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The recurring appeals of the Mormon rhetorical vision

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The recurring appeals of the Mormon rhetorical vision

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University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1992

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THE RECURRING APPEALS OF THE MORMON
RHETORICAL VISION

I

by

Arthur Thomas Challis Jr.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

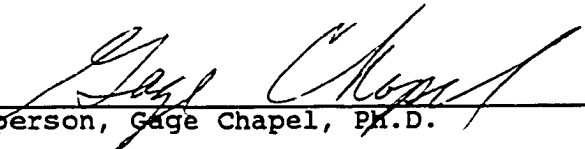
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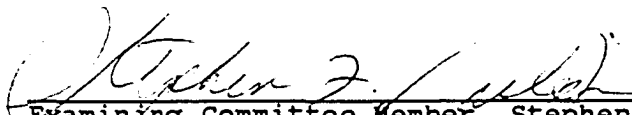
Communication Studies

Greenspun School of Communication
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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degree of Master of Arts in Communication is
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ABSTRACT

From its founding in 1830, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly called the Mormon Church, focused on missionary efforts to persuade others to accept its theological vision. This study investigates the recurring appeals of the Mormon rhetorical vision, appeals that help account for the growth of the Mormon Church which now counts over eight million members.

Bormann's Fantasy Theme Analysis, a communication model that explains how small groups develop imaginative ideas and concepts called fantasy themes that then form rhetorical visions and chain out to society, is the overall methodological approach used in investigating the Mormon vision, while Fisher's narrative fidelity and narrative coherence, and Rieke and Sillars' American Value Systems are used as procedural enhancements to Bormann's model.

The Mormon rhetorical vision displays significant fidelity with three of the American value systems while partaking in four other American values. By fidelity, Fisher means that the stories (rhetorical visions) are "faithful" to other stories the audience believes to be true. The study identifies another value of the Mormon vision, the phys-

icality value. This value is another source of appeal of the Mormon vision. The vision also displays narrative coherence in that it "holds together" internally as a viable story.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One:	Introduction	1
	The Mormons: A Successful Rhetorical Movement	1
	Historical and Theological Overview of the Church	4
	The Articles of Faith	7
	Church Mission Statement	10
	Notes	13
Chapter Two:	Purpose, Method, and Review of Literature	14
	Purpose	14
	Method	14
	Review of Literature	26
	Notes	41
Chapter Three:	Theme Analysis	42
	Narrative Fidelity and Coherency	42
	Theme One: The Gold Plates	54
	Theme Two: The Physicality of God and His Creations	58
	Theme Three: The Centrality of Matter in God's Plan of Salvation	67
	Theme Four: The Temple "Reentering Sacred Space and Time	74
	Theme Five: The Mormon Church: A History of Physical Acts	81
	Theme Six: Physical Geography and the Mormon Church	86
	Coherence of the Story	91
	Notes	108
Chapter Four:	Conclusions and Implications for Future Research	109
	Fidelity	111
	Coherence	112
	Implications for Future Research	118
Works Cited	120

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Mormons: A Successful Rhetorical Movement.

This thesis investigates a successful rhetorical vision: the growth and development of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints hereafter referred to as the Mormon Church. From its founding, the Mormon Church focused on persuading others to accept its rhetorical vision of theological reality. The Church was from the beginning a missionary movement. Donna Hill writes:

Not long after the organization of the church, Joseph's father and brothers were ordained and sent out on missions to preach. Samuel, twenty-two, and other missionaries were sent off without purse or scrip to spread the word wherever an audience could be gathered. In that first year after the church was organized, sixteen missionaries were sent out and fifty-eight the following year. (108)

The day the Mormon Church was organized several believers were baptized including Martin Harris and Orrin Porter Rockwell. Joseph's father, Joseph Smith Sr., was also baptized in Seneca Lake that day. Harris had helped with the

tized in Seneca Lake that day. Harris had helped with the translation of the Book of Mormon and Rockwell was a life-long friend to Smith and later became his bodyguard. Five days later, five members of the Whitmer family were baptized and Oliver Cowdery baptized seven people in the days immediately following (107-108).

