept any credits toward graduation that the University of Utah would accept for entrance. Because the University of Utah accepted up to one credit of high school religious study, this resolution became a de facto endorsement of Merrill's petition for academic credit.¹⁰⁸ With the approval of the State Board of Education, the

¹⁰³ James R. Clark, "Church and State Relationships in Education in Utah" (Ed.D. Dissertation, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, 1958), 410.

¹⁰⁴ Granite School District Board of Education Minutes, 23 February 1912, Granite School District, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹⁰⁵ Clark, "Church and State Relationships," 410; Granite School District Board of Education Minutes, 8 March 1912, Granite School District, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹⁰⁶ Merrill, "A New Institution in Religious Education," 55; Granite Stake High Council Historical Record, 22 July 1912, Copy of Notes by A. Theodore Tuttle in EIZ, BYU.

¹⁰⁷ Joseph F. Merrill to A. C. Nelson, 28 March 1912, in Merrill, "A New Institution in Religious Education," 55.

¹⁰⁸ Merrill, "A New Institution in Religious Education," 55.

Granite School District's Board of Education gave their final support for the stake's plan.

The Board's minutes for May 14th read,

A communication from Joseph F. Merrill, in behalf of the Presidency of the Granite Stake, was presented in which a plan was proposed for the Stake to provide a suitable building on its own grounds near the High School and employ its own teachers to offer courses in Bible History and Theology to such students of the High School as may care to receive instructions therein. After some discussion, the Clerk was instructed to write in answer to the above stating that the Board favored the plan and would concur in the same.¹⁰⁹

With the endorsement of each institution in hand, Merrill wrote to the Church Education to explain his idea and to request their suggestions for the program.¹¹⁰ He asked the Board to name "a suitable teacher," requesting "only to have the privilege of approving the [suggested] teacher." The members of the Board hailed Merrill's plan as "a good opportunity to start a new policy in Church school work, to give theological training to students of the state high schools at a nominal cost."¹¹¹

Merrill and Taylor then turned their attention to the functional matters of the seminary's day-to-day operations. As a career educator, Merrill was particularly concerned with finding the right teacher and creating the right curriculum. He described the kind of teacher he wanted, writing:

[I]t is the desire of the presidency of the stake to have a strong young man who is properly qualified to do the work in a most satisfactory manner.... [A] man who is young in his feelings, who loves young people, who delights in their company, and who can command their respect and admiration and exercise a great influence over them.... We want a man who is a thorough student, one who will not teach in a perfunctory way, but who will enliven his instructions by a strong, winning personality and give evidence of a thorough understanding of and scholarship in

¹⁰⁹ Granite School District Board of Education, 14 May 1912, Granite School District.

¹¹⁰ Church Board of Education Minutes, 12 May 1912, folder 4, box 10, Kenney Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; Clark, "Church and State Relationships," 383-84, 410-11.

¹¹¹ Church Board of Education Minutes, 29 May 1912, quoted in Merrill, "A New Institution in Religious Education," 55.

the things he teaches.... A teacher is wanted who is a leader and who will be universally regarded as the inferior of no teacher in the high school.¹¹²

Agreeing with Merrill, the Church Board of Education was emphatic about the “importance of having the right kind of teacher” for the new seminary.¹¹³ The Board nominated Thomas J. Yates, a former student at the Brigham Young Academy, a graduate of Cornell University, and a member of the Granite Stake high council. The Church contracted with Yates to teach the new seminary for a salary of \$100 per month.¹¹⁴ In addition to his teaching services, Yates continued his professional work as an engineer helping to construct a power plant in nearby Murray, Utah.¹¹⁵

Merrill and Yates worked together to design the seminary’s curriculum which “included lessons in Old Testament, New Testament, and Book of Mormon.” The program’s curriculum was patterned after the Religion Classes, having as its primary purpose the development of faith within the lives of the students. Merrill and Yates determined that the seminary would “teach girls to be ladies and boys to be gentlemen,” placing such results “above the teaching of scripture.”¹¹⁶ These aims mirrored the goals of the larger national movements of the era to shape and control the interests and activities of American youth.¹¹⁷ The aims and purposes of the seminary thus dovetailed both Mormon and Progressive American ideals. While the development of faith and the Mormonization of Latter-day Saint youth remained at the core of

¹¹² Merrill to Cummings, 23 April 1912, quoted in Merrill, “A New Institution in Religious Education,” 55.

¹¹³ Merrill, “A New Institution in Religious Education,” 55.

¹¹⁴ Casey P. Griffiths, “The First Seminary Teacher,” *Religious Educator* 9, no. 3 (2008): 115-130; Yates, “Autobiography and Biography,” 81; Magleby, “Granite Seminary 1912,” 9.

¹¹⁵ Griffiths, “The First Seminary Teacher,” 121-22.

¹¹⁶ Magleby, “Granite Seminary 1912,” 9; Yates, “Autobiography and Biography,” 80.

¹¹⁷ Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order*, 59, 222; George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 247.

the Church's supplementary religious education program, the seminary program was organized with the more universal goal of developing ideal Americans.

While Merrill and Yates firmed up the pedagogical features of the seminary, Taylor focused on erecting a building to house it. He secured a loan for \$2,500 from Zion's Bank and used the money to purchase the land and building supplies to construct the seminary building. According to Yates, the construction of a seminary building "required considerable thought." There was uncertainty as to the number of students that would actually patronize the seminary, and even more uncertainty as to the longevity that the new program would enjoy. Indeed, if the 70 students that attended the first year were any indication, the seminary seemed destined to be little more than a marginally supported program that was not worth the stake's investment.¹¹⁸ Construction of the three-room building began only a few weeks before the school year started, and was finished two or three weeks after classes had started. In addition to the regularly furnished classroom, the building included a room for coats and bags, and an office and library for the teacher.¹¹⁹

During its first year, the seminary operated on a relatively limited basis with only 70 students in two classes. There were no textbooks for the class excepting the Bible and the Book of Mormon, and the library was composed of a Bible dictionary belonging to Yates and a number of student drawn maps depicting the Holy Land as well as North and South America. Yates emphasized student participation in the lessons, assigning each student to study and lead class discussions on assigned passages from the Bible.¹²⁰ In this respect, the first seminary

¹¹⁸ Yates' autobiography contains a partial list of the names of the first 70 students to attend the seminary. A similar, more inclusive list is included in the History of Granite Seminary. Yates, "Autobiography and Biography," 80; Coleman, et al., "History of Granite Seminary," CHL.

¹¹⁹ Magleby, "Granite Seminary 1912," 9.

¹²⁰ Magleby, "Granite Seminary 1912," 9.

hearkened back to Karl Maeser's pedagogical plans for the academies and the Religion Classes.¹²¹

Growth and Development of the Granite Seminary

At the end of the seminary's first year of operation, Taylor asked Yates to continue as the continue as the seminary instructor for the following year. In spite of Taylor's request, however, Yates resigned from the position so that he could spend more time focusing on his work as an engineer. In his stead, Yates recommended that Taylor hire Guy C. Wilson, a former classmate of Yates at the Brigham Young Academy.¹²²

With Yates' recommendation and Taylor's approval, Wilson's name was passed on to the members of the Church Board of Education. Rather than being brought up as a simple item on the Board's agenda, Wilson and the future of the Granite seminary came up during a discussion over the propriety of the Church employing professional theology teachers. This issue went well beyond a debate about Granite seminary and the merits of employing Guy Wilson. The meeting moved away from a discussion of Wilson's teachings abilities and turned into a debate over the merits of a Church-wide system of religious education. During these years, a number of stakes throughout Utah and Arizona experimented with high school level Religion Classes that were taught by certified and qualified teachers.¹²³ As a part of this effort the Morgan Stake requested an appropriation from the Church Board of Education to provide a small salary for "a special

¹²¹ While not all Academies and Religion Classes operated along these lines, the "guiding rule" in both programs was that "whatever can be done by the pupils, the teacher should never do himself." Karl G. Maeser, "The Monitorial System," *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 March 1901, 153; Anthon H. Lund, Discourse, 6 April 1916, *Conference Report* (April 1916): 10-11; Round Valley Ward Religion Class Minutes, 30 August 1897, Bear Lake Stake Religion Class Record 1897-1899, CHL; Logan Third Ward Religion Class Minutes, 10 November 1915, CHL.

¹²² Yates, "Autobiography and Biography," 81.

¹²³ Edwin S. Sheets to George H. Brimhall, 20 March 1915, folder 6, box 22, Brimhall Papers, Special Collections, BYU.

Religion Class teacher” who would instruct local Mormon high school students.¹²⁴ The request, however, did not sit well with Church president Joseph F. Smith who worried about the establishment of an expensive precedent.¹²⁵ While the payment of certain Religion Class teachers had been discussed since 1890 by Anthon H. Lund, the idea had never actually been implemented by the Church on a regular basis.¹²⁶ Indeed, the idea of paying theology teachers presented a considerably murky issue for a Church that insisted upon the importance of a lay clergy.¹²⁷

In the midst of this debate, the Granite seminary was brought up as an example of an “experiment upon the same lines” as that being suggested by the Morgan Stake. The Board read a letter from Horace Cummings calling for an appropriation for the Granite Seminary “so that the services of a suitable teacher could be engaged,” namely, Guy C. Wilson. Despite the ongoing debate, the Board appropriated \$1,500 to the seminary “for the coming year in order to give [the seminary] an opportunity to thoroughly demonstrate whether it would be a success or not.” According to Wilson, Board members believed that “a lack of funds and other facilities had prevented [Yates] from giving the work a fair trial.” Accordingly, by appropriating funds for the 1913-1914 school year, the seminary program was officially placed on trial in hopes of seeing whether it really could be “a

¹²⁴ Church Board of Education Minutes, 30 April 1913, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 24 September 1913, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 16 January 1914, folder 4, box 11, Quinn Papers, BL.

¹²⁵ Church Board of Education Minutes, 30 April 1913, folder 4, box 10, Kenney Papers, Special Collections, BYU.

¹²⁶ Lund seems to have been the only proponent of this idea in 1890. Anthon H. Lund Diary, 2 June 1890, in Anthon H. Lund, *Danish Apostle: The Diaries of Anthon H. Lund, 1890-1920*, ed. John P. Hatch (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with the Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2006), 7.

¹²⁷ For a discussion of Mormon lay leadership, see Wesley P. Lloyd, “The Rise and Development of Lay Leadership in the Latter-day Saint Movement” (PhD. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1937).

new policy for Church School work.”¹²⁸ The Board members were careful, however, to note that the action was taken “with no promise...of any future appropriation” and was “not to be considered as a precedent or the initiation of a general policy.”¹²⁹ In spite of this substantial appropriation to the Granite seminary, the Board decided not to provide funding for the Morgan Stake’s Religion Class.

These decisions demonstrated the Church’s growing confidence in the superiority of Merrill’s plan to the Religion Class organization. In the eyes of Mormon leaders, the seminary’s first year had been at least marginally successful and had provided encouraging signs about the program’s future. At the same time, their non-committal attitude with regards to continued funding demonstrated that the seminary’s first year had not been a complete success. While encouraging, the 1912-1913 school year had by no means established the permanency of the seminary. The program was to remain on a provisional basis.

The selection of Guy C. Wilson as the seminary’s first full-time teacher likewise reflected the confidence of Mormon leaders in the burgeoning program. In many regards, Wilson was far more qualified to conduct the seminary than Thomas Yates. While Yates had been well educated and had prior experience as a teacher, he was not a professional educator.¹³⁰ Wilson, on the other hand, was a highly trained and eminently successful teacher. In 1913, John Widtsoe, a prominent Mormon educator, had glowingly referred to him as “the most promising man in educational lines in the Church School system.”¹³¹ Wilson’s first teaching experience came

¹²⁸ Church Board of Education Minutes, 29 May 1912, quoted in Merrill, “A New Institution in Religious Education,” 55.

¹²⁹ Church Board of Education Minutes, 30 April 1913, BL.

¹³⁰ Griffiths, “The First Seminary Teacher,” 117.

¹³¹ Guy C. Wilson to Anna Lowrie Ivins Wilson, 8 March 1913, folder 2, Guy Carlton Wilson Correspondence 1912-1913, CHL.

under the direction of Karl G. Maeser, while he was still a student at the Brigham Young Academy. Then in 1897, on Maeser's recommendation, he moved to the Mormon Mexico where he directed the Juarez Stake Academy and the other Church schools in the region.¹³² In Mexico, he proved to be particularly effective in transmitting spiritual values into the lives of Mormon youth, thus proving that he possessed the desired spiritual qualifications.¹³³ Beyond spiritual subjects, however, Wilson was also an adept instructor in academic subjects.

In contrast to some of the other teachers in the academies, Wilson's professional training extended well beyond his early instruction at the Brigham Young Academy. Wilson's summers were generally filled with post-graduate studies and trips to the National Education Association conventions where he learned new techniques and gained a deep "admiration for John Dewey and the new Pedagogy."¹³⁴ In 1912, when Pancho Villa and his band of marauders forced the exodus of the Mormon colonists from Mexico, Wilson took sabbatical leave to study under Dewey at Columbia University.¹³⁵ Throughout that year, a number of academies petitioned Horace Cummings to appoint Wilson to take charge of their school the following year. According to Cummings, the demand for Wilson that year was so high that he would be able to "get most anything" he

¹³² Lynn M. Hilton, *The History of LDS Business College and Its Parent Institutions, 1886-1993* (Salt Lake City: LDS Business College, 1995), 76; Anthony W. Ivins to Wilford Woodruff, 26 May 1898, folder 2, box 21, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, BYU.

¹³³ One of Wilson's most distinguished students, Franklin S. Harris, later became president of both Brigham Young University and the Utah State Agricultural College. At Wilson's funeral, Harris noted that Wilson had "burned into our lives eternal truths as well as information," concluding, "None of us can be the same again." Franklin S. Harris, "Tribute to Guy C. Wilson," in "Transcript of Funeral Services for Guy C. Wilson," Guy C. Wilson biographic file, Faculty Biographic Files Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹³⁴ Agnes Melissa Stevens Wilson, *Autobiography* 1962, CHL.

¹³⁵ Yates, "Autobiography and Biography," 81.

wanted.¹³⁶ Cummings informed him that he could “take [his] choice” of schools, but Wilson preferred to leave his fate in the hands of the Church leaders stating that he was “willing to undertake anything however great or small in the path of duty,” so long as he would be placed where he could “do [the] most good.”¹³⁷ With the endorsement of Thomas Yates and the support of the Granite stake presidency, Cummings offered Wilson the position at the Granite seminary.¹³⁸ Given the number of academies that desired Wilson’s services during a period when the academies dominated Mormon educational policy, Cummings’ decision to send Wilson to the Granite seminary was a significant expression of confidence in the future possibilities of the program.

While a number of factors made Wilson the best candidate for the position at the Granite seminary, in one regard, his selection for the position was highly peculiar. During the polygamy persecutions of the 1880s, Mexico had become a haven for Mormon polygamists. With the sanction of at least some Church officials, plural marriages continued to be solemnized in Mexico through 1904 when Joseph F. Smith issued the Second Manifesto. In addition to making plural marriage an excommunicable offense, circumstances had compelled Mormon officials to limit the Church service of post-Manifesto polygamists.¹³⁹ Such limitations extended into the realm of the Church schools as notable educators like Joseph M. Tanner and Benjamin Cluff, Jr. were asked to resign their prominent positions and lived out the remainder of their lives in

¹³⁶ Anna Lowrie Ivins Wilson to Guy C. Wilson, 19 January 1913, folder 1, Wilson Correspondence, CHL; Anna Lowrie Ivins Wilson to Guy C. Wilson, 26 January 1913, folder 1, Wilson Correspondence, CHL.

¹³⁷ Guy C. Wilson to Anna Lowrie Ivins Wilson, 8 March 1913, CHL.

¹³⁸ Coleman, et al., *History of Granite Seminary*, CHL; Hilton, *The History of LDS Business College*, 76-77.

¹³⁹ B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 264-65.

exile.¹⁴⁰ Generally the expectation was that those who participated in post-Manifesto polygamy would not return to the United States, thus ensuring that the Church's problems with the U.S. government would not be further exacerbated.¹⁴¹ Circumstances changed, however, during the early 1910s when Mexico erupted into revolution and the Mormon colonists—including many post-manifesto polygamists—abandoned their property and return to the United States.¹⁴²

Guy Wilson had been among those who unashamedly practiced post-Manifesto in Mexico. Throughout the remainder of his life, Wilson remained deeply committed to the doctrine of polygamy and lobbied for the Church to more to recognize the faith of those who had practiced it.¹⁴³ In 1902 and 1903, Wilson had taken two additional wives with the encouragement of Juarez stake president Anthony W. Ivins.¹⁴⁴ From all accounts, the Wilsons had intended to remain in Mexico for the remainder of their lives,

¹⁴⁰ Margery W. Ward, *A Life Divided: The Biography of Joseph Marion Tanner, 1859-1927* (Salt Lake City, Publisher's Press, 1980), 45-54; Annie Clark Tanner, *A Mormon Mother: An Autobiography of Annie Clark Tanner* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Library Tanner Trust Fund, 1991), 171-214; Brian Q. Cannon, "Shaping BYU: The Presidential Administration and Legacy of Benjamin Cluff, Jr.," *BYU Studies* 48, no. 2 (2009): 25-31.

¹⁴¹ Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 167-78.

¹⁴² F. LaMond Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamics of Faith and Culture* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1987), 87-108.

¹⁴³ In spite of opposition from some within the Church, Wilson worked throughout his life to keep his plural families together and remained deeply interested in protecting the Latter-day Saint understanding of plural marriage. In 1930, in a meeting with Church president Heber J. Grant, Wilson noted that he was concerned that "the idea was growing among the young people that the introduction of polygamy was a mistake," an idea that he felt ought to be corrected by having seminary teachers emphasize the faith of early Mormons to practice polygamy. Grant agreed in principle, noting the number of Church leaders that had been the products of polygamy, but likewise noted the importance of teaching the Manifesto, telling Wilson, "It is a fine thing for the people to get it into their heads that when the Lord tells you to do something and then tells you to quit doing it he should be obeyed in both cases." Agnes Wilson, *Autobiography 1962*, CHL; Heber J. Grant Journal, 21 June 1930, folder 4, box 3, Quinn Papers, BL.

¹⁴⁴ According to Guy C. Wilson, Jr., Wilson was called to practice polygamy by George Q. Cannon shortly before he left for Mexico in 1897. Guy C. Wilson, Jr. and B. Carmon Hardy, *Memories of a Venerable Father and Other Reminiscences* (Fullerton, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, 1988), 15; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 424; B. Carmon Hardy, "Guy Carlton Wilson," *Stalwarts South of the Border*, eds. Nelle Spilsbury Hatch and B. Carmon Hardy (No Publisher, 1985), 784.

thus complying with the unspoken Church regulation. Indeed, given their familial status, the family preferred their Mexican home to residence in any of the Mormon communities in the United States.¹⁴⁵ In 1911, however, the Wilsons fled to the United States along with the rest of the Mormon community. Because Wilson spent the first year studying in New York while his families remained separated in Utah and Texas, his family faced few scrutinizing questions. The following year's position at the Granite seminary, however, created a number of unique challenges for both the Wilsons and the Church.

The move to Utah placed the Wilsons in the center of a community that was still struggling to grapple with the controversial issue of plural marriage, a fact which made the appointment of Guy Wilson to the Granite Seminary somewhat surprising. While the plural marriage debate was not the foremost concern in the national consciousness as it had been in earlier years, it remained an important topic in 1913. Indeed, in that year, "petitions from state legislatures" urged the passage of a Constitutional amendment banning polygamy.¹⁴⁶

In addition to the continued national debate over plural marriage, since the Smoot hearings, Utah Mormons had engaged in a consistent effort to distance themselves from the practice of plural marriage. Interestingly, some of those who were most critical of the Mexican colonists' practice of post-Manifesto polygamy were Mormons themselves.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, some of those who were most critical had themselves been members of polygamist families. Wilson's

¹⁴⁵ Anna Lowrie Ivins Wilson to Guy C. Wilson, 13 April 1913, folder 1, Wilson Correspondence, CHL.

¹⁴⁶ Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 296.