The Saints of the Nineteenth Century were instructed to go to "Zion," as they called the headquarters of the Church, when they could. Growth continued, and when Joseph Smith went to Kirtland, Ohio in the spring of 1831, he found one hundred members there. "For about seven years Kirtland was to be a main center of Mormon activity. By the summer of 1835 there were fifteen hundred to two thousand Mormons in Kirtland and vicinity" (Arrington and Bitton 21).

Because of persecution in Kirtland the Mormons moved their headquarters to Missouri. When they were driven out of Missouri, the membership was several thousand. At this time the Church moved to Nauvoo, Illinois and "it soon became a city of approximately 11,000 inhabitants" (21). Many Saints numbering into the hundreds and thousands lived in settlements close to Nauvoo, and there were many thousand throughout America and in the British Isles who, for various reasons, could not gather in "Zion" (21). Arrington estimates that "as many as 35,000 persons joined the movement during its first fourteen years" (22).

The British converts were the result of a mission of

seven of the twelve apostles called by Joseph Smith in 1839. One of the most successful of the apostles, Wilford Woodruff was invited to speak to a religious group in Herfordshire numbering 600, including some preachers. Woodruff was instrumental in converting all but one of the 600 and before he left the area church membership reached eighteen hundred (Hinckley, Truth 63-64). As impressive as these figures are, numbers of conversions today by the Mormon missionary effort are even more striking. Recent convert baptisms reached an all-time high with 318,940 in 1989 and 297,770 in 1991 (LDS Church News 4).

It took nearly 120 years for the Mormon Church to reach one million members just before 1950. It has grown rapidly since and at the end of 1981 had nearly five million. By the end of 1991, membership was 8,120,000 worldwide (4). The number of missionaries is also growing rapidly. There were 29,700 in 1981, but just ten years later that number has grown to 43,395 (4). There are 45 temples operating across the world.

Sociologist Rodney Stark indicates that "if growth during the next century is like that of the past, the Mormons will become a major world faith" (23). Stark's projections indicate that at a 30 percent growth rate, by 2080, church membership would number over 60-million. The growth rate has exceeded 50 percent per decade from 1950 to 1980 and Stark says, "if we set the rate at 50 percent, then in

2080 there will be 265 million Mormons" (23).

He says further, "I can find no reason to expect the Mormons suddenly to lose their ability to gain converts. In historical terms, they must lose their conversion capacities very quickly if they are not to become a major world faith" (25).

Stark also points out that if one were to "disassemble Protestants into their constituent groups, a most remarkable fact comes to light. The Mormons...have become the fifth largest religious body in the nation." He writes that they are outnumbered "only by the Roman Catholic Church, the Southern Baptist Convention, the United Methodist Church and the National Baptist Convention" (23), and "that the Mormons have overtaken such prominent and 'respectable' faiths as the Congregationalists Presbyterians, Episcopalians and even the Lutherans, must be one of the most unremarked cultural watersheds in American history" (23).

Historical and Theological Overview of the Church.

This new religion was founded in New York state in 1830 during a time of great religious ferment. It was a religion which was to become the fastest growing new religion in American history.

Six men met in the home of Peter Whitmer in Fayette Township, Seneca County, New York on April 6, 1830 to officially organize the Church whose members are commonly referred to today as "Mormons." The first meeting was opened

with prayer and then Joseph Smith asked those in attendance if they would accept him and Oliver Cowdery as their spiritual leaders. When all agreed:

Joseph ordained Oliver to the office of Elder in the Priesthood, and Oliver in turn ordained Joseph. "The sacrament of the Lord's supper was administered and then Joseph and Oliver laid their hands on the heads of the others present and confirmed them members of the Church and bestowed upon them the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Hinckley, Truth 30)

Previous to the official organization of the Mormon Church, Smith as a youth in 1820 had responded to his religious confusion by retiring to a grove of trees near his home in Palmyra, New York in order to pray and ask God which church he should join. He later recorded the events of the spring day in 1820. While on his knees praying in what is now referred to as the "Sacred Grove," he received what he believed to be a physical manifestation from God and Jesus Christ:

I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me ... When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all

description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said--pointing to the other--"THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR HIM!" (History of the Church 1: 5)¹

Smith later said he was told in the vision not to join any of the churches in existence. When he left the grove that day he had received information about God and Christ; that they were exalted men with physical bodies, that Christ had been resurrected from the dead and that men can talk to God just like biblical prophets and believers taught at the time of Christ and before (Arrington and Bitton 6).

In 1823, Smith, while praying in his bedroom seeking forgiveness for his sins, received another revelation. An angel appeared to him and told him about a record on gold plates that contained the fullness of the gospel. Smith describes the angel as a man: "Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person" (Hinckley, Truth 8).

This angel's name was Moroni. The angel told him "that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had [known] for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues" (8). Moroni explained that the plates were buried in a hill not far from the Smith family home. He said the

record contained the writings of prophets who lived in America (8).

In the vision Smith saw the site where the plates were buried. He visited the site and found the "gold plates" in a box underneath a rock as the angel had described (11). He was unable to remove the plates and returned to the spot for the next four years as instructed by Moroni. In September of 1827, Smith was allowed to take the plates and he soon after began the translation of the Book of Mormon (11).

Smith recounted his actions before receiving the plates:

I went at the end of each year, and at each time I found the same messenger there, and received instructions and intelligence from him at each of our interviews, respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner his kingdom was to be conducted in the last days. (13)

Later, in 1842, Smith wrote a series of belief statements for a Chicago newspaper editor. A portion of the letter has been published in the Pearl of Great Price as the Articles of Faith.

The Articles of Faith

The Articles of Faith, while not encompassing the complete teachings of the religion, do summarize the funda-

mental beliefs. They were written by Joseph Smith to explain simply to non-members the beliefs of the Church:

1. We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ and in the Holy Ghost.
2. We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.
3. We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.
4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.
5. We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.
6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.
7. We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.
8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as

it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

9. We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

10. We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.

11. We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring and sustaining the law.

13. We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul--We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

(Pearl of Great Price 60-61)

Church Mission Statement

President Spencer W. Kimball outlined the three missions of the Mormon Church which define its purpose on the earth when he opened the 152nd Annual General Conference on April 3, 1982. These comments align and corroborate the Articles of Faith. Kimball said:

The mission of the Church is threefold: First, to proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; Secondly, to perfect the Saints by preparing them to receive the ordinances of the gospel and by instruction and discipline to gain exaltation; Thirdly, to redeem the dead by performing vicarious ordinances of the gospel for those who have lived on the earth. All three are part of one work--to assist our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, in their grand and glorious mission 'to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man' (Moses 1:39). I renew that declaration today. Let us keep these sacred principles in mind and make them an integral part of our lives: that is, to proclaim the gospel, to perfect the Saints, and to redeem the dead. (Mission 4)

Kimball's teachings are regarded by Mormons as revela-

tions from God's chosen prophet. The prophet is the only man living on the earth authorized to speak for God today and members regard this counsel as divine, sent from God.

Today's Prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, is viewed by members as the only man on earth called and ordained to speak to the Church as God's messenger. Church members also honor their other leaders down the hierarchy. They view them as living examples of righteousness, leaders engaged in teaching others to live the gospel moving toward the goal of "perfecting the Saints" (4). From the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, to the local level, all church leaders are regarded as those who God has called.

Semi-annual Conference addresses by the general authorities of the Church are regarded as today's scripture and members are taught the advice should be heeded as if the Lord himself had spoken. The conference provides messages to all the Church from one central location and they help keep the Church a dynamic organization that adapts to the lives of its members attempting to keep their spiritual beliefs alive. The local organization is designed to bind the members together in their individual branches, wards and stakes² with strong and lasting friendships created through service to each other and conference reinforces these ideas.

With the completion of this overview of the Mormon rhetorical vision and a brief sketch of the history and theology of the Mormon Church, the purpose and method of the

study is outlined in Chapter Two. A review of the literature is also presented.

Notes

1. The History of the Church a primary source document in this thesis will be referred to with the abbreviation HC followed by the volume number and page number when cited in the text.

2. Branches, wards and stakes are organizational units in the Mormon Church with the branches being the smallest unit. Branches are usually organized in areas where there are few members of the church. Wards are geographically designed and would resemble a protestant parish. Usually the ward would consist of some 300 members but some are as large as six and seven hundred. Wards hold meetings on a regular weekly basis on Sundays for a three hour period of time. Other meetings of ward auxilliary organizations are held throughout the week. Auxilliary organizations includes the Relief Society for women and youth organizations. For many Mormons, life revolves around activities at the ward level. A stake consists of several wards usually at least six and members of stakes gather twice yearly in stake conferences for instruction from the stake president, other stake leaders and visiting general and area church leaders.