¹⁴⁷ George A. McClellan, who had taken a plural wife in 1901, related the following experience upon his arrival in Utah in 1914: "For the MIA season 1914-1915, I was asked by the Bishop to accept the presidency of the YMMIA and told to choose my counselors...I asked two men to serve with me, one of them asked for time to think about it. I did not hear from him so one day my block teacher asked if I knew the reason the man did not accept the call. I did not. He told me it was because he had learned of my plural family and said I would be unpopular with the young people, therefore, make a failure, so he did not want to be connected with me in it. I reported that to the Bishop and asked him to re-consider my appointment that very likely the man was justified in so reasoning and the organization as a whole would be the loser. I was not set apart for the job." George A. McClellan, "My Family and I," unpublished manuscript, copy in author's possession.

wife noted that in 1910 she had met one of the wives of Wilford Woodruff who had continually railed against her son Abraham Owen Woodruff's "'insubordination' to his father's direction in relation to plural marriage." Woodruff's wife had accordingly never recognized her daughter-in-law or the granddaughter that had come from the marriage. Given such virulent sentiments amongst Utah Mormons, Agnes Wilson stated that she "was appalled at the thought of moving to Salt Lake City" when her husband was offered the position in the seminary.¹⁴⁸ In some ways her concerns were justified as the move to Salt Lake forced the families to live in different quarters and to remain constantly guarded whenever they were out in public together.¹⁴⁹

Although the position at the seminary necessitated some uncomfortable changes in the life of the Wilson family, the position also brought with it a sense of acceptance and belonging. Wilson's wife called the seminary position "an impressive gesture of fellowship by the leadership of [the] Church" and "proof positive that Brother Wilson was in good standing in the Church" notwithstanding his post-Manifesto marriages.¹⁵⁰ Thus, in some ways, Wilson's appointment to lead the seminary was an important statement regarding the Church standing of those who had entered polygamous marriages between 1890 and 1904. Although post-Manifesto polygamists were no longer appointed to positions equal to those that Cluff and Tanner had held, many were afforded greater opportunities to serve in the Church following the 1910s.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Agnes Wilson, *Autobiography* 1962, CHL.

¹⁴⁹ Agnes Wilson, *Autobiography* 1962, CHL.

¹⁵⁰ Agnes Wilson, *Autobiography* 1962, CHL.

¹⁵¹ George A. McClellan, who had experienced some difficulty with Church callings at the local level because of his polygamist status, found that such difficulties gradually dissipated as he was called to a number of

Relatively little is known about Wilson's tenure at the Granite seminary. John M. Whitaker, who succeeded Wilson, complained in his diary that when he first came to the seminary in 1915, "The only thing I found was the daily report or record of students, and of the of the course...there was nothing whatever."¹⁵² Because Wilson left the seminary after only two years to take charge of the LDS University, there is a temptation to downplay his contributions to the seminary program. Nevertheless, Wilson made several important contributions to the fledgling program.

Although the title of first seminary teacher is appropriately ascribed to Thomas Yates, Wilson was the first full-time seminary teacher. Yates had been at the seminary for only a couple of hours each day, Wilson's teaching schedule stretched from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. He also dedicated a number of hours each Saturday to consult with parents and students. In working with the students, Wilson spent much of his time helping them to deal with the growing controversies between academics and religion.¹⁵³

As a devoted student of John Dewey, Wilson was far from antagonistic toward many aspects of modernist thought and the early twentieth-century educational reforms. He consistently taught that Mormonism did not oppose, but in fact could be harmonized with, modern scientific knowledge even if it could not be reconciled with some modernist theories. He believed that "whoever would take faith and revelation and pit them against the onward march of science and reason, would drive a wedge into the very heart of the structure of truth." In Wilson's mind, it was essential for these two epistemologies to "cooperate in one great urge for

local leadership positions in the 1920s and was invited to "join the prayer circle of the First Council of Seventies" in 1929. McClellan, "My Family and I," in author's possession.

¹⁵² John M. Whitaker, Diary, April 1915, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁵³ Agnes Wilson, Autobiography 1962, CHL.

the right direction of humankind.”¹⁵⁴ Accordingly, much of Wilson’s work as a Mormon educator within the academies and the seminary was “to reconcile science and religion.”¹⁵⁵ In the midst of constant questions regarding the validity of Darwinian evolution and Mormonism’s position on the subject, Wilson staked out a middle ground upon the subject. While he did not accept Darwinian theory as a viable explanation for the origin of man, Wilson cautioned “religious dogmatists” to “be less positive in their assertiveness and frankly admit that evolution or the unfolding of life from within is a basic law of life.”¹⁵⁶

Wilson’s efforts yielded important and lasting results. S. Dilworth Young, a former student, later referred to Guy Wilson as “a man of faith” and credited Wilson with providing him with his “first detailed knowledge” of the doctrines and scriptures of Mormonism.¹⁵⁷ In addition to Mormon students, Wilson also influenced some non-Mormon students. He later recalled that one of his most memorable experiences at the seminary was “the baptism of Ray Dundes who not only freed himself from all prejudice formerly entertained but joined the church and became one our most earnest advocates.”¹⁵⁸

Perhaps Wilson’s most enduring contributions to the movement were administrative in nature. During his tenure at the seminary, Wilson developed a close working relationship with the principal at Granite High School, Adam S. Bennion, who

¹⁵⁴ Guy C. Wilson, “Professor Guy C. Wilson—Remarks at Department of Education Conference, April 5, 1931,” Guy C. Wilson Papers [ca. 1931], CHL.

¹⁵⁵ Agnes Wilson, *Autobiography* 1962, CHL.

¹⁵⁶ Guy C. Wilson, “Evolution,” Wilson Papers [ca. 1931], CHL.

¹⁵⁷ S. Dilworth Young, Discourse, 4 April 1960, *Conference Report*, (April 1960): 80.

¹⁵⁸ Guy C. Wilson to Granite Seminary, [ca. 1930], in Coleman et al., “History of Granite Seminary,” CHL.

would himself later become an integral participant in the expansion of Mormonism's supplementary religious education program. Wilson devoted much of his time to developing a developing a seminary program and curriculum that met the demands of the Granite School School District while at the same time ensuring that the program built the faith of the students.¹⁵⁹ students.¹⁵⁹ Wilson also worked to spread the message of the seminary to other members of the Church. According to Wilson's wife, most Sunday afternoons found Wilson travelling throughout northern Utah to speak to various wards and stakes about the value of this new program.¹⁶⁰ Wilson wasn't alone on the sacrament meeting circuit. Under his leadership, and with the approval of local bishops and stake presidents, seventy-two seminary students visited wards throughout the Salt Lake Valley to speak in sacrament meetings about "the advantages of Religious Education."¹⁶¹

Early Expansion of the Seminary Program

Wilson's successor, John M. Whitaker, expanded the efforts to advertize the seminary to include speaking at public schools.¹⁶² Under Whitaker's supervision, seminary students canvassed the Granite and Cottonwood stakes speaking about "their joy in religious work...and

¹⁵⁹ Wilson's wife noted that the effort to coordinate the seminary curriculum with the requirements of both local and state education boards "was a task that challenged the patience, tact, diplomacy, wisdom, foresight, intelligence and perseverance of those who had the vision...to dedicate themselves to [that] high purpose, and Guy C. Wilson was afire with zeal and enthusiasm for that purpose." Unfortunately, very little is known about the curriculum that Wilson helped to develop. Wilson's successor, John M. Whitaker, noted that Wilson had left "a little pocket handbook" detailing the fact that lessons were taught on "Religion in General...Mormonism...Word of Wisdom...Tithing...Authority...Sabbath Observance...Church work...[and] prayer," with additional lessons on sin, moral character, and the beginnings of the Old Testament. Whitaker complained, however, about the lack of detail in Wilson's curriculum, which had forced him to "start without the least scratch, or outline." Agnes Wilson, *Autobiography* 1962, CHL; John M. Whitaker, *Diary*, April 1915, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁶⁰ Agnes Wilson, *Autobiography* 1962, CHL.

¹⁶¹ Wilson wrote that he had originally asked for forty-six volunteers, but received positive responses from seventy-two, all of whom wanted to spread the message of the seminary. Wilson to Granite Seminary, [ca. 1930], in Coleman et al., *History of the Granite Seminary*, CHL.

¹⁶² John M. Whitaker to Edwin S. Sheets, 8 June 1917, folder 13, box 18, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML; Horace H. Cummings to John M. Whitaker, 10 June 1918, folder 13, box 18, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML.

the change in their attitude toward religion from indifference to earnestness.”¹⁶³ While his students encouraged seminary work in Salt Lake City, local Church leaders invited Whitaker to travel to other Utah communities like Lehi and American Fork to publicize the virtues of the program and encourage them to establish similar programs.¹⁶⁴ More surprisingly, Whitaker was frequently invited to speak to the combined student body and faculty of Granite High School about the importance of religious education.¹⁶⁵

Accordingly, a somewhat pluralistic seminary population developed that included students from a number of different Christian denominations in addition to Mormonism.¹⁶⁶ The advertising efforts of Wilson and Whitaker ultimately proved successful as Mormon supplementary religious education at the high school level numerous other stakes between 1913 and 1920, becoming the Church’s main religious education program by 1920.

As was earlier noted, in the spring of 1913, the Morgan Stake asked to the Church Board of Education for an appropriation of \$125 to pay the salary of a high school Religion Class teacher.¹⁶⁷ A few months later, the Maricopa Arizona Stake made a similar appeal. The Board denied both appeals, citing a “lack of funds.”¹⁶⁸ By January

¹⁶³ Whitaker to Sheets, 8 June 1917, Special Collections, JWML.

¹⁶⁴ John M. Whitaker to Edwin S. Sheets, 24 October 1917, folder 37, box 18, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML.

¹⁶⁵ John M. Whitaker to Adolph Merz, 20 June 1916, folder 50, box 18, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML.

¹⁶⁶ John M. Whitaker to Edwin S. Sheets, 25 September 1916, folder 36, box 18, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML; John M. Whitaker to Adolph Merz, 23 March 1917, folder 50, box 18, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML.

¹⁶⁷ Church Board of Education Minutes, 30 April 1913, BL.

¹⁶⁸ Church Board of Education Minutes, 24 September 1913, BL.

1914, however, the General Board of Religion Classes had become convinced of the merit of providing financial support for high school Religion Classes. The General Board requested that the Church Board of Education ““set aside...\$5,000 out of the money appropriated to Church Schools, to be used for Religion Classes, including High School Religion Class work.”” With this recommendation, the Church Board of Education appropriated \$3,503 for the upkeep of high school religion classes, including \$1,500 for the Granite seminary to continue for the following year.¹⁶⁹

In 1914, a number of high school religion classes were established in Mormon communities throughout the intermountain west. As with the Granite seminary, these classes requested high school credit for their study of the Bible.¹⁷⁰ To ensure the qualifications of the teachers in Utah Valley, the General Board of Religion Classes hired professors from Brigham Young University to conduct the classes.¹⁷¹ Further, to guarantee that the curriculum of the classes met the standards of the state, George H. Brimhall and Guy C. Wilson were commissioned to write a text for the classes.¹⁷² Ultimately, the State Board of Education voted to allow districts to accept one unit of “Bible Study and Literature” toward graduation.¹⁷³

Although far less costly than the Granite seminary, high school Religion Classes were riddled with problems that made them far less viable than the seminary. Though academic credit was initially promised to students and was eventually granted by the State Board of Education, it

¹⁶⁹ General Board of Religion Classes to Church Board of Education, 8 January 1914, in Church Board of Education Minutes, 16 January 1914, BL.

¹⁷⁰ Sheets to Brimhall, 20 March 1915, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁷¹ George H. Brimhall to Edwin S. Sheets, 7 September 1915, folder 4, box 24, Brimhall Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁷² Unfortunately, there is no known copy of this text in existence. Edwin S. Sheets to George H. Brimhall, 1 September 1915, folder 4, box 24, Brimhall Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁷³ Edwin S. Sheets to Dear Brother, 9 November 1917, folder 37, box 18, Whitaker Papers, Special Collections, JWML.

was not immediately forthcoming. The result, according to one Mormon leader, was that “many of the L.D.S. students in the public high schools are not inclined to take the High School Religion Class work, because school credits cannot be given for said work.”¹⁷⁴ The lack of academic credit placed enrollment in the high school Religion Classes upon a precarious footing. Indeed, the entire issue of credit came into question in December 1915, when Mosiah Hall, the state inspector of high schools, questioned the resolution that had granted credit for the Granite seminary, leading the State Board of Education to overturn the resolution.¹⁷⁵ Although credit was reinstated less than a month later, stringent regulations governing the extension of credit required religious classes to be held to a high standard.¹⁷⁶

The standards for academic credit were contingent upon the idea that the classes would be “pursued for the same length of time and with the same thoroughness required for similar credit in any other subject,” and would be taught by a teacher with “full high school certification or its equivalent.”¹⁷⁷ This regulation presented some difficulties for the high school Religion Classes. The seminary operated throughout the day on a released time basis, but the high school Religion Classes were generally held in the afternoons or evenings, and were subject to the scheduling demands of those qualified to teach the classes. This issue became particularly problematic when teachers worked

¹⁷⁴ Edwin S. Sheets to George H. Brimhall, 8 October 1914, folder 6, box 22, Brimhall Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁷⁵ Berrett and Hirschi, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education*, 29; “Bible Study Taboo in Public Schools,” *Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1 December 1915, CHL (hereinafter cited as JH).

¹⁷⁶ Sheets to Dear Brother, 9 November 1917, Special Collections, JWML; “Co-operation of Church and School in Religious Training of the Child,” JH, 22 December 1915, CHL.

¹⁷⁷ Sheets to Dear Brother, 9 November 1917, Special Collections, JWML.

some distance away from the areas where they taught. Noting this problem, George Brimhall informed the General Board of Religion Classes that the classes would be “more satisfactory to the people” if they could be “given at some time other than in the evening.”¹⁷⁸

Finally, the salaries offered to most of the high school Religion Class teachers did little more than compensate their travel to and from the class locations.¹⁷⁹ Given the stringent state requirements, it became increasingly implausible to expect individuals who were qualified to teach the courses would be willing to do so for a nominal sum. While high school Religion Classes operated far more cheaply than the Granite Seminary’s yearly appropriation of \$1500, the reality was that the benefits of supplementary religious education had an attached cost.

In 1915, the Church began a steady expansion of the released time seminary program, judging it to be “one of the most potent agencies placed at the disposal of the young people during the year and an important enlargement of the Church school system’s scope.”¹⁸⁰ With the encouragement and support of Horace H. Cummings, the Box Elder Stake opened the Church’s second theological seminary on September 20, 1915 with Abel S. Rich as principal.¹⁸¹ The following year, additional seminaries were organized in Mount Pleasant, Utah, and Maricopa, Arizona, each receiving appropriations between \$1,200 and \$2,000 per year to operate.¹⁸² In

¹⁷⁸ George H. Brimhall to Edwin S. Sheets, 5 October 1915, folder 4, box 24, Brimhall Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁷⁹ Brimhall to Sheets, 7 September 1915, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁸⁰ “Progress and Growth in Church Schools,” *Deseret Evening News*, 16 December 1916.

¹⁸¹ Horace Cummings had encouraged the Stake to “have [a] Religion Class in connection with [the] high school” as early as October 1913. Stohl Daybook, 26 October 1913, CHL; “Theological Academy Begins Work Today,” *Deseret Evening News*, 20 September 1915.

¹⁸² Church Board of Education Minutes, 24 January 1917, folder 1, box 25, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; “Progress and Growth in Church Schools,” *Deseret Evening News*, 16 December 1916.

1917, seminaries were also set up in Lehi, American Fork, and Pleasant Grove.¹⁸³ As the Granite seminary's frequent advertising campaigns began to yield results, John Whitaker became a source of information and guidance to help the new seminaries to get established, answering questions on a wide array of issues that ranged from high school credit to the specifics of lesson plans.¹⁸⁴

In addition to numerical growth, the seminary had an important influence in the the students who attended the classes. According to Whitaker, 80 to 85 percent of the who attended seminary also attended their Sunday meetings, including many who had not frequently participated prior to that time.¹⁸⁵ In addition to attending Church meetings, seminary students became active in the auxiliary organizations, testifying "of the good desires and feelings that have come into their lives, of their change of attitude toward life, toward society, toward religion and toward the Lord."¹⁸⁶

Beyond increasing the religious activity of the students, seminary had a positive influence upon the social and moral practices of the students. Jesse K. Wheeler, one of Whitaker's students, wrote that the lessons he received in seminary were "a constant guide" so he could no longer "see the very appearance of sin or wrong without shunning

¹⁸³ Whitaker to Sheets, 24 October 1917, Special Collections, JWML; "Church Will Provide Theological Course," *Deseret Evening News*, 3 September 1917; "Going to Canada," *Deseret Evening News*, 1 November 1917.

¹⁸⁴ W. Ernest Morrell to John M. Whitaker, 2 September 1919, folder 50, box 18, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML; Adolph Merz to John M. Whitaker, 15 June 1916, folder 50, box 18, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML; Adolph Merz to John M. Whitaker, 12 August 1916, folder 50, box 18, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML; Franklin S. Davis to Harold W. Hoare, 16 August 1923, folder 50, box 18, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML.

¹⁸⁵ John M. Whitaker to George H. Brimhall, 20 December 1920, folder 8, box 18, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML.

¹⁸⁶ John M. Whitaker to Edwin S. Sheets, 1 June 1916, folder 35, box 18, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML.

it.”¹⁸⁷ Another student wrote of the influence that seminary had upon his morality, writing, “I too, like many others like to take things that do not belong to me. [But] since we had the lesson on stealing whenever I am tempted to take anything I say, ‘What would Bro. Whitaker say if he knew?’”¹⁸⁸ The seminary likewise influenced the behavior of students in the public schools. D. J. Thurman, principal of the Granite Junior High, noted that as a result of the seminary, the “general deportment in [the] halls and auditorium” as well as the level of respect displayed by students toward their teachers and others at the school had remarkably improved.¹⁸⁹

For those who had been with the program since its inception, the expansion and the resultant influence that the seminary had in the lives of the students was surprising and a direct evidence of the divine origins of the program. Looking back on the progress of the seminary program, Joseph F. Merrill wrote, “We sometimes build better than we know. It was so in this case.”¹⁹⁰ Commenting on the expansion of the seminary program into Lehi and American Fork, Whitaker wrote,

[I]t was a day long to be remembered and the commencement of a movement there with possibilities of the greatest moral and religious results. I look to see the day when throughout the Church, splendid seminaries will rise as a blessing and salvation to the young men and women of high school age.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Jesse K. Wheeler to John M. Whitaker, 15 July 1917, folder 12, box 19, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML.

¹⁸⁸ Dean Bringhurst, undated note, folder 14, box 19, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML.

¹⁸⁹ D. J. Thurman signed statement, 10 January 1921, folder 44, box 18, Whitaker Collection, Special Collection, JWML.

¹⁹⁰ Merrill, “A New Institution,” 55.

¹⁹¹ On another occasion, Whitaker stated, “The seminary movement is a great forward [*sic*] movement in the formation of an educational system destined to be a power in the elevation of the race, and we are fortunate in being privileged to aid in its future.” Whitaker to Sheets, 24 October 1917, Special Collections, JWML; John M. Whitaker to W. Ernest Morrell, 10 September 1919, folder 50, box 18, Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, JWML.

For John Whitaker and others closely associated with Mormon education, the rapid expansion of the seminary made it clear that the program, that had first taken shape during a Merrill family home evening, did in fact represent “a new policy in Church School work.” By 1919, fifteen seminaries had been established throughout the Church and the seminary was poised to become the dominant and most influential element in the educational efforts of the Church.¹⁹²

The seminary, however, represented more than just a shift in Mormon educational policy. In many regards it was an evidence of just how far the Church had come in the few short years since 1890. Although the Religion Class program had been the Church’s first supplementary religious education program, its underlying philosophy represented the protectionist ideas and practices of nineteenth-century Mormonism. Joseph Merrill’s seminary, however, represented a Mormonism that was no longer defined by the fears of encroaching Americanization and Protestantization. From the program’s inception, seminary officials worked to maintain a healthy relationship with the public school system, rather than viewing the school officials as enemies and the schools as houses of “Godless education.” The curriculum reflected this change. While inculcating faith remained the vital standard of all Mormon religious education programs, the curriculum likewise emphasized the development of social morals and Christian character through a non-sectarian treatment of the Bible. The result was the creation of a seminary program that was mutually beneficial to both the Church and the State. The seminary program was thus an evidence of the fact that Mormonism was moving into the mainstream of American society and would be governed by the principles governing Church and State relations. With this foundation laid, the Church was prepared to take the last major step in the development of its supplementary religious education program: namely, providing supplementary religious education for Mormon students at the collegiate level.