CHAPTER TWO

PURPOSE, METHOD, AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the continuing appeals of the Mormon rhetorical vision. The focus is on core rhetorical appeals that have existed for the Mormon Church since its inception in 1830, not on thematic changes in the movement. The large topic of how the Mormon Church has adapted to its American cultural environment, it is believed, is best left to a different research project that might concern itself with rhetoric surrounding changes in the Churches stance concerning people of African heritage and about plural marriage. Also, this study will not concern itself with the international elements of the religion, nor evaluate the truth claims of the Churches theology. The focus, then, is on what Shephard and Shephard identify as the many recurring themes that "would be familiar to the first Mormons as they are to the current generation" (201).

Method

This study utilizes Ernest Bormann's Fantasy Theme Analysis, a communication model that describes how small groups of people can develop imaginative ideas and concepts (fantasy themes) that combine to form "rhetorical visions"

that "chain out" into the larger society (396-97).

While Bormann's Fantasy Theme model has proven valuable in studying public communication, one weakness in the model is its lack of a fully articulated procedure to carry out the description, analysis, and evaluation of rhetorical visions. To remedy this deficiency, the study incorporates two compatible analytical tools to strengthen the procedural component of Bormann's model: Fisher's notion of "narrative rationality" (64) and Rieke and Sillars description of "American Value Systems" (118).

Fisher, who notes the compatibility of his narrative model of communication with Bormann's model (63-64), argues that human communication is fundamentally a process of "storytelling" and he characterizes human beings as fundamentally "homo narrans," narrative animals. Fisher argues that narratives can be profitably analyzed and evaluated in terms of "narrative rationality" (64).

Narrative probability can be bifurcated into its component parts: narrative fidelity and narrative coherency. Fidelity relates to the extent to which new stories or dramatized themes "ring true" with existing stories audiences hold to be true (64). Coherence relates to the degree to which a story or dramatic theme holds together internally as a believable story. Coherent stories are intrinsically compelling in terms of such traditional literary concerns as character development, plot, dialogue, etc

(64-65).

Bormann does pose a number of questions that are useful to the critic in evaluating the coherency of stories, and this study uses them in its critique of the Mormon rhetorical vision.

To complete the investigation of the Mormon vision, this study employs Rieke and Sillars' description of "American Value Systems" to assess the fidelity of the Mormon Rhetorical Vision. By juxtaposing the themes of the Mormon Rhetorical Vision with Rieke and Sillars' American Value Systems, a useful means was found to determine the degree to which the themes and vision ring true with fundamental stories inherent in American value systems.

In effect, then, Bormann's Fantasy Theme analysis is used as an overall approach in investigating the Mormon Rhetorical Vision, while Fisher's Narrative Rationality and Rieke and Sillars' American Value Systems are used as procedural enhancements to Bormann's model.

Having summarized the methodological approach of this study, what follows is a more amplified discussion of the ideas of Bormann, Fisher, Rieke and Sillars. Ernest G. Bormann's 1972 essay in the Quarterly Journal of Speech outlined a process of studying small group communication in order to look at larger communication groups and the way they operate across the population.

Bormann's work at the University of Minnesota with

small groups and his attempt to rhetorically evaluate a small group communication did not yield the results desired until Robert Bales, "provided the key part to the puzzle when he discovered the dynamic process of group fantasizing" (396). Bales' work allows the critic to examine how group fantasy creates social reality and gives the critic a means to study messages "for insights into the group's culture, motivation, emotional style and cohesion" (396).

Bales examined 12 areas of content analysis and one of the areas was changed from "shows tension release" to "dramatizes." "Dramatizes" led to "group fantasy events" (396-97). Bormann writes:

The communication coded as dramatizes would chain out through the group. The tempo of the conversation would pick up. People would grow excited, interrupt one another, blush, forget their self-consciousness. The tone of the meeting, often quiet and tense immediately prior to the dramatizing, would become lively, animated, and boisterous, the chaining process, involving both verbal and nonverbal communication, indicating participation in the drama. (397)

Bormann relates that Bales most important contribution "for the integration of communication and rhetorical theory ... was the process by which a zero-history group used

fantasy chains to develop a common culture" (397) and leads the group to "go public" with their feelings of the shared realities discussed and dramatized by the group. Once the members had shared the emotional feeling to the point of empathy with the dramatic portions of the discussion, they would show commitment to the situation by publicly voicing or demonstrating their commitment (399).

It is posited that these forces actually lead to attitude change in group members because of the strength of the group's dramas which motivate members to take action or change a behavior to conform or proclaim the ideas of the group. Bormann states that "Values and attitudes of many kinds are tested and legitimized as common to the group by the process of fantasy chains" (398).

Bormann contends that these types of dramatizations occur not only to individuals or small groups, but also to larger groups and then reach out to larger communities through public speeches and mass media. Members of the group that accept the fantasy create, "a social reality filled with heroes, villains, emotions, and attitudes" (398).

Members are sometimes then, "transported" to this "new world which seems somehow ever more real than the everyday world." According to Bormann those transported to this new reality begin to spread the dramas to additional groups of friends and the fantasy themes of the group grow to a new

and wider group and "thus the rhetorical vision is propagated to a larger public until a rhetorical movement emerges" (399).

The critic using the method of fantasy theme analysis can begin to pose questions. Some of these questions center on who the main players are in the drama that shape the social reality of the group. Does God act to "legitimize" the drama and make it more potent in the minds of group members? What are the motives of the group? What is a member of the group likely to adopt as his personal vision of the mission or goal of the group? (401).

Other questions could relate to the "setting of the dramas" and does the setting give "supernatural sanction" to the rhetorical vision (401). Bormann asks, "For what are the insiders praised, the outsiders or enemies castigated? What values are inherent in the praiseworthy characters?... What lifestyles are exemplified as praiseworthy?" A question pivotal to this thesis is, "How does the fantasy theme work to attract the unconverted?" (402). An examination of the Mormon rhetorical vision shows the conversion process to be a key mission of the Church. Much effort is expended to teach those who have not yet heard or accepted the Mormon story.

Bormann's case study of the Puritans in early American history applies his methodology. The Puritan rhetorical vision shows how the attitudes and beliefs of this group

acted to weave the people together in embracing a higher vision. The Puritan rhetorical vision allowed Puritans to see themselves:

As conquering new territories for God, saving the souls of the natives, and, most importantly, as setting up in the wilderness a model religious community, a new Israel, patterned after the true meaning of the scriptures to light the way for the reformation still to be accomplished in old England and in all of Europe. Such a vision gave to every social and political action a sense of importance. (402)

The vision legitimized the importance of each member of the Puritan group as an important player in the drama of completing hard work to accomplish the Lord's work on earth. Bormann writes of the Puritan drama:

The scenario places each member of the audience firmly in the role of protagonist. Cotton Mather wrote to students preparing to be ministers that, "the Gaining of one Soul to GOD by our Ministry, will be of more Account with you than any Gain of this World; than all the Wealth in the World." (Bormann 402-03)

The Puritan rhetorical vision also focused on the

belief in an afterlife and the hope of achieving "Sainthood" in this life as being central to the movement's rhetorical vision. Bormann said the Puritans seem to be preoccupied with a fear of death before God had called them to sainthood (403).

"The fantasy themes in which good Puritans took each setback and difficulty as a sign from God and made good use of them to become better persons contained strong motives for action and reform," writes Bormann (404). The desire to live better now, to be more obedient to God, and to plan for a life with God after death was a major factor in the cohesion of the Puritans.

Bormann's sketch of the Puritans captures the drama of the characters involved, their sense of values, how they acted and felt, what they deemed as appropriate action, and their relationship to their God. Using this tool allows the critic to "have an opportunity to be in possession of much more of the Puritan experience" (405).

Fantasy theme analysis allows the critic to examine the motives and meanings of people caught up in a rhetorical movement and gives the critic a chance to look at the messages contained in the vision based on the content of the artifact. The critic doesn't need to understand the psyche of the individuals involved but to see where the vision is leading the group and how the goals of the group hold the vision together. (407)

This methodology also allows the critic, and the ~~reader~~ of the work, a chance to "vicariously experience a way of life that would otherwise be less accessible to us, we ~~have~~ enlarged our awareness, we have become more fully human" (407).