¹⁹² Merrill, “A New Institution,” 56.

CHAPTER 5

A PERIOD OF EXPANSION: MORMON SUPPLEMENTARY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 1919-1930

By 1919, supplementary religious education had become a staple in Mormon educational policy. Still, one important aspect of the Church's educational program remained unresolved. Despite numerous efforts, Mormon leaders had yet to create a viable program of religious education for Latter-day Saint college students. The growing enrollment of Mormons in American colleges and universities meant that collegiate level supplementary religious education had become an increasingly crucial necessity for the Church by the 1920s.

Concerns over collegiate level religious education, however, had existed since at least the 1880s. In fact safeguarding the faith of Mormon college students had been a source of discussion since at least the 1880s, and had been brought up frequently during the following four decades. Such discussions had dramatically increased during the 1910s as the numbers of Mormon university students grew. According to Horace Cummings, the Church superintendent of schools, college often proved to be "a new and strange mental environment" for Mormon students, many of whom "scarcely [knew] how to meet New theories and philosophies" which were "often quite contrary the gospel." He further argued that the collegiate environment tended to "entrap them into serious sins." As a result, many students abandoned their Mormon faith, creating an urgent need for the Church to establish a "positive and strong influence" at the collegiate level.¹ Such a need was particularly pronounced because of the ever-growing numbers

¹ Horace H. Cummings, "Annual Report, Church Schools," *Deseret News*, 17 September 1915.

of Mormon students who were leaving their homes and the influence of their parents in order to pursue advanced degrees.²

Due to a high percentage of Mormon students, the University of Utah was often the focus of these concerns. Although publicly supporting the University, Mormon leaders privately worried that the University created an environment where Mormon ideas were “far from popular among both faculty and student body,” which caused many students to “feel half ashamed or reluctant to have it known that they are Mormons.”³ Such suspicions were not entirely without merit, as some University officials concurred that the University was not the friendliest environment for Mormon students. On the very day that the Church Board of Education approved plans in 1912 for the Granite Seminary, a couple of unnamed University officials warned the Board that some of the Church’s “best educated boys and girls are losing interest in the gospel and becoming tainted with erroneous ideas and theories.” They subsequently requested that the Board do something to ensure “the religious welfare of the Mormon students” at the University.⁴ Although the Board looked into the possibility, they eventually decided not to establish a collegiate seminary because of difficulties in securing credit and their concerns that the students would be “too busy with school” to add yet another class to their schedules.⁵

² Commission of Education Meeting Minutes, 25 October 1921, folder 9, box 25, Centennial History Project Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereinafter cited as Special Collections, HBLL).

³ Church Board of Education Minutes, 23 November 1917, folder 4, box 10, Scott G. Kenney Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁴ Church Board of Education Minutes, 12 May 1912, folder 4, box 10, Kenney Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁵ Church Board of Education Minutes, 6 November 1912, folder 4, box 10, Kenney Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

In 1914, Joseph Merrill and Maude May Babcock were invited “to become members of a committee to look after the welfare of the Latter-day Saint students at the University.”⁶ A year later, noting that all previous efforts to establish religious education at the University had failed, Horace Cummings again called the attention of the Board to the “urgent need of making some provision to care for the Latter-day Saint students attending the state university.” Even the University of Utah administration, together with several of its professors, had urged the Church to erect a building near the campus where “a course in theological training” for academic credit could be offered to Mormon students.⁷ Similar concerns for students at the University of Utah were expressed again in both 1916 and 1917, leading the Board to conclude that “a competent professor to teach the Gospel there would do incalculable good.”⁸

In spite of these attempts, a viable program of religious education for college students continued to evade Mormon leaders during the 1910s. During the 1920s, however, the Church finally developed what came to be known as the institute program to provide moral and religious instruction at the collegiate level. Together with the other religious education programs, the institute program ensured that religious education was available to the whole range of Mormon students from grade school through college. It likewise provided important evidence of Mormonism’s effective transition into the modern world as generally-assimilated Americans.

Historiography of the Institute Program

Similar to the seminary program, the history of the institutes has been widely researched and written about within Mormon educational history. In 1935, J. Wyley Sessions, the Church’s

⁶ Unfortunately, available records do not indicate what became of this committee. Church Board of Education Minutes, 26 June 1914, folder 6, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁷ Cummings, “Annual Report, Church Schools,” *Deseret Evening News*, 17 September 1915.

⁸ Church Board of Education Minutes, 23 November 1917, Special Collections, HBLL.

first official institute teacher, wrote a short history of the founding of the institute program for the *Improvement Era*. In this article, Sessions outlined the academic qualifications and standards that the Idaho State Board of Education had required of the first institute and the Church's efforts to comply with those standards. His article also included statements made by Idaho educators endorsing the institute program.⁹ Sessions augmented his narrative of the founding events of the institute program with two oral history interviews, one given in 1965 and the other in 1972.¹⁰ Whereas Sessions' article documents the efforts to secure the approval of the University of Idaho, these oral histories document Sessions' assignment to go to Idaho and his subsequent work with the Moscow community to establish the institute.

Leonard Arrington was the first historian to make use of Sessions' narrative of the institute founding. In 1967, Arrington published a short history of the Moscow institute to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the institute program. Arrington tied the program's founding to "the rising reputation of science and a decline in the influence and power of the churches" during the 1920s.¹¹ He then argued that "the most effective religious response was the spread of 'Religious Foundations' at the university level," which provided academic defenses of religion for collegiate students.¹² Arrington then briefly surveyed the development of the institute program and the role it played in the Church, telling the story mostly through Sessions' point of view.

⁹ J. Wyley Sessions, "The Latter-day Saint Institutes," *Improvement Era*, July 1935, 412-25.

¹⁰ J. Wyley Sessions and Magdalene Sessions, Interview, 29 June 1965, transcript by Casey P. Griffiths, copy in author's possession; J. Wyley Sessions, Oral History, 12 August 1972, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹¹ Leonard J. Arrington, "The Founding of the L. D. S. Institutes of Religion," *Dialogue* 2, no. 2 (Summer 1967): 139.

¹² Arrington, "The Founding of the L. D. S. Institutes of Religion," 140.

A year later, Ward Magleby wrote a similar article for teachers in the Church Educational System detailing the founding of the Moscow institute.¹³ While much of the information in Magleby's article can be found in other sources, he does provide some important information regarding the curricular beginnings of the institute program. Magleby cites a letter from Joseph Merrill to Wyley Sessions detailing the desired contents of the institute curriculum. To date, Magleby's article is the only known source for this important letter.¹⁴

More recently, three authors have added to our understanding of the origins of the institute program. Robert Cloward's article delivered at the Mormon History Association's conference in 2001 redefines the story of the institute's founding. He argues that the institute program was actually established first at the Utah Agricultural College in Cedar City in 1925, a full year before Wyley Sessions was asked to establish the Moscow institute, and three years before the first classes were actually taught at Moscow. Cloward offers a number of explanations as to why the Cedar City classes had been marginalized within the official history of the institute program. Accordingly, Cloward suggests that the history of the institute be revised to include the Cedar City college seminary within its narrative.¹⁵ There are compelling reasons both for and against Cloward's argument to list the Cedar City Seminary as the first institute. The real value of the paper, however, is that it demonstrates the fact that the creation of the Church's collegiate supplementary religious education program had a history that predated 1926 and the founding of the Moscow institute. Unfortunately, Cloward's paper suffers from

¹³ Ward H. Magleby, "1926 Another Beginning: Moscow, Idaho," *Impact: Weekday Religious Education Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1968).

¹⁴ Magleby, "1926 Another Beginning," 27, 31.

¹⁵ Robert Allen Cloward, "The Cedar City, Utah, Origin of the Institute of Religion," CHL.

many of the same deficiencies as the Sessions narrative, remaining couched in the 1920s rather than acknowledging the long history of efforts that predated the Cedar City Seminary.

Taking a slightly different approach than Cloward, Dennis Wright's article on the beginnings of the "first LDS institute of Religion" at the University of Idaho appeared in 2009.¹⁶ Similar to other articles, Wright describes the founding of the Moscow institute in 1926. In addition to this, Wright provides important background information on the history of Moscow, Idaho, and the Church's involvement in that city. Additionally, Wright used the reminiscences of one of the Moscow institute's first students to show how the program influenced those who it was established to help.

Jacob Olmstead has further redefined the foundational origins of the institutes in three unpublished articles written for BYU's Education in Zion Exhibit.¹⁷ Using a number of sources, including Scott Kenney's research collection, Olmstead argues that the idea for the institute began in 1901 when Anthon Lund met with University of Utah officials to discuss establishing a Religion Class for the University. While additional sources have since revealed earlier origins for the idea of supplementary religious education at the collegiate level, Olmstead's research first established a pre-1910s origin for the institute program. Additionally, building upon Arrington, Olmstead placed the founding of the institute into the contextual setting of the growth of secularism in American higher education. Further, Olmstead has carefully documented the founding of the Moscow institute and the early expansion of the institute program during the late

¹⁶ Dennis A. Wright, "The Beginnings of the First LDS Institute of Religion at Moscow, Idaho," *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 65-84.

¹⁷ Jacob W. Olmstead, "Institutes of Religion, 1926-1929: Part I," Unpublished Essay, Education in Zion Exhibit, Joseph F. Smith Building, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereinafter cited as EIZ, BYU); Jacob W. Olmstead, "Institutes of Religion, 1926-1929: Part II," Unpublished Essay, EIZ, BYU; Jacob W. Olmstead, "Institutes of Religion, 1928-1938: Part III," Unpublished Essay, EIZ, BYU.

1920s and early 1930s. Olmstead's three articles provide an invaluable source of information regarding the founding of the early institutes.

Although several authors have written about the founding of the institute program, its establishment has generally not been viewed as the culmination of a complete Church program of supplementary religious education, with origins in and connections to the founding of the Church's other religious education programs. Further, while several historians have explained the role that the secularization of the American university played in developing the institute program, historians have ignored the equally important role of the 1920s sexual revolution in the establishment of the program. Finally, most authors have failed to examine the reasons why the establishment of the institute program and the subsequent abandonment of the majority of the Church's colleges took place during the tenure of Heber J. Grant. While it is certainly true that other individuals like Adam S. Bennion and Joseph Merrill were more prominent players in the development of the institute program, Grant played a crucial, albeit behind-the-scenes, role in defining the economic policy that drove the decade's economic decisions. Thus it is essential to examine certain aspects of the Grant administration during the 1920s.

Contextual Setting

The Church had engaged in a concerted effort to establish a supplementary religious education program at the collegiate level since the early 1890s, but three decades later had yet been unsuccessful. Why was the institute program finally able to be established in the mid-1920s? What factors contributed to the successful founding of the program in the 1920s that had not been present in earlier periods?

Both the American and Mormon contexts of the twenties help to explain the reasons why the Church was finally successful in this decade. While Mormon leaders had desired to establish

such a program in earlier years, the 1920s provided a fertile social, religious, economic, and political climate that allowed the Church to organize a collegiate level program.

In many ways, the 1920s was a decade of duality. The mere mention of the decade conjures thoughts of two contradictory, yet related, images: flapper girls and Prohibition. Indeed, it was a decade defined by both sexual revolution and Christian fundamentalism. In economic terms, the twenties are widely considered to be a period of the excesses and extravagance so aptly described in F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel *The Great Gatsby*.¹⁸ At the same time, however, the 1920s were years of leanness and recession for many Americans, including farmers.¹⁹ Such duality played an integral role in the founding of the Church's institute program.

In the post-war world, many American youth began to challenge the country's mores of gender and sexuality. While it would be incorrect to suggest that the country had been a paradise of Victorian morality prior to World War I, that the country's public views on sexuality underwent a dramatic transformation in the decade following the War. Encouraged by the Women's Rights Movement, young women challenged the country's moral regulations, which they viewed as a double standard that unfairly favored male transgressions while harshly punishing female infidelities.²⁰ The rebellion of the younger generation, particularly female rebellion, came to be symbolized by the image of the flapper, a style characterized by bobbed

¹⁸ Nathan Miller, *New World Coming: The 1920s and the Making of Modern America* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 1; F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Scribner, 2004).

¹⁹ Geoffrey Perrett, *America in the Twenties: A History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 118; Gilbert C. Fite, "The Farmer's Dilemma, 1919-1929," *Change and Continuity in Twentieth-Century America: The 1920's*, eds. John Braeman, Robert H. Bremner, and David Brody (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968), 67-102; Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 6-7.

²⁰ David E. Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1940*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004), 134; Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 20, 136.

hair and “a minimum of undergarments, short skirts, filmy fabrics, and sheer hose.” Further, flappers generally engaged in practices often associated with prostitution to “underscore...their right to sexuality and personal liberty.”²¹ Accordingly, the flapper came to symbolize the female demand for “the same social freedoms...that men enjoyed.”²²

While the flapper generally reflected the revolution in female sexuality, men likewise participated in the decade’s redefinition of sexual ideas and practices. Margaret Sanger’s push for the increased understanding and availability of birth control together with the sexualizing of the mass media led to dramatic increases in the numbers of women who acknowledged engagement in premarital intercourse.²³ Such cases, however, were generally among engaged couples that eventually married. That premarital sex was largely confined to engaged couples, however, is not to suggest that other youth were unaffected by the introduction of new mores. Indeed, spurred on by the film industry’s production of “racy” films like *The Sheik*, necking and petting became some of the favored activities of American youth.²⁴ Noting the widespread nature of the sexual revolution, one national magazine declared that “the nation had ‘struck sex o’clock.’”²⁵ As a result, a marked separation appeared between the older and younger generations, as traditionalists came to view the youthful practices as “irresponsible, irreligious, and immoral.”²⁶

²¹ Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 135.

²² Miller, *New World Coming*, 253.

²³ Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 132-33, 135-36.

²⁴ Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States*, 95-96, 133-34, 149; Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 136-37; *The Sheik*, directed by George Melford, Famous Players-Lasky, 1921.

²⁵ Miller, *New World Coming*, 260-62.

²⁶ Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 135; Miller, *New World Coming*, 262.

The generation gap of the 1920s resulted not only from the sexual revolution, but also from a growing difference in the level of educational achievement between older and younger Americans. The country's educational advancements, in fact, actually contributed to the sexual revolution of the twenties. During this decade, American intellectuals began to question the country's social and religious traditions that they had inherited.²⁷ The country's growing number of college and university students grabbed hold of such questions, dramatically increasing their importance within the country. While the majority of Americans still had no collegiate training during the decade, the twenties produced the most widely educated group of Americans to date. By 1926, approximately one-eighth of the Americans between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three received some form of collegiate training.²⁸ As the nation continued to industrialize, it was becoming increasingly clear that the future of America would be inextricably tied to colleges and universities.

Corresponding with this boom in the number of college-educated Americans was a increase in scientific inquiry and discovery. Modern science seemed to extend its reach into and alter the understanding of virtually every field of learning, including religion. Using the latest scientific techniques, Biblical scholars began to study the Bible in a way that "undermined for many the sense of the unique truths of evangelical Protestantism."²⁹ Indeed, it seemed as though "scientists were taking over the study and interpretation of the Bible" and challenging the very core of American Christianity in the process.³⁰ What made matters worse was the fact that many American youth "reveled in modernity," viewing the newfound knowledge as "a release from the

²⁷ Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 145-46.

²⁸ Miller, *New World Coming*, 259-60.

²⁹ Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 148.

³⁰ Arrington, "The Founding of the L. D. S. Institutes of Religion," 139.

restraints, especially the Victorian moral code, of the past.”³¹ As American college students became more familiar with contemporary scientific ideas like Darwinian evolution, many became increasingly critical of many of the older generation’s traditional religious beliefs. Moreover the country’s increased educational opportunities further separated American youth from their elders by providing them with large amounts of time to socialize with their peers outside the confines of parental supervision.³²

Such social changes among the younger generations, however, did not go unopposed. In the wake of the sexual revolution and the increased availability of higher education, Christian groups worked to combat both the moral degeneration of society and the teaching of evolution in the schools.³³ The fundamentalist movement focused primarily upon two areas, namely, “the onslaughts of liberalism within the major denominations” and the teaching of Darwinism within the schools.³⁴ The movement emphasized a return to the fundamental concepts of Christianity, including Biblical literalism.³⁵ The fundamentalist movement thus aimed at the heart of the 1920s revolutions in morality and education.

Emblematic of the movement’s moral efforts was the passage of the Volstead Act, commonly known as Prohibition. Although the act was a progressive reform initiative with deep roots in the nineteenth-century temperance movements, its enforcement as a law was largely a thing of the 1920s. Against the backdrop of some of the Progressive Era’s more “liberal reforms,” like the seventeenth amendment, that put more power into the hands of the people,

³¹ Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 148.

³² Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States*, 148-49.

³³ Perrett, *America in the Twenties*, 197.

³⁴ George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, Second Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6.

³⁵ Perrett, *America in the Twenties*, 197.

Prohibition evidenced a conservatism that looked to curtail individual rights. Those who supported Prohibition viewed alcohol as “a spur to illicit sex” and saloons as “venue[s] for harlots.”³⁶ Further, the pervasive use of alcohol was most commonly—and unfairly—identified with the country’s immigrant populations, which had become increasingly suspect in the wake of the Russian Revolution.³⁷ Accordingly, while Prohibition predated the fundamentalist movement, it nevertheless evidenced the efforts of many within this period to combat the era’s moral decline.

Equally important to the fundamentalist movement’s moral efforts, was the movement’s emphasis upon Biblical literalism. Nowhere was this more evident than in the highly publicized case of *Tennessee v. Scopes* in 1925.³⁸ At the time, Tennessee law banned the teaching of evolution in the schools. With encouragement from the American Civil Liberties Union, biology teacher John Scopes had decided to challenge the law, setting up a nationally publicized showdown between the fundamentalists represented by William Jennings Bryan and the scientific community represented by Clarence Darrow. At the end of the eight-day trial the jury convicted Scopes, demonstrating the fundamentalist movement’s power in rural America.³⁹ Ironically, however, the trial had likewise undercut the idea of Biblical literalism in the eyes of many throughout the nation. In 1927, the Tennessee State Supreme Court reversed the Scopes

³⁶ Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 84.

³⁷ Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 19-20.

³⁸ Edward J. Larson, “Scopes Trial,” *The Oxford Companion to United States History*, ed. Paul S. Boyer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³⁹ The law applied only to Tennessee, but it was an example of the power of the Fundamentalist movement.

decision. Despite the evidence of flaws within the fundamentalist movement, the Scopes trial demonstrated the growing rift between science and traditional Christianity.⁴⁰

In many ways, 1920s Mormonism shared much in common with the fundamentalist movement. Like many fundamentalists, Mormon officials sensed a need to combat the social trends of the 1920s, particularly the sexual revolution. Key Mormon leaders like Heber J. Grant openly supported the Prohibition movement; and others like Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith became ardent supporters of Biblical literalism.⁴¹ Hence, some may assume that the 1920s expansion of Mormon supplementary religious education to the collegiate level was a mere outgrowth of Christian fundamentalism. Most Mormon leaders, however, would have rejected the notion that they were associated with many aspects of the fundamentalist movement, particularly as it was related to the ultra-conservative organizations like the Ku Klux Klan.⁴²

While society's moral pushed Mormon leaders to establish a religious education program on the University level, national economic conditions were the driving force behind the policy. World War I had provided an important boom for the country's economy. With a significant portion of Europe engrossed in the War, the trade value of American agricultural products skyrocketed creating a "sharp increase in the foreign demand."⁴³ Hoping to capitalize upon the increased demand for farm products, American farmers purchased and planted additional acres of land. The result, however, was the overextension of American agriculture, with most farmers

⁴⁰ Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States*, 153-54; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 184-89.

⁴¹ Joseph Fielding Smith, Discourse, 9 October 1921, *Conference Report* (October 1921): 185-87; Heber J. Grant, Discourse, 4 April 1914, *Conference Report* (April 1914): 25-28.

⁴² Charles W. Nibley, Discourse, 6 October 1922, *Conference Report* (October 1922): 37; Anthony W. Ivins, Discourse, 4 October 1925, *Conference Report* (October 1925): 19-28; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 191.

⁴³ Willard W. Cochrane, *The Development of American Agriculture: A Historical Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 111.

having more than twice the debt in 1920 than they had carried prior to the war. Ultimately this agricultural growth would prove to be unsustainable during the postwar era.⁴⁴

On the basis of continued government contracts and the continued foreign market for American goods, the postwar economy remained strong through 1919 and into 1920. By the spring of 1920, however, as the government made dramatic cuts in its spending and foreign trade tapered off, the country slipped into a recession. Surpluses turned to deficits while unemployment and social tension increased throughout the country, leading to “an unprecedented wave of strikes.”⁴⁵ For the majority of Americans, however, the recession was short lived. In 1922 the country returned to economic “normalcy” and stability, beginning what would be one of the most prosperous periods of American history.⁴⁶ Spurred on by what has been called “a productivity revolution,” the American economy grew by seven percent annually from 1922 to 1927.⁴⁷ Further, this growth trickled down to many American families as electricity, automobiles, and radios became commonplace conveniences in households throughout the nation.⁴⁸ Indeed, the economic growth of the 1920s and the opulence that accompanied it would come to define the standard American memory of the decade.

The 1920s, however, were not economically kind to all Americans. Several vital industries, including agriculture, railroads, and mining, never fully recovered from the postwar recession. Further, despite the fact that the general economy was growing, American unskilled

⁴⁴ Perrett, *America In the Twenties*, 118; R. Douglas Hurt, *American Agriculture: A Brief History* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994), 233-34.

⁴⁵ Perrett, *America in the Twenties*, 31-32; Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States*, 9.

⁴⁶ Perrett, *America in the Twenties*, 131; Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 15, 40.

⁴⁷ Perrett, *America in the Twenties*, 337.

⁴⁸ Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States*, 27-90.

workers gained little to no growth in their income throughout these years.⁴⁹ Accordingly, for many, the notion that the Twenties was a prosperous decade was little more than a myth, an idea as fictional and foreign to them as the life and excesses of Jay Gatsby.

Living in an essentially agricultural state, Utahns were among those that never truly saw alleviation from the postwar recession nor participated in the fabled prosperity of the Twenties. Indeed, as Thomas Alexander has written, “for Utah...the depression was not merely temporary.”⁵⁰ The three main pillars of the State’s economy—agriculture, mining, and manufacturing—were essentially “toppled” by the postwar depression, with nothing substantive to replace them.⁵¹ Not surprisingly, “the greatest damage was done to agriculture, which was then the largest single source of employment in the region.”⁵²

Because a majority of the Mormons in Utah worked in the agricultural industry, the depression of 1920 had a dramatic influence upon the payment of tithing and the financial condition of the Church. In February 1922, Adam S. Bennion wrote to BYU President Franklin S. Harris that the Church found itself “in the same position that the individual members of the Church have been in during the past two years.” With its income critically reduced, the Church was unable to devote as much money to education and hence began to move toward eliminating the remainder of its secondary academies.⁵³ Within the decade, the Church school closure policy

⁴⁹ Perrett, *America in the Twenties*, 338.

⁵⁰ Thomas G. Alexander, “The Economic Consequences of the War: Utah and the Depression of the Early 1920s,” in *A Dependent Commonwealth: Utah’s Economy from Statehood to the Great Depression*, ed. Dean May (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1974), 57.

⁵¹ Alexander, “The Economic Consequences of the War,” 60.

⁵² Alexander, “The Economic Consequences of the War,” 86.

⁵³ Adam S. Bennion to Franklin S. Harris, 13 February 1922, folder 1, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

would be extended to the Church colleges. For a time, the Board of Education even discussed the closure of its flagship school, Brigham Young University.

While a number of factors influenced the decision to eliminate the majority of the Church schools, it is significant that this policy was established during Heber J. Grant's administration as the Church's president. By that time an avowed financial pragmatist, Grant's twenty-six year tenure as the head of the Church was marked by statements about the dangers of debt and the importance of eliminating unnecessary expenditures.⁵⁴ Although the Church continued to subsidize unprofitable businesses like Saltair and the Salt Lake Theater, both of which were deemed to be important community entities, the general policy of the Grant administration was to protect the Church's limited resources by cutting expenses.⁵⁵

A short overview of Grant's life helps to reveal some of the reasons for his financial pragmatism and many of the corresponding policies that he enacted as the president of the Church. From his childhood Grant had known the difficulties of poverty, due to his father's death when he was just nine days old. This poverty was only exacerbated by the fact that Grant and his mother lived within the boundaries one of Salt Lake City's most illustrious and wealthy wards.⁵⁶ Although his family enjoyed some of the benefits of the surrounding wealth, such benefits did not make the family's impoverished circumstances any less real or difficult.⁵⁷ Grant

⁵⁴ Heber J. Grant, Discourse, 6 April 1923, *Conference Report* (April 1923): 8-9; Heber J. Grant, Discourse, 6 April 1932, *Relief Society Magazine*, May 1932, 299-303.

⁵⁵ Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 91-92.

⁵⁶ At one time the family's circumstances were so destitute that Bishop Edwin D. Woolley offered to assist the family out of funds that had been donated for the poor. Much to Woolley's consternation, Grant's mother refused the funds, stating that her son would take care of her. Ronald W. Walker, "Rachel R. Grant: The Continuing Legacy of the Feminine Ideal," *Dialogue: Journal of Mormon Thought* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 1982): 112-13; Heber J. Grant, "Address," *Relief Society Magazine*, October 1937, 626-27.

⁵⁷ While the Grant family experienced "relative poverty," it would be a mistake to suggest that they were members of the poor classes. Jedediah Grant having been a member of the First Presidency at the time of his death,

spent much of his youth devising various ways to alleviate his family's impoverished circumstances.⁵⁸

While it is certain that Grant's impoverished youth influenced his financial pragmatism, it would be a mistake to characterize the youthful Grant as a fiscal conservative. Indeed, Grant developed something of a propensity for making unwise investments with hopes for large returns. Much of this changed, however, when the Depression of the 1890s threatened both the Grant family and the Church as a whole. When Zion's bank, the Church's main financial institution, was on the verge of collapse following the Panic of 1893, Grant was sent to New York City to secure loans to save the bank. Failing to secure loans from every institution he could think of, Grant went so far as to offer God his life "in exchange for the preservation of the banks." Grant feared that Church was doomed to suffer "the 'perfect horror' of another Kirtland Bank failure." Although the needed loans were eventually secured and the banks saved, the Panic left an indelible mark upon Grant.⁵⁹ In addition to the Church's financial troubles during the Depression, Grant's own family experienced straitened financial circumstances during the decade as his personal debts mounted to around \$30,000 and other obligations totaled nearly \$100,000, most of which were the result of his participation in risky financial ventures.⁶⁰ These painful experiences with both personal and institutional debts deeply impressed him and were

the Grants ran in Mormonism's most elite circles. As Ronald Walker has written, the Grants were "part of a growing social elite that...changed Utah and Mormon society." Ronald W. Walker, "Young Heber J. Grant's Years of Passage," *BYU Studies* 24, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 131-34; Ronald W. Walker, *Qualities That Count: Heber J. Grant as Businessman, Missionary, and Apostle* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2004), xv.

⁵⁸ Walker, *Qualities That Count*, 81-113; Grant, "Address," 627.

⁵⁹ Walker, *Qualities that Count*, 132-36.

⁶⁰ Grant was eventually able to pay his debts and afterwards vowed to avoid frivolous speculation and unnecessary debts. Walker, *Qualities that Count*, 231-33; Heber J. Grant, "Ram in the Thicket," *Improvement Era*, December 1941, 713; Grant, Discourse, 6 April 1932, 299-300.

frequently woven into his discourses in later years.⁶¹ As president of the Church, Grant's financial pragmatism came to define Church administration.

Changing the Face of Mormon Education

In part due to Grant's financial policy and the depression of the 1920s, the Church restructured its educational program between 1919 and 1922. The restructuring had four essential components: first, a change in the leadership of Mormon education; second, leadership of the seminaries was transferred from the General Board of Religion Classes to the Church Board of Education; third, a decision to close the Church's secondary academies while expanding the seminary system; and fourth, the termination of the General Board of Religion Classes. As a result, these new conditions placed supplementary religious education at the forefront of the Mormon educational program.

The administrative changes to Church education began on February 5, 1919, when Rudger Clawson replaced Anthon H. Lund as the leader of the General Board of Religion Classes. Lund recorded that Church president Heber J. Grant made the change in order to keep the "First Presidency free from acting in the auxiliary organizations."⁶² Although Clawson and his first assistant, Joseph Fielding Smith, were both members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the loss of Lund's leadership proved detrimental to the Religion Class program. In addition to proposing the idea for the program, Lund had staunchly defended Religion Classes against critics for nearly thirty years. The Religion Class program's loss of its architect and chief defender was finalized thirteen months later with Lund's death.

⁶¹ Heber J. Grant, Discourse, 3 April 1910, *Conference Report* (April 1910): 37-38; Grant, Discourse, 6 April 1932, 299-300; Heber J. Grant, Discourse, 10 April 1932 *Conference Report* (April 1932): 121-22.

⁶² Lund, Diary, 5 February 1919, in *Danish Apostle: The Diaries of Anthon H. Lund, 1890-1920*, 729.

Five months after the administrative changes in the Religion Class program, Church leaders established the Commission of Education to administer the Church's educational program. Longtime educator David O. McKay was appointed as Commissioner of Education with two assistants, and Adam S. Bennion was named superintendent of Church schools.⁶³ As products of the progressive education movement, McKay and Bennion proved instrumental in reshaping Mormon educational efforts.⁶⁴ In some ways the Commission was a response to the desperate financial circumstances of the early twenties. According to Grant, the Commission had been set up with the intent of "cutting down the expense[s]" of Church education.⁶⁵ While Grant later complained that the Commission had actually exacerbated the Church's financial problems, the Commission went to great lengths to cut the Church's expenses.⁶⁶

Little more than a month following the formation of the Commission, Rudger Clawson reported to the General Board of Education that the Board of Religion Classes and the Commission had unanimously decided that the seminaries "should be placed directly under the supervision of the Commissioners of Education."⁶⁷ For a number of years prior to this decision, the position of the seminaries within the Religion Class organization had been questioned.⁶⁸ In

⁶³ McKay's two assistants in the Commission of Education were fellow apostles Stephen L. Richards and Richard R. Lyman. Church Board of Education Minutes, 16 July 1919, folder 4, box 11, D. Michael Quinn Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (hereinafter cited as BL).

⁶⁴ Mary Jane Woodger, "David O. McKay's Progressive Educational Ideas and Practices, 1899-1922," *Journal of Mormon History* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 208-48; Kenneth G. Bell, "Adam Samuel Bennion: Superintendent of L.D.S. Education—1919 to 1928" (MA Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1969).

⁶⁵ Church Board of Education Minutes, 3 February 1926, folder 3, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Bell, "Adam Samuel Bennion," 91.

⁶⁶ Church Board of Education Minutes, 3 February 1926, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁶⁷ Church Board of Education Minutes, 27 August 1919, Quinn Papers, BL.

⁶⁸ Church Board of Education Minutes, 27 December 1916, Quinn Papers, BL; Horace H. Cummings to John M. Whitaker, 4 January 1917, folder 13, box 18, John M. Whitaker Papers, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereinafter cited as JWML).

1919 the Board finally reasoned that “a seminary was more in the nature of a limited academy” than a Religion Class and that the program should therefore be placed under the direct supervision of the Church Board of Education.⁶⁹ This decision was unanimous, but it may well have sealed the fate of the controversial Religion Class program.⁷⁰ During the 1910s, the seminaries had given a sense of legitimacy and validation to the Religion Class program by filling a unique niche within the Church’s educational program. Indeed, during that decade, many of the program’s resources were directed toward high school students rather than elementary aged youth. Without a high school program after 1919, however, the Religion Classes were relegated to the uncomfortable position of an auxiliary that had too much in common with its fellow programs to justify its continued existence. Within a matter of a decade, the Religion Class program would be dissolved and its memory relegated to a place of relative insignificance within the narrative of Mormon history.

With the seminaries under the charge of the Commission of Education, McKay and Bennion worked with the Board of Education to develop a policy that would radically alter the face of Mormon education. The motivational force for this change seems to have been largely economic in nature. Almost since the inception of the Church school system, Mormon leaders had worried about the ability of the Church to financially support the academies. Although periods of depression had forced the closure of many of the schools, general support for the academies had remained strong among the general leaders of the Church. While the leaders had supported Religion Classes and seminaries,

⁶⁹ Church Board of Education Minutes, 27 August 1919, BL.

⁷⁰ Church Board of Education Minutes, 27 August 1919, BL.

their general attitude had favored Church schools in preference to supplementary religious education.⁷¹

Attitudes about the academies began to change during the first two decades of the twentieth century as the costs of the academies began to mount. Mormon leaders asked how the Church could do “the most good [for] the greatest number” of students with the means that were available to the Church.⁷² Further complicating matters was the fact that the academies were increasingly forced to compete with a growing number of better funded public high schools which threatened their relevance and survival. The fate of schools like Brigham Young College and the Weber Academy hinged upon the ability of these schools to offer advantages to students that could not be gained at the public high schools.⁷³ Leaders of these schools argued that the only thing which would save these schools was for to be turned into junior colleges, offering advanced courses in teacher training that would satisfy the State’s increasingly more rigorous requirements for teacher certification.⁷⁴ Such changes would create a niche for the Church schools and supply a greater number of Latter-day Saint teachers to fill the State’s need for

⁷¹ Willard Young expressed the sentiment of most Board members when he said that if the Church were to have “unlimited funds, the Church should have a complete system of schools.” Church Board of Education Minutes, September 15, 1915, folder 9, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 28 February 1906, folder 1, box 23, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁷² Church Board of Education Minutes, 28 February 1906, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁷³ What seemed to be the most distinctive advantage of the academies, namely the fact that they were Church-run schools seemed to fade in the eyes of some Mormons who argued that they “would rather send [their] children to the local high school and have them home at night under parental influence than send them to a Church high school.” Indeed, Alma Merrill, president of the Benson Stake in Cache Valley confessed to the Church Board of Education that he “encouraged his people to send their children” to the public high schools “so that they could be at home in the evening.” Church Board of Education Minutes, 31 May 1911, folder 1, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁷⁴ Church Board of Education Minutes, May 31, 1911, folder 1, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 15 September 1915, folder 9, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

adequately trained teachers, preventing an undesired influx of non-Mormon teachers from the East.⁷⁵

To turn the academies into teacher training colleges, however, was a highly venture that required upgrades in the physical facilities and the faculty of the school. Influential leaders like Joseph F. Smith and Anthon H. Lund supported the idea of Latter-day Saint teachers for the public schools, they wondered if the Church had the do it.⁷⁶ Smith declared that “while he was heartily in favor of the idea of turning attention to the making of teachers” he could not see how the Church could meet the cost. The Church, he said, “would simply have to trim [its] educational sails to the financial winds.”⁷⁷

In the process of cutting expenses, Mormon leaders increasingly viewed the expendable luxuries that the Church could no longer afford to maintain. In 1915, Joseph F. Smith and others favored a plan to turn “some of the smaller schools...into public high schools, to have the means thus saved expended for normal work.”⁷⁸ The growth and success of the seminary program during the latter half of the 1910s only strengthened evidence that the secondary academies were no longer as necessary as they had been in 1888 when Wilford Woodruff had encouraged the establishment of an academy in every

⁷⁵ Anthon H. Lund warned that “there was danger in importing teachers [from the East], who may be afflicted with tuberculosis and other diseases we know not of.” While the fear of diseases was likely substantial, it appears that the motivating fear for preventing the importation of Eastern teachers was the fear of the secular, non-Mormon influence that they would have upon the children. Church Board of Education Minutes, May 31, 1911, folder 1, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; James R. Clark, “Church and State Relationships in Education in Utah” (Ed.D. Dissertation, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, 1958), 410-17.

⁷⁶ Church Board of Education Minutes, 31 May 1911, folder 1, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁷⁷ Church Board of Education Minutes, 27 January 1915, folder 8, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁷⁸ “Normal work” is a term that referred to the collegiate training of teachers for the high schools. Church Board of Education Minutes, 27 January 1915, folder 8, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

stake. The depression of the 1920s and the accompanying strain that it placed upon the finances of the Church seemed to make the closure of the secondary academies an inevitable reality.

By March 1920, Mormon leaders had become convinced that the Church's system of academies threatened the financial solvency of the entire Church. In February, McKay informed the Commission that "maintaining twenty-one schools and a seminary generally in connection with the public High Schools, is a policy that will inevitably bankrupt the Church." Church." He suggested a plan which would close the academies and support public schools in communities that boasted a large Latter-day Saint presence. McKay then recommended the immediate closure of fourteen academies. In the place of the academies, McKay supported a massive expansion of the seminary program, with the ultimate goal of maintaining a seminary in connection with each public high school throughout the Mormon corridor. While McKay opined that the seminary had "not been made a successful substitute for the Church School" up to that time, he argued that if the program was "properly conducted" it could "be made a successful substitute" for the schools. Additionally, McKay proposed that the Church maintain "four or five schools with the aim...of giving first class training to teachers."⁷⁹

With the Commission's approval, McKay submitted his proposal to the General Board of Education on March 3, 1920. During that meeting the plans for immediately closing fourteen academies were amended to include only eight schools. Teacher training colleges were to be maintained at six schools, with Brigham Young University as the parent school.⁸⁰ In spite of the fact that fewer Church schools were slated for immediate closure McKay's proposal had set the

⁷⁹ Church Commission of Education Minutes, 24 February 1920, folder 7, box 25, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸⁰ Commission of Education to Heber J. Grant and Members of the Church Board of Education, 3 March 1920, folder 7, box 25, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Commission of Education Minutes, 3 March 1920, folder 7, box 25, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

course for the future educational policy of the Church. Less than nine years after Joseph F. Merrill originally proposed the idea of a seminary to the other two members of the Granite Stake Presidency, the program had been adopted as the preeminent program of the Mormon educational system. In some senses, the remaining Church schools were relegated to a secondary status within the Church's educational system, serving mainly to train teachers for the growing seminary system and the public schools.

The last major administrative change of these years occurred one year later when the recently reorganized General Board of Religion Classes was dissolved, and the control of the Religion Class program was turned over to the General Board of Education.⁸¹ The decision was tied to the Commission's newly adopted policy "to leave high school training, so far as possible, to State schools and to provide in connection therewith seminaries for religious training." The First Presidency explained:

[I]nasmuch as the Church School system had already taken over entirely the seminaries throughout the Church which were once operated, in part at least, in connection with the General Board of Religion Classes, it is quite obvious that the Religion Class work can be more capably and effectively carried on under the supervision of the Church School system than the Religion Class Board, and it was with this understanding that the action of the First Presidency and Apostles was this day taken.⁸²

Significantly, the decision to dissolve the board came just four months following the death of the program's founder and champion, Anthon H. Lund.⁸³ While Lund had not been a member of the Board for over a year and a half, it is probable that the decision to eliminate the board was made easier without his presence. Although the Religion

⁸¹ First Presidency to Rudger Clawson and Stephen L. Richards, 11 July 1921, folder 9, box 25, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸² First Presidency to Clawson and Richards, 11 July 1921, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸³ Lund died on 2 March 1921.

Class program continued for another eight years, without its own board to defend it, they were years of diminuendo for the perpetually troubled program. Ultimately, Church officials terminated the program in 1929. The official notice of the program's termination acknowledged the many difficulties that had plagued the program, noting that the decision was made in order to "insure harmony and cooperation in providing week-day religious instruction for all children by making only one organization at a time responsible for week-day religion class work."⁸⁴

Officially, the Religion Classes were merged with the Primary association to form "the Primary-Religion Class of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," suggesting an equal relationship between the two programs.⁸⁵ In reality, however, Mormon leaders believed the Primary association to be the more effective of the two programs at inculcating Mormonism into the lives of Latter-day Saint youth.

In spite of the diminished importance of the Religion Class program during the 1920s, supplementary religious education had become the dominant feature of Mormon education. In order to make the seminary "a successful substitute" for the academies, however, dramatic improvements were required for the program.⁸⁶ For Church leaders, the spiritual moorings and character of the seminary needed particular emphasis. Accordingly, seminary teachers were regularly trained in matters of Church doctrine by high-ranking Mormon officials. Further, throughout the 1920s, the Commission of Education overhauled the seminary curriculum to ensure the spiritual character of the classes and to bring greater uniformity to the program.⁸⁷ As part of these efforts, Church leaders hoped to bring "increased attention to the Book of

⁸⁴ First Presidency to Presidencies of Stakes, 29 May 1929, in *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833-1964*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), 5:267.