The second approach used in this study is that of Walter Fisher's. Fisher believes his narrative method of analysis is compatible with Bormann's "Fantasy Theme Analysis." Fisher says:

To clarify the narrative paradigm further, I should specify how it is related to Bormann's concept of "fantasy themes" and "rhetorical visions,".... Fantasy, Bormann holds, is a technical term, meaning "the ~~cre-~~ative and imaginative interpretation of events that fulfills a psychological or rhetorical need." Fantasy themes arise "in group interaction out of a ~~recollection~~ of something that happened to the group in the past or a dream of what a group might do in the future." When woven together, they become composite dramas, which Bormann calls "rhetorical visions." ~~From~~ the narrative view, each of these concepts translates into dramatic stories constituting the fabric of social reality for those who compose them. They are, thus, "rhetorical fictions" constructions of fact and faith having persuasive force, rather than fantasies. ~~Never-~~

theless, without getting into the problem of how group-generated stories become public stories, I would note that Bormann and others have demonstrated that "rhetorical visions" do exist. I take this demonstration as partial evidence for the validity of the narrative paradigm. (63-64)

Fisher's narrative paradigm is supported by five basic underlying principles:

1. Humans are essentially storytellers. 2. The paradigmatic mode of human decision making and communication is "good reasons," which vary in form among situations, genres, and media of communication. 3. The production and practice of good reasons are ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character ... 4. Rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings--their inherent awareness of narrative probability, what constitutes a coherent story, and their constant habit of testing narrative fidelity, whether or not the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives. (Narrative probability and narrative fidelity are analagous to the concepts of dramatic probability and verisimilitude; and as MacIntyre observes, "The difference between imaginary characters and real ones is not

in the narrative form of what they do; it is in the degree of their authorship of that form and of their own deeds.") 5. The world as we know it is a set of stories that must be chosen among in order for us to live life in a process of continual re-creation. (64-65)

Fisher's theory is extremely important in allowing the critic to understand the reasons groups of people act the way they do. All of us construct our lives based on the narratives we are familiar with and have lived. Fisher explains that, "Narratives enable us to understand the actions of others 'because we all live our narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives'" (66).

Throughout history communities or societies have had those whose stories helped others remember the past of the community, and helped to give them a view of the future. The stories strengthened the loyalty of the group. Fisher says:

History records no community, uncivilized or civilized, without key storymakers/storytellers, whether sanctioned by God, a "gift," heritage, power, intelligence, or election. Narration implies, however, that the "people" judge the stories that are told for and about them and that they have a rational capacity to make

such judgments. (67)

From the beginning, the rhetorical vision of the Mormon's struck a desire in the hearts of those who heard the narrative, and read from the physical evidence, the Book of Mormon, to embrace this new story that offered them "that better account for their lives"-the purpose of that life (67).

Examining the Mormon story, its rhetorical vision, its coherence, and fidelity in comparison with other stories the power of the rhetorical vision created is seen through the actions of the people involved; people who shared their vision with friends, family and others after becoming excited about their part in the narrative.

The work of Rieke and Sillars will be incorporated into the study in order to measure the fidelity of the Mormon rhetorical vision against a standard of American values. Drawing from a wide variety of material they have identified six major American value systems that reoccur in American culture.¹

The six value systems are: 1. The Puritan-Pioneer-Peasant Value System; 2. The Enlightenment Value System; 3. The Progressive Value System; 4. The Transcendental Value System; 5. The Personal Value System and 6. The Collectivist Value System (118-123). Two others are named by Rieke and Sillars because they "are common in these systems and some-

times operate alone: nature and patriotism" (124).

Review of Literature

Primary Sources

The primary sources of this thesis are often called "the standard works" by members of the Mormon Church. The four books which make up these "standard works" are: The Holy Bible, The Book of Mormon, The Doctrine and Covenants² and The Pearl of Great Price.

A set of the standard works, fully cross-referenced, was prepared by the Church and is now available containing the King James version of the Bible as well as the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible.³ Mormons believe the Bible contains sacred writings which form the foundation of man's relationship to God; however, it believes that the Bible is not as correct today as it was before its many translations.