⁸⁵ First Presidency to Presidencies of Stakes, 29 May 1929, in *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:267.

⁸⁶ Church Commission of Education Minutes, 24 February 1920, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸⁷ *Seminary Lectures: [Given at the Brigham Young Summer School, 1921]*, Special Collections, HBLL.

Mormon,” which had been largely neglected to that point.⁸⁸ Contrary to their agreements to teach the Bible in a non-sectarian manner, Church leaders hoped to integrate the Book of Mormon into the Bible centered courses, as well as to devote six weeks of the course on Church History and Doctrine to the Book of Mormon.⁸⁹ Clearly, in the minds of Mormon leaders, the foremost purpose of the seminary program was to build faith in the lives of Latter-day Saint youth.

Efforts to strengthen the seminary program were not solely confined to spiritual improvements. Indeed, because seminary students received high school credit for their Bible classes, it was crucial that the seminary program be more than a glorified Sunday school. Additionally, seminary officials were anxious to strengthen the “scholastic standards” of the program.⁹⁰ These efforts included the holding of yearly summer training sessions for teachers in academic subjects as well as a concerted effort to persuade seminary teachers to pursue advanced degrees in religious subjects. These training sessions were often taught by non-Mormon academics from prestigious universities and generally addressed controversial topics such as Biblical criticism and evolutionary science and their relationship to Mormon theology.⁹¹ While some teachers and leaders found such topics offensive and inappropriate, many within the system thought that the lectures were enlightening and informative.⁹²

⁸⁸ Franklin S. Davis to George H. Brimhall, 21 June 1923, folder 3, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁸⁹ Church Board of Education Minutes, 6 August 1924, folder 6, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁹⁰ Davis to Brimhall, 21 June 1923, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁹¹ Church Commission of Education Minutes, 8 January 1924, folder 5, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Griffiths, “Joseph F. Merrill,” 135-41; John A. Widtsoe, *In Search of Truth: Comments on the Gospel and Modern Thought*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1930).

⁹² John A. Widtsoe to Franklin S. Harris, 1 July 1922, folder w, box 3, Franklin S. Harris Presidential Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Franklin S. Harris to John A. Widtsoe, 8 July 1922, folder w, box 3, Harris

Predictably, the Church's emphasis upon these two distinct ways to improve the program often led to conflicts within the Church's educational system.⁹³ The focus of the summer schools generally shifted every couple of years between academic and spiritual topics in an effort to appease the program's various contingencies and to retain balance between the two objectives. Despite such challenges, however, Church officials moved forward with the closures of the academies and the expansion of supplementary religious education.

While the decision to transfer the academies to state control was logical and economical, economical, its decision and process were far from simple. The academies often held important meaning for the Mormon communities that they served. Local communities rallied in support of the schools by suggesting plans that kept the schools apart from the public schools.⁹⁴ For instance, citizens of Fillmore refused to accept the Millard Stake Academy as a public school and turned their efforts into converting the school into an agricultural college that would fill a niche in the Mormon educational system. Their efforts were marginally successful and temporarily delayed the transfer of the school to the public system.⁹⁵

In spite of the disapproval by some local communities, Heber J. Grant agreed with the Commission's actions and encouraged them to "consider the propriety of eliminating still more

Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; T. Edgar Lyon, Oral History Interview, 7 February 1973, folder 11, box 2, T. Edgar Lyon Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; Russel B. Swensen, "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School: A Personal Reminiscence" *Dialogue* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1972): 40; M. Lynn Bennion, *Recollections of a School Man: The Autobiography of M. Lynn Bennion*, (Printed in the United States: Western Epics, 1987), 85.

⁹³ John A. Widtsoe to Howard S. McDonald, 19 November 1948, folder 6, box 13, Howard S. McDonald Presidential Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁹⁴ Casey P. Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education, 1928-1933," (MA Thesis, Brigham Young University, 2007), 80-83, 90-92.

⁹⁵ Church Board of Education Minutes, 15 April 1922, folder 1, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

schools.”⁹⁶ In the place of the transferred academies, additional seminaries were constructed, further strengthening the Church’s commitment to supplementary religious education.

Enrollment and costs at the remaining Church schools, however, continued to increase during the early 1920s, leading some to worry that the schools would “cost more than ever unless some check is interposed.”⁹⁷ Although Church leaders were sympathetic to the feelings of those who argued for the continued maintenance of the academies, the Church Board of Education went forward and by 1924, the Church had closed all but one of its secondary academies. Only a university, a handful of Church colleges, and one academy in Mexico now stood beside the increasingly important seminary system.⁹⁸ With the exception of the Juarez Stake Academy in Mexico, the remaining schools had been maintained on the proposition that they would train teachers for the seminary program.⁹⁹

Even the elimination of the secondary academies, however, did not solve the Church’s financial problems.¹⁰⁰ The establishment and maintenance of Brigham Young University and the junior colleges proved to be almost as expensive as it had been to run the secondary academies and commanded a significant portion of the available funds. Accordingly Mormon leaders considered closing even more schools. Even the Church’s flagship school, Brigham Young

⁹⁶ Commission of Education Meeting Minutes, 13 December 1921, folder 9, box 25, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁹⁷ Church Board of Education Minutes, 3 January 1923, Centennial History Project Papers, folder 4, box 26, Special Collections, HBLL.

⁹⁸ Esplin, “Education in Transition,” 155.

⁹⁹ Church Commission of Education Minutes, 24 February 1920, Special Collections, HBLL; Joseph F. Merrill, “Brigham Young University, Past, Present and Future,” *Deseret Evening News* (Salt Lake City), 20 December 1930.

¹⁰⁰ Church Board of Education Minutes, 2 January 1924, folder 5, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

University, was strongly considered for closure.¹⁰¹ For Mormon leaders, however, such a solution was unrealistic as long as the Church lacked a religious education program for its growing number of college students. Thus they renewed discussions about the possibility of extending supplementary religious education to the collegiate level. These discussions continued throughout the early and mid-1920s and culminated in the establishment of Mormonism's collegiate religious education program known as the institute program.

In 1922 the Board of Education noted that the trustees and president of the Brigham Young College in Logan were concerned that the school could not successfully continue to exist as a junior college. The Board of Education determined that because of the costs of maintaining a fully fledged college, it was "very inadvisable for the Church to establish another senior college, at [that] time." The Board members suggested the College might prove more serviceable if it were to "discontinue all of its departments of instruction" except the theology department. The theology department would then function near the Utah Agricultural College as "a gathering place of L.D.S. students, [and] a place for receiving religious instructions."¹⁰²

These issues were not confined to Logan. In 1923, Commissioner of Education John Widtsoe noted that the LDS University in Salt Lake City could only serve 1,000 of the 2,500 Mormon high school students in Salt Lake City, to say nothing of its university students. Widtsoe estimated that educating the Mormon students in the city would "easily reach a quarter of a million dollars," nearly one-fourth of the entire budget of the Church Educational System.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Church Board of Education Minutes, 20 February 1929, folder 5, box 2, folder 2, William E. Berrett Research Files, CHL.

¹⁰² Church Board of Education Minutes, 15 April 1922, folder 1, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁰³ Church Board of Education Minutes, 4 April 1923, folder 3, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections HBLL.

It had become clear that the Church schools would never be able to accommodate more than a few of its youth. Mormon leaders accordingly became convinced that they could no longer justify such a large appropriation of funds for a relatively small percentage of the Church's youth. The logical response to these issues was the closure of the Church schools and the Church-wide expansion of supplementary religious education.

By 1924 the Commission of Education had determined to move forward with the establishment of a collegiate program.¹⁰⁴ The following year the Commission called for a collegiate seminary be established in connection with the University of Idaho at Moscow.¹⁰⁵ The following day, at a meeting of the Board of Education Adam S. Bennion recommended that the Church build "a building adjacent to the Idaho University...for a seminary and social center." Though Heber J. Grant suggested that the First Presidency would need further time to consider the proposal, it was clear that the likelihood of establishing collegiate seminaries was increasing.¹⁰⁶

Collegiate seminaries, however, could not be as easily established and maintained as the high school seminaries. Just as high school seminaries had required a higher level of academic attainment than the Religion Classes, collegiate seminary teachers required more training than their secondary level companions. One of the fundamental requirements of the University of Idaho for the Moscow Institute was that the "instructor...have a master's degree or its equivalent and...possess such maturity of scholarship as is required for appointment to the position of [a]

¹⁰⁴ Church Commission of Education Minutes, 8 January 1924, folder 5, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁰⁵ Church Commission of Education Minutes, 5 May 1925, folder 1, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁰⁶ Church Board of Education Minutes, 6 May 1925, folder 1, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

full professor.”¹⁰⁷ Accordingly, the Commission of Education made plans to ensure that the collegiate seminaries could be established upon a solid footing. In 1924, Adam S. Bennion requested permission “to urge particularly strong men in religious education to further qualify themselves for the teaching of religion in such seminaries.” Recognizing the Church’s financial problems, however, Bennion stipulated that those so encouraged would pursue their collegiate training with the understanding that “no position would be offered or held out to any such individuals but that they should merely be urged to go on with their preparation.” This approach likewise ensured that the Church would not be obligated to employ any teacher whose faith became a casualty to his graduate education. The other members of the Commission encouraged Bennion to move forward.¹⁰⁸

Adequate funding, in addition to trained instructors, was essential to organizing an effective collegiate seminary program. Accordingly, in 1925 the Board of Education reviewed the expenditures and needs of the Church’s educational system to determine “whether it should be allowed to grow and expand in a natural way with a consequent increase of appropriation, or whether it should be limited and possibly curtailed.”¹⁰⁹ After a year-long examination, Adam S. Bennion presented a detailed study to the Church Board of Education that questioned the Church’s ability to continue operating its junior colleges. He argued that appropriations to the

¹⁰⁷ Sessions, “Latter-day Saint Institutes,” 412.

¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, available documents do not reveal whether or not Bennion actually encouraged any seminary teachers to pursue graduate studies. Sidney B. Sperry, a notable seminary teacher from the period does provide evidence that perhaps such encouragement was extended. Sperry had long considered the possibility of obtaining a graduate degree in ancient languages and had spoken with James E. Talmage about the matter. Hence, while Sperry seems to have pursued graduate studies of his own accord, it was with both the knowledge and approval of the Church authorities. Indeed, the possibility that Church authorities had perhaps encouraged Sperry’s studies at Chicago with a view to him becoming an instructor in the collegiate seminaries is validated by the fact that Sperry became the second instructor at the Moscow institute in 1929. Church Commission of Education Minutes, 8 January 1924, folder 5, box 26, Special Collections, HBLL; V. Wallace McCarlie, “Sidney B. Sperry: Father of Religious Education at BYU,” *BYU Religious Education Review* (Winter 2009): 11.

¹⁰⁹ Church Board of Education Minutes, 4 March 1925, folder 1, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

colleges would have to be significantly increased in order for them to remain relevant institutions of higher learning. According to Bennion, the financial challenges created by the colleges would only be complicated by the establishment of the collegiate seminaries that had been planned for Salt Lake, Logan, Cedar City, Moscow, Phoenix, and Tucson. Bennion believed that the Church could not realistically maintain the junior colleges in addition to the collegiate seminaries. He recommended a complete withdrawal from the field of academic instruction in order to focus the Church's resources upon "the promotion of a strictly religious education program."¹¹⁰ For Bennion, it had become clear that the Church could no longer afford to duplicate the work of the public school system to educate a relatively small percentage of Mormon youth.

Bennion's study launched the Church Board of Education into a heated debate over the respective merits of Mormon private schools versus the benefits of supplementary religious education. Bennion had argued that the academies had been built principally to supply education to Mormon youth in the absence of public schools. Apostle David O. McKay questioned this assumption, however, suggesting that the academies had actually been built "to make Latter-day Saints." McKay argued that to completely "abandon...[the] Church Schools and go into the seminary business exclusively is not only premature but dangerous" because the seminary program had not yet been fully tested and thus its long-term success could not be predicted.¹¹¹ Three years later, when the issue of closing the colleges came to a vote, McKay again objected to the idea and stated that while "he did not wish to be considered as not sustaining the First

¹¹⁰ Church Board of Education Minutes, 3 February 1926, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹¹¹ Church Board of Education Minutes, 3 March 1926, folder 3, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

Presidency...he could not vote in favor of the elimination of the junior colleges.” Accordingly, he went on record as the lone dissenting vote against the elimination of the colleges.¹¹²

McKay’s dissent on this issue was a complicated matter. Although some have suggested that his decision was based purely upon his past experiences as the principal of the Weber Academy, McKay’s reasoning seems to have had far deeper roots.¹¹³ While his time at the Weber Academy doubtless influenced his feelings toward the Church schools, McKay did not oppose either the seminaries or the public schools.¹¹⁴ Indeed, McKay had been a student at the University of Utah prior to his employment at the Weber Academy. Further, as the Commissioner of Church education, McKay had thoroughly proven his willingness to eliminate unnecessary academies in preference to public schools and seminaries.¹¹⁵ Indeed, while the Board of Education had eventually settled upon the immediate closure of nine academies in 1920, McKay had originally called for the termination of fourteen of the schools. While McKay’s comments appear to be highly critical of the seminary, he had been the one that had recommended the widespread expansion of seminaries throughout the Church.¹¹⁶

Given these facts about McKay’s actions as the Commissioner, it is difficult to reconcile the David O. McKay of 1920 with the David O. McKay of 1926-1929. It is possible that McKay’s ideas about the future direction of Mormon education simply changed between 1920

¹¹² Church Board of Education Minutes, 20 February 1929, CHL.

¹¹³ Gregory A. Prince and William Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 182-87; Casey P. Griffiths, “Joseph F. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education, 1928-1933” (MA Thesis, Brigham Young University, March 2007), 74.

¹¹⁴ McKay seems to have been particularly hurt that the Weber College was transferred to the state. When the 1950s presented opportunities for the Church to regain some of its former academies, Weber was the most desired of the colleges. Ernest Wilkinson noted simply, “there was never any doubt in President McKay’s mind that it was desirable to obtain Weber back.” Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay*, 184.

¹¹⁵ Commission of Education Minutes, 24 February 1920, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹¹⁶ Church Board of Education Minutes, 15 March 1920, BL; Commission of Education Minutes, 24 February 1920, Special Collections, HBLL.

and 1926, and that the McKay who voted against the closure of the Church colleges was not the same McKay who had suggested the closure of fourteen academies and the expansion of the seminary program. McKay, however, never suggested that the educational policy he had established in 1920 had been wrong. On the contrary, McKay likely felt that his objections to the closures of the schools were actually in line with his policy of 1920. He explained his reasons for voting against the First Presidency by stating that “he favored the retaining of the junior colleges...because, by their elimination, the Church would lose its hold on the training of teachers.”¹¹⁷ Without its colleges, the Church would be unable to train professional teachers to run the growing number of seminaries. Hence, rather than being a nostalgic defense of the Church schools and a wholesale rejection of the seminaries, McKay was arguing that the Church’s system of secondary and collegiate seminaries could not be adequately maintained without a corresponding system of Church-sponsored colleges. Thus McKay’s stated mistrust of the seminaries should not be read as a wholesale rejection of the seminary program, but rather as a statement about the vital role that the colleges played in the supplementary religious education program.

Another aspect of McKay’s argument was that the seminaries had not yet been fully tested, and thus it was impossible for the Church to adequately predict their long-term future. McKay was right to question Bennion’s decision to abandon the Church’s colleges. Although the communities of Utah had been generally receptive towards the seminary program, the program was not without challenges. For instance, the Church’s repeated requests to establish a released time seminary within the Salt Lake School District were consistently turned down by the school board. As a result, the Church developed non-released time seminaries at Salt Lake

¹¹⁷ Church Board of Education Minutes, 20 February 1929, Berrett Research Files, CHL.

City's three high schools.¹¹⁸ Further, the legal standing of the seminary remained in question. Early in 1930, the seminary program came under attack as the result of an investigation by the state high school inspector, Isaac L. Williamson.¹¹⁹ Williamson's report called into question the constitutional and academic legitimacy of the seminary, as well as the financial burden that it placed upon the state's public schools.¹²⁰ While Williamson's challenges were eventually answered by the Church, the Williamson affair proved that the seminary program remained on tenuous legal ground, justifying McKay's concerns.

In addition to the seminary's fragile status, there was still no official program of supplementary religious education at the college level at the time of Bennion's proposal. The Church's various efforts to establish collegiate seminaries had all been rejected on the basis that they would constitute a violation of the separation of church and state.¹²¹ While Andrew Anderson and Gustive Larson had begun holding a few seminary classes for the students at the Cedar City Agricultural College, their program had no official sanction from either the Church or the State.¹²² Hence in 1926, the Board had no reliable information to suggest that a college seminary program could actually succeed; rather, it had sufficient data to suggest the

¹¹⁸ Berrett and Hirschi, *A Miracle in Week-day Religious Education*, 29; Frederick S. Buchanan, "Masons and Mormons: Released-Time Politics in Salt Lake City, 1930-56," *Journal of Mormon History* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 67-114.

¹¹⁹ The best examination of the Williamson report is Casey Paul Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill and the 1930-1931 LDS Church Education Crisis," *BYU Studies* 49, no. 1 (2010): 93-134.

¹²⁰ Williamson particularly questioned whether the seminaries actually functioned on a non-sectarian basis, noting that one of basic aims of the seminary was to develop within the students "an abiding testimony ... that Joseph Smith and his successors are the prophets chosen by [God] to reestablish His gospel in the earth." Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill and the 1930-1931 LDS Church Educational Crisis," 101.

¹²¹ Church Board of Education Minutes, 6 November 1912, Scott G. Kenney Collection, box 10, folder 4, Special Collections, HBLL; Anthon H. Lund Diary, 18 September 1901, *Danish Apostle: The Diaries of Anthon H. Lund, 1890-1921*, ed. John P. Hatch (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with the Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2006), 144.

¹²² Gustive O. Larson, Autobiography, folder 7, box 1, Gustive O. Larson Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

improbability of such an idea. Hence, for McKay it seemed premature for the Church to abandon its colleges without any assurances that they could be replaced by collegiate seminaries.

Countering McKay's concerns that it was unwise to do away with the colleges was Heber J. Grant's apprehension that the schools were putting the Church into a precarious financial position. Grant confessed to the Board, "nothing has worried me more since I became President than the expansion of the appropriation for the Church school system." After reviewing a number of the requested appropriations to upgrade the colleges, Grant concluded "Well, we can't do it, that's all."¹²³ He noted that while "the tithes of the Church had not increased during the past several years" the financial needs and demands of the Church schools had continued to increase. Grant acknowledged the good that the Church schools had accomplished, but it seemed clear to him that Bennion's policy was the only reasonable course for the Church to take.¹²⁴

Grant's reasoning was far more complex than a simple explanation of his views on finances can suggest. Grant's financial views certainly influenced his thinking on the closure of the schools, but other factors also molded his decision. Throughout his life, Grant had been a devoted supporter of the Church schools. From his early days as an Apostle, he had possessed great respect for Karl Maeser and had marveled at the abilities of capable theology teachers to influence their students.¹²⁵ Later, as a member of the Board of Education, Grant had chaired the appropriations committee and had played an important role in financially supporting the schools,

¹²³ Church Board of Education Minutes, 3 February 1926, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹²⁴ Church Board of Education Minutes, 10 March 1926, folder 3, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹²⁵ Heber J. Grant, Discourse, 4 October 1904, *Conference Report*, (October 1907): 26; Heber J. Grant, "Honoring Karl G. Maeser," *Improvement Era*, June 1935, 339.

in spite of the financial challenges that faced the Church.¹²⁶ When the decision had been made to begin transferring the Church colleges to the State, Grant “expressed the thought that ‘it almost breaks one’s heart’ to think of closing [the] institutions.”¹²⁷ While financial solvency was immensely important to Grant, he was motivated by more than just a satisfactory bottom line.

While there were strong economic reasons for the closure of the Church schools during the 1920s, other factors likewise influenced Grant’s decision. Indeed, Grant’s support of the closures was at least partially motivated by his longstanding belief that the schools were not doing enough to build faith in the lives of the students. In a 1912 meeting of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association, Grant had complained:

The Church is spending fully \$350,000 a year to educate the young people in Church schools, and I believe I do not overestimate when I say that only about ten per cent of the time of the students is devoted to theological studies exclusively; the other ninety per cent is to scientific, literary, and other secular studies....¹²⁸

Although he said nothing further about the future of Church schools at this time, the implications of his statement were ominous for the church schools.

Such sentiments were heightened in 1923 when it was reported to the Board of Education that the Book of Mormon was not being extensively used within the Church schools.¹²⁹ Grant “expressed regret that the Book of Mormon was not being taught in the LDS [University],” and the subsequent discussion of the Board revealed that “the Book of Mormon was not taught as a

¹²⁶ Church Board of Education Minutes, 29 January 1909, folder 7, box 23, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 26 January 1916, folder 10, box 24, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹²⁷ Church Board of Education Minutes, 20 February 1929, CHL.

¹²⁸ Heber J. Grant, “The Place of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Associations in the Church,” *Improvement Era*, August 1912, 877-79.

¹²⁹ Church Board of Education Minutes, 5 December 1923, folder 5, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

regular study in any of the Church schools or seminaries.”¹³⁰ While some efforts were made to more fully integrate the Mormon-specific text into the curriculum of the seminaries and schools, the task proved to be daunting and no full course of study was developed for several years. The basic issue was that a course on the Book of Mormon jeopardized academic credit for the seminaries and the state’s willingness to hire teachers trained in the Church’s colleges.¹³¹ Such objections did not faze Grant, who believed that academic credit was not an acceptable reason for the elimination of the spiritual purposes of the seminaries and the Church schools.¹³²

But, Grant determined that the Church could no longer afford to support schools which were not fully meeting the purposes of their sponsoring institution. Such an approach was likewise taken with regard to the seminaries and other Church education entities. Grant later told the seminary and institute teachers that the only reason why Church funds were being expended for education was for the teachers to “sow the seed of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ...into the hearts and minds and souls of those who come into your classes.”¹³³ The requirement of the Church educational programs to build faith remained a central part of the Grant administration. Several years later, when the seminary and institute programs seemed to be failing to meet this objective, Grant’s counselor, J. Reuben Clark, reiterated this same policy. Clark stated:

If we cannot teach the Gospel, the doctrines of the Church, and the Standard Works of the Church, all of them, on ‘released time,’ in our seminaries and institutes, then we must face giving up ‘released time’ and try to work out some other plan of carrying on the Gospel work in those institutions. If to work out

¹³⁰ Church Board of Education Minutes, 2 April 1924, folder 5, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹³¹ Church Board of Education Minutes, 6 August 1924, folder 6, box 26, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL. For a full discussion of this matter, see: Noel B. Reynolds, “The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon in the Twentieth Century,” *BYU Studies* 38, no. 2 (1999): 19-28.

¹³² Church Board of Education Minutes, 3 March 1926, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹³³ Heber J. Grant, “Teach That Which Encourages Faith: Address by President Heber J. Grant to Seminary Teachers, July 13, 1934,” *The Deseret News* (Salt Lake City), 8 September 1934.

some other plan be impossible, we shall face the abandonment of our seminaries and institutes and the return to Church colleges and academies. We are not now sure, in the light of developments, that these should ever have been given up. We are clear upon this point, namely, that we shall not feel justified in appropriating one further tithing dollar to the upkeep of our seminaries and institutes unless they can be used to teach the Gospel in the manner prescribed. The tithing represents too much toil, too much self-denial, too much sacrifice, too much faith, to be used for the colorless instruction of the youth of the Church in elementary ethics....In saying this, I am speaking for the First Presidency.¹³⁴

During the Grant administration, appropriations to the Church's schools and other educational institutions became contingent upon their continued ability to build faith in the lives of the students.

Bennion agreed with Grant that a complete withdrawal from secular education was in the Church's best interest. On March 18, 1926, Bennion recommended that the Board close the Brigham Young College immediately and prepare for the eventual transfer of the other colleges to state control. To defray the costs he suggested that the other schools operate with a fixed appropriation and be given to the state as soon as the legislature had made adequate preparations for their maintenance. Bennion further recommended that the Church "continue to establish seminaries wherever their need is keenly felt and wherever the local people exhibit a spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm which seem to guarantee for successful operation of such institutions."¹³⁵

¹³⁴ It is not entirely certain what "developments" Clark was referring to that had caused the First Presidency to reconsider the matter of closing the academies; however, given the general tone and direction of his address, it is likely that he was referring, at least in part, to the introduction of Biblical criticism into the seminaries and institutes by a number of teachers who had studied at the University of Chicago. Both Clark and Heber J. Grant became highly concerned about the level of orthodoxy within the seminaries and institutes and the influence that the programs had upon Mormon youth during the thirties and early forties. J. Reuben Clark, Jr., "The Charted Course of the Church in Education," in *J. Reuben Clark: Selected Papers on Religion, Education, and Youth*, ed. David H. Yarn, Jr. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1984), 254; Heber J. Grant, Diary, 4 January 1940, *The Diaries of Heber J. Grant, 1880-1945 Abridged* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2010), 439-40.

¹³⁵ Church Board of Education Minutes, 18 March 1926, folder 3, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

College-Level Supplementary Religious Education

Along with the spread of supplementary religious education at the secondary level, Bennion suggested that it was time for the Board to support a collegiate program. The closure of the Brigham Young College left the Church without a presence among the college students of Logan. Bennion asked that the Board “make provision by the establishment of suitable institutions to provide for the religious interests of our students in...the Utah Agricultural College.”¹³⁶

In addition to the preparations in Logan, by June 1926, the Board of Education went ahead with plans to develop the first collegiate seminary to be regularly organized by the Church Board of Education in Moscow, Idaho. Bennion had already started searching for a teacher to take charge of the program. He first offered the position to Gustive O. Larson, who had been teaching seminary in Richfield, Utah, but Larson instead opted to take charge of the collegiate seminary at the Branch Agricultural College in Cedar City, which had been established by the local stake presidency.¹³⁷ Bennion then recommended that the Board employ J. Wyley Sessions, who was concluding a seven-year stint as the presiding official in the Church’s South African mission.¹³⁸ The Board approved Bennion’s recommendation and encouraged him to investigate the possibility of establishing additional collegiate seminaries at the University of Utah and the Utah Agricultural College in Logan.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ In spite of Bennion’s request, the program in Logan did not formally begin until 1928, when it became the Church’s second institute. Church Board of Education Minutes, 18 March 1926, Special Collections, HBLI.

¹³⁷ Cloward, “The Cedar City Utah Origin of the Institute of Religion,” 12, CHL.

¹³⁸ Berrett and Hirschi, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education*, 49. For additional biographical information on Sessions, see Casey Paul Griffiths, “The First Institute Teacher,” *The Religious Educator* 11, no. 2 (2010): 175-201.

¹³⁹ Church Board of Education Minutes, [ca. June 1926], Centennial History Project Papers, box 27, folder 4, Special Collections, HBLI; Berrett and Hirschi, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education*, 49.

Having determined the future educational policy of the Church, the Church Board of Education set to work developing the collegiate seminary in Moscow, Idaho. Jacob Olmstead has observed that the selection of Moscow was somewhat surprising considering the fact that both Church and University of Utah officials had noted the need for such a program in Salt Lake since the 1890s. Olmstead has postulated that the selection of Moscow may have been due to the fact that there were far fewer Mormons in Moscow than in the other possible locations.¹⁴⁰ While the University of Utah and the Utah Agricultural College evinced the greatest needs for collegiate seminaries, the Board of Education may have decided to begin on a smaller scale where there would be fewer problems.

Equally perplexing is the fact that the Board chose Moscow for its first official college seminary rather than formally recognizing the collegiate seminary already in place at Utah's Branch Agricultural College in Cedar City. At the time, the college had an enrollment of only 325 students.¹⁴¹ While the number of Latter-day Saint students at the college was still larger than the number in Moscow, Cedar City provided a far more inviting environment for Latter-day Saints. Further, a rather successful, albeit unofficial, collegiate seminary was already operating at the Branch Agricultural College. Accordingly, whereas Sessions was obliged to establish a new program in difficult circumstances in Idaho, the Church might simply have expanded a program that was already operating in Southern Utah's Mormon friendly environment. It is clear that the Church was pleased with the progress of Cedar City's collegiate seminary and viewed it as at least a quasi-official institution. In fact, after the title "institute of religion" had been adopted for the college seminaries, the principal of the Cedar City seminary was directed to

¹⁴⁰ Olmstead, "Institutes of Religion, 1926-1929: Part II," 1-2, EIZ, BYU.

¹⁴¹ "SUU Headcount Enrollment 1898 to 2001," <http://www.suu.edu/general/ir/fact02/SUUenrollmentStatistics.pdf> (accessed 9 August 2010).

“report [his] college level class separately under the name of Institute of Religion in conformity with the name adopted at Moscow.” Church officials saw little if any distinction between the work being done in Moscow and that in Cedar City.¹⁴²

Whatever the merits of other locations may have been, it is certain that Moscow was a worthy location for the establishment of the first institute. The city and the University of Idaho provided an intersection between Mormons and non-Mormons that made it an important test site for the first collegiate seminary. Moscow’s Mormon and non-Mormon communities had long had a precarious relationship fueled a mutual distrust.¹⁴³ Indeed, when Moscow’s non-Mormons first learned of the Church’s intentions to establish a program at the university, they created a committee to watch Sessions and ensure that he “didn’t Mormonize the University of Idaho.”¹⁴⁴

On the other hand, the Latter-day Saint community in Moscow was concerned about the influence that the non-Mormons at the university were having upon the lives of Mormon students. The pervasiveness of alcohol on the Moscow campus was particularly worrisome to many LDS parents.¹⁴⁵ As early as 1923, Mormon parents from Moscow began petitioning the Church authorities for something to be done for the LDS students at the school.¹⁴⁶ By 1925, William C. Geddes, whose two daughters attended the university, became so frustrated with conditions at the school that he travelled to Salt Lake to meet with the second counselor in the First Presidency, Charles W. Nibley. During the meeting, Geddes argued that “LDS students

¹⁴² Larson, Autobiography, folder 7, box 1, Larson Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁴³ Wright, “The Beginnings of the First LDS Institute of Religion at Moscow, Idaho,” 28.

¹⁴⁴ J. Wyley Sessions, Oral History, 12 August 1972, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁴⁵ Norma Geddes Green, Interview 1990, CHL; Wright, “The Beginnings of the First LDS Institute of Religion,” 65-66, 69-70.

¹⁴⁶ Green, Interview 1990, CHL; Olmstead, “Institutes of Religion, 1926-1928: Part II,” 1, EIZ, BYU.

deserved a strong Church presence at the University” and ultimately succeeded in securing Nibley’s promise that something would be done about the matter.¹⁴⁷

According to the traditional narrative, the decision to establish the Moscow institute came during an extemporaneous meeting between two members of the First Presidency—Heber J. Grant and Charles W. Nibley—and J. Wyley Sessions, who had recently returned from his missionary service in South Africa.¹⁴⁸ Sessions claims that the idea for the institute came to Nibley while he was informing Sessions about the details of a new job with the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company. According to Sessions, Nibley paused and turned to Grant, saying, “Heber, we are making a mistake.”¹⁴⁹ After Grant concurred, Nibley told Sessions, “You are the man to go to Moscow, Idaho, to take care of our students registered at the University of Idaho.” Noting Sessions’ initial disappointment in the assignment, Nibley told him, “Brother Sessions, don’t be disappointed... This is what the Lord wants you to do. Now you go and the Lord bless you.”¹⁵⁰ Sessions accepted the assignment and went to work establishing the first institute.

While Session’s narrative is compelling, he may not have known all of the facts regarding the program’s establishment when he gave his narration of the events. For example, it is evident that he did not know that his name had been suggested to the Board of Education as early as June 1926.¹⁵¹ Further, when Sessions was asked if the Church had considered the establishment of an institute prior to this meeting, he responded that, “If they had, there was no

¹⁴⁷ Green, Interview 1990; Wright, “The Beginnings of the First LDS Institute of Religion,” 70.

¹⁴⁸ Magleby, “1926 Another Beginning,” 22.

¹⁴⁹ Sessions, Oral History, 12 August 1972, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁵⁰ Sessions, Oral History, 12 August 1972, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁵¹ Berrett and Hirschi, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education*, 49.

indication.”¹⁵² Sessions had not been privy to the Board’s many years of discussions concerning the establishment of such a program. This is not surprising due to the fact that Sessions was never a member of the Board and had spent the seven years prior to his appointment as a mission president in South Africa, far removed from the proceedings of the Church Board of Education.

Despite its inaccuracies, the Sessions account has become the dominant narrative of the institute program. Robert Cloward has listed a number of factors that may have accounted for the inaccuracies and popularity of the Sessions narrative. A number of Cloward’s arguments relate to various pedagogical features and details that distinguished the Moscow institute. He suggested that the Sessions’ account simply made a better story by providing an example of immediate revelation to the Church president, and thus was adopted despite competing and contradictory accounts.¹⁵³

While Cloward’s arguments have some merit, a simpler explanation of the events is found in the fact that most of those who wrote the history of the institute program had only limited access to the sources and did not have enough information to correctly write the history. Without access to vital sources like the Church Board of Education Minutes, it is almost impossible to reconstruct the institute’s founding story. It is highly unlikely that the authors of earlier histories on the institute program, like Arrington and Magleby, adopted Sessions’ narrative. Rather, such authors made use of the Sessions story, along with its inaccuracies, because it was available.

While the two Sessions interviews are somewhat inaccurate in terms of the overall founding of the institute program, they nevertheless provide a number of crucial details into the establishment of the Moscow institute. The details help to explain why it took so long to

¹⁵² Sessions, Interview 29 June 1965, copy in author’s possession.

¹⁵³ Cloward, “The Cedar City, Utah, Origin of the Institute of Religion,” 10-11, CHL.

establish supplementary religious education at the collegiate level. Sessions' story reveals that many Moscow residents continued to feel uneasy toward Mormonism despite the fact that the Church's nineteenth-century distinctiveness was becoming an increasingly distant part of its past.

Even before Sessions could begin the work of establishing a religious education program, he had to deal with the religious divisiveness in the state that had strained relationships between Mormons and non-Mormons for years. In addition to religion, the two groups had been divided by culture and occupation. Whereas agriculture dominated the Mormon communities in the southeastern part of the state, timber and mining-based extractive industries formed the backbone of the non-Mormon cities and towns in northeastern Idaho. Accordingly, both groups viewed actions from the opposing camp with more than a hint of mistrust. Thus, when Sessions arrived in Moscow, he was greeted with "much discussion" and scrutinizing questions like "Who is this fellow that is now assigned, this man Sessions[?]" and "What's his duty up here; what's he want to do?"¹⁵⁴

Seeking to allay such misconceptions and make some allies, Sessions joined the local Chamber of Commerce and worked to develop friendships that stretched across religious lines. At meetings of the Chamber of Commerce, he made it a point to sit next to and converse with Fred Fulton, who had been the man assigned to keep a close watch on Sessions' efforts in Moscow. In retrospect, he described Fulton as "the nicest fellow" and "a lovely gentleman." Fulton likewise warmed up to Sessions, finally confessing to him, "You son-of-a-gun, you're the darndest fellow....I was appointed on a committee to keep you out of Moscow and every time I see you, you come in here so darn friendly that I like you better all the time." With

¹⁵⁴ Sessions, Oral History, 12 August 1972, Special Collections, HBLL.

Fulton's help, Sessions eventually "won the friendship of the town and business connections and everybody."¹⁵⁵

Along with the community's business leaders, Sessions formed friendships with the president of the university and a number of influential professors. Far from being merely cordial acquaintances, these friendships had an important influence upon the development of the program. This group of friends helped Sessions to secure land for a building.¹⁵⁶ Even the name "institute of religion" came from one of Sessions' non-Mormon friends at the university.¹⁵⁷ Further, much of the inspiration for the institute's original curriculum came from Protestant programs that had been established at universities in the east.¹⁵⁸ Thus, in one sense, the institute became a kind of ecumenical program that served to unite Mormons with those of differing faiths, rather than a force that drove a wedge between them. Given the purposes for which the Religion Class program had been established, the founding of the Moscow institute represented a significant change in the Church's religious education policy.

In addition to developing relationships with community and university officials, a number of other matters had to be arranged before the institute could open. Keeping in line with the Church's general policy since 1905, one of the first items of business was to secure land for the construction of a building to house the institute. The process of finding an appropriate location

¹⁵⁵ Sessions, Oral History, 12 August 1972, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁵⁶ Olmstead, "Institutes of Religion, 1926-1929: Part II," 4-6, EIZ, BYU.

¹⁵⁷ Sessions recalled a conversation with Jay G. Eldridge, dean of the faculty, concerning the name of the program. Eldridge asked, "What are you going to call it? Your name, you can't call it the seminary, if it isn't a seminary. You've spoiled that anyway with your high school seminaries, you can't call it a seminary." Sessions responded that he "didn't know what they would call it" and hadn't really thought about it. After a pause in the conversation, Eldridge remarked, "I'll tell you what the name is, what you see up there is the Latter-day Saint institute of religion at the University of Idaho north campus. When we build ours over here (he pointed to his church) it will be the Methodist institute of religion at the University of Idaho." Sessions, Interview 29 June 1965, copy in author's possession.

¹⁵⁸ Sessions, Interview, 29 June 1965, copy in author's possession.

and erecting a building, however, was anything but simple. This process brought the fiscal policy of the Grant administration into direct conflict with the costly realities of educational expenditures, making clear to Church leaders that supplementary religious education carried its share of attached costs.

At least a portion of the costs was due to price gouging by a small group of antagonistic citizens. Sessions related that after a committee of Mormons had settled upon a prime location near the university, the price for the property quickly “went up beyond what the committee felt the Church should pay.” The benefit of Sessions’ inter-denominational friendships, however, became apparent when the Moscow Chamber of Commerce offered to pay any amount beyond \$2500 to help the Church to secure the property. Upon learning of this offer, Grant wrote to Sessions, and instructed him to “express our sincere appreciation to the good people of Moscow for their generous offer and kind cooperation in assisting us in securing the location for our building.” Not wanting to impose upon the community, however, Grant included “a check for the full price of the property.”¹⁵⁹

In addition to the hefty price for the lot, Sessions felt that it was essential to construct a building that would be viewed as a respectable addition to the university’s campus. In a meeting with Grant, Sessions confessed, “I cannot go back to Moscow and build a little shanty at the University of Idaho.” While Grant agreed that “the Moscow building must be nice” he was leery of yet another building that would demand increasingly larger appropriations to maintain. Grant predicted, “If we give you \$40,000, you will return and ask for \$49,000 or \$50,000.” Sessions responded with a degree of humor that emphasized his point, saying, “I promise that I will not ask you for \$45,000 or \$50,000, but I will not promise that I will not ask for \$55,000 to

¹⁵⁹ J. Wyley Sessions, Notes on the founding of the Moscow Institute, 6 January 1968, folder 5, box 2, J. Wyley Sessions Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

\$60,000.” Grant finally relented, and appropriated the considerable sum of \$60,000 to the project, agreeing with Sessions that “the building must be well done since it is near the campus of the University.” Upon completion, the project came in under budget. Sessions returned \$5,000 to Grant, who remarked, “I did not think it possible or that I should live to see this occur.”¹⁶⁰

Along with an office for Sessions and classrooms, the completed building contained a number of other features that served both ecclesiastical and recreational functions. These features included “a full basement, a main floor, and a third floor living area,” with the basement housing “a large recreation room, baptismal font, small kitchen, and several small multi-purpose rooms.” The building also contained a chapel and a library.¹⁶¹ These facilities allowed the institute to serve as a social center for the LDS students in Moscow. Under the directions of Magdalene Sessions, Sessions’ wife, the institute held frequent social and cultural activities.¹⁶² Although Latter-day Saints made up the majority of the students who attended these events, the attendance of non-Mormon students was encouraged. Such activities provided a moral environment for Mormon students to enjoy recreational activities in noticeable contrast to other forms of entertainment during “the roaring twenties.” Indeed, at least one non-Mormon attendee praised the entertaining and moral environment that these events provided.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Magleby, “1926 Another Beginning,” 23.

¹⁶¹ Wright, “The First LDS Institute of Religion,” 76.

¹⁶² “Sharing the Light: History of the University of Idaho LDS Institute of Religion, 1926-1976,” folder 6, box 2, Sessions Collection, Special Collections, HBLI.

¹⁶³ Rafe Gibbs, “Tribute to the LDS Institute at the University of Idaho,” folder 6, box 2, Sessions Collection, HBLI.

Perhaps the most significant addition to the building, however, was the inclusion of dormitory facilities for 22 male students.¹⁶⁴ These dorm rooms proved to be economically beneficial to the students by providing low cost housing to male Latter-day Saint students throughout the Depression.¹⁶⁵ At the same time, they also helped to underscore the Church's opposition to the sexual revolution and moral profligacy that pervaded among American young adults during the 1920s. Dorm rules prohibited the consumption of alcohol and at least one student was expelled from the dorms for violating these regulations.¹⁶⁶

The institute building thus filled needs beyond mere pedagogical purposes. The building became a social center that was a positive alternative to the moral mentalité of university campuses during the 1920s. The institute building and its accompanying amenities, although quite expensive for its time, became an subtle way for the Church to inculcate the desired morals into its college-age young adults.

Beyond the physical requirements of a suitable building, there were pressing educational requirements that were essential to the opening of the institute. In approving academic credit for the institute, the Idaho State Board of Education had mandated that the program include a number of important components. One of the most important requirements was the academic stature of the instructor. The University of Idaho required him to possess "a master's degree or its equivalent and...such maturity of scholarship to the position of full professor in the University of Idaho."¹⁶⁷ Accordingly, Sessions immediately enrolled in a master's program at

¹⁶⁴ Wright, "The First LDS Institute of Religion," 76.

¹⁶⁵ "Sharing the Light," Sessions Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; Gibbs, "Tribute to the LDS Institute," Sessions Collection, HBLL.

¹⁶⁶ Wright, "The First LDS Institute of Religion," 83 nt. 45.

¹⁶⁷ Sessions, "The Latter-day Saint Institutes," 412.

the university.¹⁶⁸ Although some later questioned Sessions' level of scholarship, his studies at the university proved satisfactory to both the Church and the University of Idaho.¹⁶⁹

The institute also needed a curriculum that conformed to the university's "standards in library requirements and in method and rigor of their conduct."¹⁷⁰ In line with the university, Sessions wanted the courses to "be pursued with intellectual vigor" so that they would blend well with the campus' intellectual environment. It was essential to develop a course curriculum that could be deemed worthy of the university's standards. To create the institute courses, Sessions collaborated with a number of different people both inside and outside of the Church. Years later, Sessions fondly recalled the significant contributions made by individuals at the universities of Illinois, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Idaho.¹⁷¹

While Sessions praised the non-Mormon contributions to the institute curriculum, he generally overlooked and minimized the contributions of his fellow Latter-day Saints. In one interview, he complained that when he had requested information from BYU, all he had received in exchange was "a pamphlet...[and] a letter on how to make a speech for the Latter-day Saints."¹⁷² Such statements, however, do not adequately reflect the Mormon contributions to the

¹⁶⁸ Sessions, Interview, 29 June 1965, copy in author's possession.

¹⁶⁹ In 1929, George L. Luke wrote to Joseph Merrill and defended Sessions' academic abilities, suggesting that some may have called them into question. A decade later, Sidney Sperry privately questioned Sessions' scholarship when Sessions, who only had a master's degree, was named director of the Department of Religion at BYU ahead of others with doctorates. George L. Luke to Joseph F. Merrill, 3 June 1929, folder 5, box 2, Sessions Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; Sidney B. Sperry to Joseph F. Merrill, 2 May 1939, folder 4, box 1, Sidney B. Sperry Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; Sidney B. Sperry to Charles A. Callis, 1 June 1939, folder 4, box 1, Sperry Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; Sidney B. Sperry to John A. Widtsoe, 2 September 1939, folder 4, box 1, Sperry Collections, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁷⁰ Sessions, "The Latter-day Saint Institutes," 412.

¹⁷¹ Sessions, Interview, 29 June 1965, copy in author's possession.

¹⁷² Sessions complaints may not have been fully justified. He seems to have overlooked the fact that although BYU had theology classes, at that time, the school did not yet have a regularly organized department of religion or trained professors of religion. Hence, the university may not have been in a position to send Sessions much more than what he received. Sessions, Interview, 29 June 1965, copy in author's possession.

curriculum. Sessions had petitioned a number of fellow Church members for help, stating that “the building of a curriculum for such an institution has worried me a lot and it is a job that I feel unqualified for.”¹⁷³ Indeed, evidence suggests that the original institute curriculum was developed as a collaborative effort between Sessions, Gustive Larson in Cedar City, W. W. Henderson in Logan, and Joseph F. Merrill, who had recently been appointed Commissioner of Education.¹⁷⁴ Together they developed a curriculum that included classes on the Old and New Testaments, ethics, and modern religious problems.

Merrill’s contribution, in particular, was crucial to the development of the institute. In a letter to Sessions, Merrill stated that “the primary purpose” of the institute was “to enable students to become settled in their faith by harmonizing and reconciling the truths of science and scholarship that they are learning in college.”¹⁷⁵ Noting a concern that had troubled Church leaders since the days of Brigham Young, Merrill stated that “when our young people go to college and study science and philosophy in all their branches, that they are inclined to become materialistic, to forget God, and to believe that the knowledge of men is all-sufficient.” The pervading influence of modern scholarship presented a significant challenge to the faith of Mormon students. In Merrill’s eyes, however, the goal was not to turn students away from the findings of scientific research, but to help them reconcile such findings with Mormonism’s body of religious truth. Merrill confessed to Sessions, “Personally, I am convinced that religion is as reasonable as science; that religious truths and scientific truths nowhere are in conflict...and that

¹⁷³ J. Wyley Sessions to Joseph F. Merrill, 24 July 1928, quoted in Magleby, “1926 Another Beginning,” 31.

¹⁷⁴ Joseph F. Merrill to Gustive O. Larson, 31 July 1928, folder 1, box 12, Larson Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁷⁵ Joseph F. Merrill to J. Wyley Sessions, 6 June 1928, quoted in Magleby, “1926 Another Beginning,” 27.

there is an all-wise, all-powerful Creator back of it all.”¹⁷⁶ Such sentiments evidenced not only Merrill’s devotion to Mormonism, but his decades of work as a scientist and an engineer. In his mind, the purpose of the institutes was to help Mormon university students to come to similar conclusions about the conflicting claims of science and religion.

In the short term, Merrill’s concept of the institute curriculum prevailed as institute instructors were asked to teach from a variety of different sources, including evolution and Biblical criticism.¹⁷⁷ Rather than avoiding questions about the intersections of science and religion, teachers were to “encourage...students to think, to ask questions, to seek explanations, etc.” and then to “frankly admit that you ‘do not know’” when difficult questions were put forth during their classes.¹⁷⁸ While such views certainly did not reflect the thinking of everyone within the institute program, they did affect many influential teachers, helping to create a climate of openness and liberal intellectualism that lasted in the institutes into the 1950s, at which point the program’s curriculum and faculty turned towards greater conservatism.¹⁷⁹

The liberal content of the curriculum helps to separate the Church’s educational efforts of the 1920s from the decade’s Christian fundamentalist movement. In some regards, the institute did share common elements with fundamentalism. For instance, the institute was organized to combat secularism’s threat to the religious faith of the students. The program’s establishment declared both the Church’s unabashed faith in the truths of Christianity and its opposition to the moral decay of the 1920s, both of which were strong elements of Christian fundamentalism. At

¹⁷⁶ Joseph F. Merrill to J. Wyley Sessions, 26 July 1928, quoted in Magleby, “1926 Another Beginning,” 31-32.

¹⁷⁷ Widtsoe, *In Search of Truth*, 67-93; Swensen, “Mormons at the University of Chicago,” 37-47.

¹⁷⁸ Joseph F. Merrill to Seminary Teachers, 23 April 1928, folder 2, box 32, George H. Brimhall Presidential Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁷⁹ Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 224-40.

the same time, the institute curriculum revealed the Church's unwillingness to take a hard-line stance on scientific research. Though it was clear that some like Joseph Fielding Smith would have preferred such a stance, the official position of the Church remained neutral.¹⁸⁰ While such neutrality and intellectual openness may not have been popular among all concerned parties, it was crucial to the acceptance of the institute as a legitimate entity on university campuses.

After nearly two years worth of preparatory work, Charles W. Nibley dedicated the Moscow institute on September 25, 1928. The service was attended by "a distinguished group of educators and people from several states" throughout the West.¹⁸¹ The facility received praise from Mormons and non-Mormons alike, who viewed the school as "a distinct addition to the religious and recreational life of the University."¹⁸² At least one prominent non-Mormon educator frequently encouraged other educators to visit the institute, declaring that it "had come nearer solving the problem of religious education for college students than any [other effort] that he knew about." Such success was evidenced in the enrollment statistics. During the first year of classes, 25 students enrolled at the institute, followed by 30 the next year.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Following a lengthy discussion on the subject in 1931, the First Presidency declared, "Upon the fundamental doctrines of the Church we are all agreed. Our mission is to bear the message of the restored gospel to the people of the world. Leave Geology, Biology, Archaeology and Anthropology, no one of which has to do with the salvation of the souls of mankind, to scientific research, while we magnify our calling in the realm of the Church." First Presidency to the Council of the Twelve, the First Council of Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric, 5 April 1931, folder 1, B. H. Roberts Papers 1888-1920, Special Collections, HBLL; Joseph Fielding Smith to Rudger Clawson, 14 January 1931, folder 1, Roberts Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 286-88; Stan Larson, "Editor's Introduction," in *The Truth, The Way, The Life, An Elementary Treatise on Theology: The Masterwork of B. H. Roberts*, ed. Stan Larson (Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates, 1994), xlv-lixiii.

¹⁸¹ "Dormitory for 20 Men is Provided in Beautiful New Building," *Deseret News*, 27 September 1928.

¹⁸² Sessions, "The Latter-day Saint Institutes," 415.

¹⁸³ It is unknown exactly how many Mormon students attended the university during this period, but it is likely that the institute enrollments reflected a significant portion of that group. A. Gary Anderson, "A Historical Survey of the Full-time Institutes of Religion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1926-1966" (PhD. Dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1968), 52, 59.

Even before the Moscow institute had officially opened, plans were underway for the construction of an institute in Logan at the Utah Agricultural College. Presidents from eight surrounding stakes had written to the Board of Education and requested the establishment of an institute. On March 21, 1928, the Board decided that construction of a building near the Logan campus should begin as soon as possible, and in June of that same year, the First Presidency appropriated \$50,000 for its construction. The position of institute instructor was offered to both Sterling B. Talmage and W. W. Henderson, but both declined. Henderson was later persuaded to accept the position as a one year appointment, following which Thomas C. Romney assumed the role of institute director.¹⁸⁴ During its first year of operation, 114 students enrolled at the Logan institute, making it the largest in the Church Educational System. It would remain the most highly attended institute until the mid-1960s.¹⁸⁵

Intriguingly, in spite of the high Mormon population among the student body and years of appeals for such a program, the Church did not immediately open an institute at the University of Utah. In fact, counting the Cedar City collegiate seminary, there were five institutes opened prior to the founding of the University of Utah institute in 1934.¹⁸⁶ In 1928, the Church Board of Education had given permission for the establishment of an institute at the university as soon as possible, but university president George Thomas opposed the plan, fearing that it might jeopardize the university's accredited status.¹⁸⁷ According to Berrett, Thomas' chief objections

¹⁸⁴ Berrett and Hirschi, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education*, 52-53.

¹⁸⁵ Olmstead, "Institutes of Religion, 1928-1938: Part III," 1, EIZ, BYU; Anderson, "A Historical Survey of the Full-time Institutes," 129.

¹⁸⁶ Olmstead, "Institutes of Religion, 1928-1938: Part III," 1-2, EIZ, BYU.

¹⁸⁷ Anderson, "A Historical Survey of the Full-time Institutes," 160.

seem to have revolved around the proposed use of a faculty member to conduct courses at the institute and the idea of credit.¹⁸⁸

Thomas' objections, however, did not necessarily signify a rejection of the institute program. During this period, national accreditation had become essential to the survival of American universities.¹⁸⁹ The accreditation standards required university officials, including those at the University of Utah, to become more discriminating in their approval of university courses in an effort to increase the academic standing of their school. Such concerns extended to religion courses, even causing concerns for BYU president Franklin S. Harris.¹⁹⁰ Although the University of Utah had secured accreditation in 1922, Thomas' concerns about granting collegiate credit for institute courses may have been motivated by his desires to maintain the University's standing in the academic community.¹⁹¹ Further, Thomas viewed the institute as a program to "meet the social and spiritual needs of the students" rather than an academic program

¹⁸⁸ Berrett and Hirschi, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education*, 52-54.

¹⁸⁹ Gordon Daines writes that during this period "institutions voluntarily chose to participate in the accreditation activities...because 'there [was] a large price to pay for those who [did] not [participate].'" Universities who failed to participate in accreditation risked losing funding as well as having their degrees rejected by other institutions. J. Gordon Daines, "'The Vision That You Have...Augurs Well for the Development of Still Better Things': The Role of Accreditation in Securing the Future of Brigham Young University, 1921-1928," *BYU Studies* 49, no. 2 (2010): 66.

¹⁹⁰ Harris faced a unique situation at BYU, being caught between the Church's requirements for its schools and the national accreditation standards. In order to keep Mormon leaders from closing the university, Joseph F. Merrill mandated that the university develop "a strong department of religion or of religious education" and that all of the Church's seminary teachers obtain "a master's degree in the field of education" from BYU. At the same time, however, Harris worried about the need to "remain rigorous in our requirements" so as to not jeopardize the university's accredited status. Harris likewise worried about granting credit for seminary and institute work. Joseph F. Merrill to Franklin S. Harris, 7 May 1929, folder 9, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Joseph F. Merrill to Franklin S. Harris, 8 June 1929, folder 9, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Franklin S. Harris to Joseph F. Merrill, 11 June 1929, folder 9, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Joseph F. Merrill to Franklin S. Harris, 9 December 1929, folder 9, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Joseph F. Merrill to Directors of Institutes, 13 December 1929, folder 9, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

¹⁹¹ Ralph V. Chamberlin, *The University of Utah: A History of Its First Hundred Years, 1850 to 1950* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1960), 387.

that merited university credit.¹⁹² Since his inauguration as president, Thomas had insisted that the university emphasize academic work over social activities and clubs. In his inaugural speech, Thomas reminded “students, parents and even faculty members...that a record of good scholarship is a real preparation for life, while a record of social achievement on the campus is usually a poor preparation for life.”¹⁹³ For Thomas to support the Church’s request for credit would have violated his general policy on social clubs. Thomas’ opposition to the institute was likely motivated by a desire to protect the academic viability of his school rather than an indictment of the Church’s religious education efforts.

The founding of the University of Utah institute was further complicated by the devastating effects of the Great Depression, which further curtailed the Church’s educational expenditures. Finally, in 1934, Lowell L. Bennion was appointed to begin the institute, despite no guarantee of university credit. During its first year, 84 students enrolled in the institute, taking classes on a variety of religious topics like “Comparative Religion” and “The Position of Mormonism in the Religious Thought of Western Civilization.”¹⁹⁴

In some ways the establishment of the University of Utah institute proved how far the Church had come since the 1890s. That institute represented the culmination of over forty years of efforts to build a suitable religious education program in connection with the public school system. No single school in the public system had given the Church as much difficulty or been as important to the Church’s educational efforts as the University of Utah. Accordingly, to have a program at the University of Utah represented a significant accomplishment. On the other

¹⁹² Anderson, “A Historical Survey of the Full-time Institutes,” 160.

¹⁹³ “Thomas Pledged Hearty Support in Inauguration,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 6 April 1922.

¹⁹⁴ Classes opened at the University of Utah institute in January 1935. “L.D.S. Institute Opens Near U. of U.,” *Deseret News*, 2 January 1935. Anderson, “A Historical Survey of the Full-time Institutes,” 144-45, 147.

hand, the continued opposition to the University of Utah institute demonstrated the continued tension and mistrust that had characterized Church and State relationships in Utah for more than a half-century. President Thomas, himself a Mormon, recognized that the central purpose of the institute was to create faithful Mormons, no matter what the content of the curriculum. Clearly potential for violations of the separation of church and state remained. As has been shown, within time Mormon leaders did indeed become dissatisfied with a curriculum that they viewed as being far too non-sectarian for the amount of money that was being expended. Thomas' concerns about a formal connection between the institute and the university were ultimately accepted by Mormon leaders who determined that the ability to inculcate Mormonism into students was much more important than academic credit for the students.¹⁹⁵

In spite of some continued questions and difficulties, the 1920s had provided a fertile environment for the Church to establish a workable supplementary religious education program at the collegiate level. The sexual revolution and the spread of secularism had created what Mormons and other Christians viewed as a dangerous moral environment that threatened the religious lives of the youth. Additionally, the economic problems of the Intermountain West during the early 1920s combined with the pragmatic administration of Heber J. Grant created a situation that required the Church to cut costs and jettison unnecessary programs. All of these circumstances assisted in the creation of the Church's institute program. With this program in place, supplementary religious education had truly become the "new" and definitive "policy in Church school work."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill and the 1930-1931 Church Education Crisis," 125.

¹⁹⁶ Church Board of Education Minutes, 29 May 1912, quoted in Joseph F. Merrill, "A New Institution in Religious Education," *Improvement Era*, January 1938, 55.

CONCLUSION

REENVISIONING THE MORMON FRONTIER: SUPPLEMENTARY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY MORMON DISTINCTIVENESS

At the 1893 meeting of the American Historical Association, Frederick Jackson Turner argued that the western frontier and the innovations and adaptations that the frontier required had defined the American character.¹ For Turner, the frontier had provided Americans with a kind of safety valve, a place that they could escape to when the pressures of urbanization began to crowd in too closely upon them.

While Turner's idea of the frontier included only land and geographic space, subsequent historians have noted that the term frontier has "a range of meanings far richer than [Turner] allowed."² James Malin similarly argued that the basic problem with Turner's thesis was that "it was too simple" and "violated the fundamental principles of social causation as the complex product of the unique interaction of multiple causes."³ Malin suggested that Turner's thesis proposed an idea of "closed space" that limited the frontier to geographical terms.⁴ He argued that the advent of the "air age" demonstrated the folly of Turner's argument as it introduced "a new world opening to man through the medium of air communications—radio, television, and

¹ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History' and Other Essays*, ed. John Mack Faragher (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 31-60.

² John Mack Faragher, "The Significance of the Frontier in American Historiography," in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner*, 239.

³ James C. Malin, "Space and History: Reflections of the Closed-Space Doctrines of Turner and Mackinder and the Challenge of Those Ideas by the Air Age," *Agricultural History* 18, no. 2 (April 1944): 65.

⁴ Malin, "Space and History," 66.

aircraft.”⁵ Malin thus took the idea of the frontier and expanded it from a purely geographical idea into a metaphor that included a wide array of opportunities for American growth, development, and transformation.

Following Malin’s lead, John Faragher has argued that the term is best defined as “borderlands between people or nations...the region of encounter in between, an area of contest but also of consort between cultures.”⁶ The frontier can thus be understood not only as an “uncultivated” region available for expansion, but also as place where contrasting people and ideologies come into contact with each other. While Turner’s frontier may have been closed in 1893—an idea which has been generally disputed—other American frontiers remained wide open as the United States transformed itself from an agrarian republic into an urban nation. As John Higham has noted, although the 1890s were “an unusually troubled decade,” they were also a decade of profound cultural transformation, in which, among other things, “the structure of the modern university solidified.”⁷

Several historians, including Turner himself, have disputed the idea that Turner’s thesis can be appropriately ascribed to Mormons.⁸ In spite of such arguments, however, it can be argued that nineteenth century Mormonism may actually have been one of the most appropriate case studies for the frontier thesis. From the Church’s inception, it had continually been looking

⁵ James C. Malin, “Space and History: Reflections on the Closed-Space Doctrines of Turner and Mackinder and the Challenge of Those Ideas by the Air Age,” *Agricultural History* 18, no. 3 (July 1944): 107.

⁶ Patricia Limerick has likewise argued for continuity in the American frontier, suggesting that most of the most unfortunate aspects of the frontier, such as the displacement of Native Americans, have continued into the twentieth century. Faragher, “The Significance of the Frontier in American Historiography,” 239; Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988).

⁷ John Higham, *Writing American History: Essays on Modern Scholarship* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 76-77.

⁸ Patricia Nelson Limerick, “Peace Initiative: Using the Mormons to Rethink Culture and Ethnicity in American History,” *Journal of Mormon History* 21, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 6-7; Martin Ridge, “Mormon ‘Deliverance’ and the Closing of the Frontier,” *Journal of Mormon History* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 137-52.

toward new havens of peace and refuge. One historian has described Mormonism's early history as a "quest for refuge," due to its radical differences from the wider American culture.⁹ During the nineteenth century, Mormonism's "quest for refuge" led Church members to different locations including Missouri, Illinois, the Intermountain West, and even Mexico and Canada. By the time of the federal polygamy prosecutions during the 1880s, however, mass exodus to a viable new frontier was no longer a realistic option although small numbers of Mormons fled to Canada and Mexico. While open space continued to abound, it had become abundantly clear to the Latter-day Saints that escape from American culture and influence was an impossible proposition.

It was in such circumstances that Wilford Woodruff issued the plural marriage Manifesto, effectively ending the large-scale practice of Mormon polygamy.¹⁰ For some the Manifesto was akin to Turner's declaration that the frontier was closed. Indeed, Patricia Limerick has written, "If the workability of the West as a refuge for distinctive societies is deemed essential [to an open frontier], the 1890 Mormon concession on polygamy signals the closing."¹¹ While not all Mormons in 1890 viewed the Manifesto in such depressing terms, it is clear that some did view the Manifesto as a significant blow to their faith, posing a significant challenge to the Mormonism that they had known and practiced.¹² In a sense the Manifesto created the end of a

⁹ Marvin S. Hill, *Quest For Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989).

¹⁰ As has been previously noted, the Woodruff Manifesto did not entirely end plural marriage; however, post-Manifesto polygamy was a highly selective practice and constituted far fewer marriages than pre-Manifesto numbers.

¹¹ Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 25.

¹² While some like Lorenzo Snow, Heber J. Grant, and Anthon H. Lund expressed positive attitudes about the Manifesto and suggested that it would "result in good" for the Church, others like John Henry Smith and John W. Taylor expressed uncertainty. Taylor noted that when he first heard about the Manifesto he "felt to say 'Damn it.'" Abraham H. Cannon, Diary, 30 September and 1 October 1890, folder 17, box 5, Abraham H. Cannon Diaries, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereinafter cited

significant era of Mormon religious thought and practice. According to Agnes Melissa Stevens Wilson, plural wife of Guy C. Wilson, there was “a wide divergence of opinion among people in high places and responsible positions throughout the Church” regarding the meaning and interpretation of the Manifesto.¹³ Writing in his diary, Woodruff noted, “There are many in the Church who feel badly tried about the Manifesto” causing some to believe that “Revelation had ceased [*sic*].”¹⁴ Among those so tried by the abandonment of polygamy was Woodruff’s secretary, L. John Nuttall. A year after the issuance of the Manifesto, Nuttall wrote the following in his diary:

I called at Sophia’s this evening. I find there is much feeling among the people in regard to the testimony given by Prests Woodruff & Cannon [o]n the Manifesto before the Master in Chancery. Sophia feels all right & I gave her all the encouragement I could to keep quiet & we would trust in the Lord to help us to do our duty to each other & to the Church. We did not feel that the Lord wished us to abandon our covenants or fail in doing our duty; but to trust in Him & do right, for we were joined together in the Holy bonds of Matrimony according to His revelations & we could not repudiate our position & condition in life.¹⁵

Confused feelings about the Manifesto persisted well beyond the momentary shock occasioned by the initial proclamation. Such sentiments have led many historians to view Woodruff’s

Special Collections, HBLL); Abraham H. Cannon, Diary, 1 April 1892, folder 4, box 6, Special Collections, HBLL; Ronald W. Walker, “B. H. Roberts and the Woodruff Manifesto,” *BYU Studies* 22, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 363-66; B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 135-38.

¹³ Agnes Melissa Stevens Wilson, *Autobiography* 1962, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereinafter cited as CHL).

¹⁴ Abraham H. Cannon also noted such problems, writing in his diary, “there is considerable comment and fault-finding among some of the Saints because of [the] manifesto.” Abraham H. Cannon, Diary, 26 September 1890, folder 17, box 5, Special Collections, HBLL; Wilford Woodruff, Diary, 25 October 1891, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1889-1898*, ed. Scott G. Kenney (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), 168.

¹⁵ L. John Nuttall, Diary, 26 October 1891, in L. John Nuttall, *In the President’s Office: The Diaries of L. John Nuttall, 1879-1892* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with the Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007), 477-78.

Manifesto as the height of Mormon capitulation and the end of Latter-day Saint distinctiveness and identity.¹⁶

While, for some, the events of the 1890s represented the end of an era and a dramatic departure from nineteenth-century Mormonism, the decade also became a watershed in the development of Mormon culture and education. The development of the Religion Class program and the beginnings of Mormon supplementary religious education signaled a new era in Mormon educational policy. Whereas nineteenth-century Mormonism had been defined by insular communalism and private Church academies, twentieth-century Mormonism came to be defined in part by its Americanism and support for the public schools. That shift was contingent upon the Church's development of three supplementary religious education programs that covered the full range of the educational experience and insured that Mormons could be culturally American in most ways and yet remain religiously distinctive. By inculcating Mormon values into the minds of young Latter-day Saints, these programs helped to prevent both the Protestantization and secularization of Mormon youth.

While Anthon Lund's original intent was probably not to initiate a complete shift in Mormon educational policy, the implementation of supplementary religious education ultimately changed the course of Mormon education. As difficult economic conditions made the field of private education less viable to the Church during the period from 1890 to 1930, supplementary religious education started as a safety valve to ensure the perpetuation of the Mormon value system in the lives of Latter-day Saint youth.

The establishment of supplementary religious education did not come easily. Many people, both inside and outside the Church, resisted the Religion Class program. Such

¹⁶ Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900*, 1958, repr. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 409.

difficulties both necessitated and complicated the development of the seminary program in 1912, leading Joseph Merrill to observe that prior to Frank Y. Taylor's enthusiastic acceptance of the seminary program, "no one...seemed greatly interested."¹⁷ While general interest was a constant challenge for the Religion Classes and an initial obstacle to the seminaries, parents had petitioned Mormon officials to establish a collegiate program for several decades. Legal challenges, however, made the founding of the institute a difficult process.

In addition to the obstacles directly related to the founding of these three programs, Mormon leaders found the closure of the academies and the transfer of the Church colleges to the state to be incredibly complicated. Local communities and even some ardent Church leaders protested the closure of the schools, demonstrating the profound influence that the schools had exerted upon Mormon communities for more than forty years. In spite of such objections, however, supplementary religious education had become Mormonism's chief educational policy by 1919. In a matter of just eight years, Joseph Merrill's seminary program redefined Mormon educational policy and outlined the course of education in the Church during the twentieth century. In creating the seminary, Merrill bypassed many of the earlier problems that had plagued the Religion Classes, while achieving the Church's aims for religious education. With the seminary in place and the number of public schools increasing throughout the 1910s, the Church gradually withdrew from the field of secular education, ultimately leaving its educational fate in the hands of its supplementary religious education programs.

On the heels of such success at the secondary level, Mormon leaders completed the framework of supplementary religious education programs by developing the institute program for students at the collegiate level. Although Mormon students had attended eastern colleges and universities since the 1870s, the institute demonstrated a profound shift in Mormonism's attitude

¹⁷ "Joseph F. Merrill, "A New Institution in Religious Education," January 1938, 55.

toward American education. The institute's curriculum was designed to help students to reconcile the ever-growing body of scientific knowledge, while maintaining their faith in religious truth. The development of faith in Mormonism was a core purpose of the institute, but anti-intellectualism was not designed to be a part of that process. In addition to addressing the growing number of scientific questions amongst Mormon college students, the institute program countered the sexual revolution and the lackadaisical moral environment of the 1920s.

The Church's supplementary religious education program thus addressed many of the most perplexing issues of the early twentieth century. By addressing these critical subjects, supplementary religious education became a crucial instrument in the development of twentieth-century Mormonism's character and ideology by inculcating the Church's moral and religious code into Latter-day Saint youth. While it is certain that not all participants were influenced in the same ways by the Church's supplementary religious education programs, records reveal that many Mormon youth were profoundly influenced by these programs.

According to one teacher, the purpose of these programs was "to develop the moral and spiritual instincts of growing young men and women," particularly in the midst of a changing world.¹⁸ Both inside and outside of the classroom, seminary and institute teachers became mentors to many of the students who attended their classes, fulfilling Adam S. Bennion's hopes that the instructors would be "strong [men]" who were capable of profoundly influencing their students."¹⁹ Such influence in the moral lives of the students brought praise from religious as

¹⁸ John M. Whitaker to Dear Student, 15 July 1921, folder 16, box 18, John M. Whitaker Papers, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereinafter cited as Special Collections, JWML).

¹⁹ Students at both the seminary and institute levels came to think of their teachers in fatherly terms. One former student of John M. Whitaker, noted that Whitaker had been "like a father" to him while he had been in seminary. At the collegiate level, J. Wyle Sessions bailed a Mormon college student out of jail and then took to counseling the student in a "caring" and "sometimes stern" manner. The student responded favorably to Sessions' efforts, affectionately calling him "Dad" in their subsequent correspondence. Paul E. Reimann to John M. Whitaker,

well as civic leaders, including even the approbation of leaders in the heavily non-Mormon regions of Moscow, Idaho.²⁰ In addition to the numerous statements by Church leaders and teachers about the moral and spiritual value of supplementary religious education, many students cited the role that these programs played in altering and defining their moral and religious ideas and practices.²¹

The influence of supplementary religious education upon twentieth-century Mormonism, however, reached beyond the realms of moral and spiritual development. In some regards, these programs helped to redefine how Mormons viewed the United States as a whole. Whereas nineteenth-century Mormons had worried about the encroachment of American institutions upon the Church and frequently predicted the dissolution of the government, twentieth-century Mormons had become fully-fledged members of and participants in American institutions by the 1930s.²² While a series of developments helped to account for this transformation, the Church's

11 January 1925, folder 12, box 19, Whitaker Papers, Special Collections, JWML; Casey Paul Griffiths, "The First Institute Teacher," *Religious Educator* 11, no. 2 (2010): 188-89; William Anderson to J. Wyley Sessions, 9 May 1935, folder 7, box 2, J. Wyley Sessions Collection, Special Collections, HBLL; Church Board of Education Minutes, 23 March 1926, folder 3, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

²⁰ Frank Y. Taylor to George Brimhall, 13 March 1922, folder 10, box 18, Whitaker Papers, Special Collections, JWML; D. J. Thurman to John M. Whitaker, 10 January 1921, folder 44, box 18, Whitaker Papers, Special Collections, JWML; J. Wyley Sessions and Magdalene Sessions, Interview, 29 June 1965, transcript by Casey P. Griffiths, copy in author's possession; George L. Luke to Joseph F. Merrill, 3 June 1929, folder 5, box 2, Sessions Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

²¹ One student called the seminary "a constant guide" in his moral decisions, while another student noted the role that such instruction played in his decision to refrain from theft. One female student credited seminary with helping her to avoid drinking alcohol and lowering her "moral standards" during a night out with friends. Jesse K. Wheeler to John M. Whitaker, 15 July 1917, folder 12, box 19, Whitaker Papers, Special Collections, JWML; Dean Bringhurst, undated note, folder 14, box 19, Whitaker Papers, Special Collections, JWML; Unnamed student to John M. Whitaker, 9 May 1927, folder 12, box 19, Whitaker Papers, Special Collections, JWML.

²² Wilford Woodruff copied a vision in his journal, in which an unnamed person reported seeing Washington DC in "Desolation" with "The white House Empty, the Halls of Congress the Same Every thing in ruins." In 1880, Woodruff received a revelation condemning "The Presidents of the United States, The Supreme Court, The Cabinet, The Senate & House of Conress [*sic*] of the United States The Governors of the States and Territories The Judges & Officers sent unto you and all men and persons who have taken part in persecuting you or Bringing distress upon you or your families." Such rhetoric, however, had begun to soften by the time of the Manifesto, as Latter-day Saints were encouraged to "pray for the Executive of our nation, for the Cabinet, the Senate, the House of Representatives, the Judiciary and the people of our nation...that their hearts will be softened

establishment of supplementary religious education programs and its corresponding acceptance of the public schools played an important role in this process. By the 1920s, seminary teachers were encouraged to emphasize the importance of knowing the Constitution and memorizing the “Star-Spangled Banner” to combat the evils of “bolshevism and lawlessness” with “the great and inspired truths that underlie secure government.”²³ Although supplementary religious education had originally been instituted to counter the perceived dangers of encroaching Americanism, by the second decade of the twentieth century, it had become a tool of Americanization. Far from withdrawing from American schools, during the first thirty years of the twentieth century, Mormonism became increasingly tied to the country’s public schools and universities. Indeed, by the end of the 1920s, Mormon leaders decided to eliminate the vast majority of the Church colleges.

While the development of the institute program and the subsequent transfer of the Church’s junior colleges to state control solidified the Church’s commitment to supplementary religious education, such moves did not ultimately lead to the complete Mormon withdrawal from the field of secular education.²⁴ Despite some comments from high-ranking officials about the importance of eliminating the remainder of the schools, Brigham Young University and a

towards the people of God.” Woodruff, Journal, 15 June 1878, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journals*, 7:421; Woodruff, Journal, 31 December 1880, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journals*, 7:616; Heber J. Grant, Diary, 29 December 1889, *The Diaries of Heber J. Grant, 1880-1845 Abridged* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2010), 106.

²³ Adam S. Bennion to John M. Whitaker, 6 September 1921, folder 4, box 18, Whitaker Papers, Special Collections, JWML; George H. Brimhall to John M. Whitaker, 15 January 1923, folder 11, box 18, Whitaker Papers, Special Collections, JWML; Ethan R. Yorgason, *Transformation of the Mormon Culture Region* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 147.

²⁴ Church Board of Education Minutes, 23 March 1926, Special Collections, HBLL; Casey Paul Griffiths, “Joseph F. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education, 1928-1933” (MA Thesis, Brigham Young University, 2007), 60-97.

few other schools remained under Church control.²⁵ Ironically, Joseph F. Merrill, the founder of the first seminary and the Church's point man in the transfer of its colleges to state control, played a key role in the preservation of BYU, the largest remaining bastion of Mormon private education.

In 1929, as the Church Commissioner of Education, Merrill tied the success of the seminary and institute program to BYU, which had recently become an accredited university. He argued, as had David O. McKay before him, that the university was essential to the preparation and training of adequate teachers for the seminaries and institutes.²⁶ With Merrill's encouragement and insistence, BYU became an important center of higher education for teachers within the seminaries and institutes.²⁷ Ironically, the very educational programs that had led to the termination of all but a few of the Church Schools proved to be the salvation of those that remained. Through such collaborative efforts, private education remained an important, albeit much smaller, part of the Church's educational program.

Even while supplementary religious education grew into the dominant feature of Mormonism's educational program, Mormon leaders remained committed to organizational efficiency. Efficiency lay at the heart of the decision to retain Brigham Young University. At the same time, it was the motivating factor in the decision to terminate the Religion Class

²⁵ Church Board of Education Minutes, 20 February 1929, folder 5, box 2, reel 2, William E. Berrett Research Files, CHL; Joseph F. Merrill to Amos M. Merrill, 13 December 1951, folder 2, box 4, Joseph F. Merrill Collection, Special Collections, HBLL.

²⁶ Joseph F. Merrill to Amos M. Merrill, 13 December 1951, Special Collections, HBLL; Joseph F. Merrill, "Brigham Young University, Past, Present and Future," *Deseret Evening News*, 20 December 1930; Church Board of Education Minutes, 15 March 1920, D. Michael Quinn Papers, Uncat.WA MS.98, box 11, folder 4, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

²⁷ Joseph F. Merrill to Franklin S. Harris, 2 May 1929, folder 10, box 22, Franklin S. Harris Presidential Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Joseph F. Merrill to Franklin S. Harris, 7 May 1929, folder 10, box 22, Harris Papers, Special Collections, HBLL; Joseph F. Merrill to Franklin S. Harris, 8 June 1929, folder 10, box 22, Harris Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

program in 1929.²⁸ The quest for efficiency demonstrated that by the 1930s, Mormonism had, in some regards, moved beyond the debates over distinctiveness and assimilation. Rather, by the 1930s, what concerned Mormon leaders most was ability of the program to effectively meet the needs of the Church, regardless of whether or not the proposed program was more assimilative or more separatist in its nature.

The two programs that Mormon leaders found to be most effective in meeting the Church's educational needs were programs that had essentially been developed at Mormonism's grass roots. Unlike the Religion Class program which had its origin in a meeting of the Church Board of Education, the seminaries began during a meeting of the Granite Stake Presidency, and the institutes were created following numerous requests from parents and local Church officials.²⁹ Accordingly, the ideas for these programs revealed a growing agency among lower ranking members within the Church hierarchy. Given the frequent complaints of nineteenth-century Americans that Mormonism's hierarchical structure betrayed the country's democratic principles, the grass roots origins of the seminaries and institutes demonstrated a Mormonism that was becoming more American in its character.

With the elimination of the Religion Class program and the majority of the academies, the Church's educational programs no longer came into direct conflict with American institutions. While the Church's educational programs would yet face criticisms from concerned non-Mormons like Isaac L. Williamson, the days of large-scale government investigations into

²⁸ First Presidency to Presidencies of Stakes, 29 May 1929, in *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833-1964*, ed. James R. Clark, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), 5:267.

²⁹ It should be noted that Frank Y. Taylor was son of former Church President John Taylor, and Joseph F. Merrill was the son of former apostle Marriner W. Merrill. Accordingly, it is possible that Church leaders granted Taylor and Merrill a greater amount of leeway in their efforts to develop new programs than was generally given to other leaders. Such a possibility might account for the Granite Stake's unusually successful record in piloting new Church programs during Taylor's administration. Granite Stake, *Granite Stake History in Review, 1900-1964*, Special Collections, HBLL.

Mormon involvement in public institutions had largely ended by 1930. In the place of such Mormon-specific challenges, the Church Board of Education became increasingly concerned with the problem of secularism that concerned the whole of twentieth-century American Christianity.³⁰ Thus, Mormonism had, in a sense, joined the wider community of American Christianity.

Although becoming a more palatable form of American Christianity had its advantages, it was likewise detrimental to certain aspects of Mormonism. In his classic work, *The Mormons*, Thomas O’Dea argued that after Mormonism had given up its objectionable nineteenth-century practices in favor of a more mainstream theology, the Church lost much of its innovative character. By 1930, gone were the peculiar institutions of plural marriage and the united order, as well as Mormonism’s overt control of Utah politics. As a result, O’Dea suggested, Mormonism lost much of its distinctiveness. O’Dea concluded, however, that in the fields of “education and...recreation” Mormonism continued its tradition of “genuine innovation and real cooperation.”³¹

While the Latter-day Saints were not the only church to initiate a program of supplementary religious education during these years, Mormonism had one of the most successful plans for religious education and became a model for several other such programs.³² Through the Church’s three main supplementary religious education programs, Mormons found a highly successful method of inculcating doctrines and principles into the lives of Latter-day Saint youth while at the same time observing the strict boundaries that governed the American

³⁰ J. Reuben Clark, Jr., “The Charted Course of the Church in Education,” in *J. Reuben Clark: Selected Papers on Religion, Education, and Youth*, ed. David H. Yarn, Jr. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1984), 243-56.

³¹ Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 216.

³² Joseph W. McMurrin, Discourse, 6 October 1914, *Conference Report* (October 1914): 119.

separation of church and state.³³ Indeed, supplementary religious education helped to provide a bridge whereby the Church made the difficult transition from its nineteenth-century closed communalism to its twentieth-century brand of American Mormonism.

³³ Some would certainly argue that seminaries and institutes violated the separation of Church and State. In *Zorach v. Clauson*, however, the Supreme Court ruled released time religious education to be constitutionally acceptable provided the classes were “held off the school premises” and all costs were “borne by the [religious] organizations.” Frank J. Sorauf, “Zorach V. Clauson: The Impact of a Supreme Court Decision” *American Political Science Review* 53, no. 3 (September 1959): 778.

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