The Book of Mormon is accepted as the word of God and is considered by the Church to be a second witness of Jesus Christ. It is purported to be a companion to the Bible and according to Mormon belief presents some doctrine more clearly than the Bible. The Book of Mormon is a record of God's dealings with the people living in ancient America. The book was "translated" by Joseph Smith. In 1830 five thousand first edition copies of the book were printed (Where the Book of Mormon, 44).

The Doctrine and Covenants is a compilation of the

revelations received by Joseph Smith including "additions by his successors in the Presidency of the Church," and was first published as the Book of Commandments shortly after the organization of the Church. The book is regarded by the Church as scripture and contains revelations and commandments revealed to Smith while forming and leading the Church. It also contains instructions to the members from leaders who have come after Smith (D&C iii).

The Pearl of Great Price as quoted from its title page is "a selection from the revelations, translations, and narrations of Joseph Smith." The Book of Moses, the first book contained in the volume, is made up of revelations received by Smith from June to December of 1830. The Book of Abraham was translated by Smith, from, as he says, "ancient Records, that have fallen into our hands from the catacombs of Egypt" (29). Both of the books discuss the creation of the world and the dealing of the Lord with two ancient prophets.

The Pearl of Great Price also contains the account of Joseph Smith's first vision, the visit of the angel Moroni and his acquisition of the gold plates as well as a translation of the twenty-fourth Chapter of Matthew from the Bible. In 1976, at general conference, two additions were made to the Pearl of Great Price. "Joseph Smith's vision of the celestial kingdom, received in the Kirtland Temple on January 21, 1836," was one addition and the other was the vision

of President Joseph F. Smith, the sixth president of the Church, received in 1918 concerning the "redemption of the dead." Prior to 1976, there had not been an addition to the Mormon standard works for 70 years (Allen and Leonard 631).

The History of the Church is also a valuable set of books for obtaining information concerning the early organization of the Mormon Church and the actions of Smith and the early members. It is a seven volume work covering 1820 to 1844, the period before Brigham Young was named president.

Secondary Sources

Very little has been written concerning the Mormon Church in communication journals. One example is an article by, Loy Otis Banks "The Role of Mormon Journalism in the Death of Joseph Smith." Published in Journalism Quarterly in 1950, Banks explains how Smith's death was a result, in part, of the "suppression of the Nauvoo, Illinois, 'Expositor', an apostate journal" that was being published in Nauvoo by former Mormons. Smith's death came just two weeks after the "suppression" of the journal by Smith who was also acting as the Mayor of Nauvoo. The article traces events leading to the death of Smith and his brother Hyrum and discusses how the murders of the two were covered in many newspapers in America. It also briefly discusses the trials of some of those held for the murders at Carthage jail.

Kevin M. Simmons has examined strategies used by Mormon

missionaries in communicating with potential converts. His "Selling the Saints: Conversational Strategies of Mormon Missionaries," details his investigation of the Churches "conversational strategies" during presentation of the Mormon message. Simmons taped conversations he had with Mormon missionaries and discovered five "conversational strategies" while analyzing the tapes content. The five are: "1) impersonal personalization, 2) commitment responses, 3) cushion of empathy, 4) authority, and, 5) involvement" (2). He writes that "underlying the lessons was an attempted value change involving self-awareness and dissatisfaction," and that "the goal of the process was to engage in a ineffable experience, the discovery of truth through divine Intervention." His experience with the missionaries indicated that they continually asked him to pray for answers and to study the material presented. "The conversational strategies created a personal, empathic, and authoritative context within which I became committed and involved" (23).

Two other works published in Communication Journals deal with Mormon subjects. Douglas Monty Trank wrote "The Negro and The Mormons: A Church in Conflict" in 1971 focusing on the Mormon practice that until 1978 did not allow Black men to be given the priesthood. Richard J. Jensen and John C. Hammerback wrote a paper examining the Mormon stance on the equal rights amendment in the Central States Speech Journal in 1985. The article centers on Sonia Johnson and

her stand for the ERA which led to her excommunication.

In "Persuasion in a Theocracy: Utah -- 1847 to 1869," Halbert S. Greaves outlines the use of persuasion in Utah from the arrival of the Saints in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847 to 1869. This article traces much of the early history in Utah through the discourses presented to the people by their leaders. It contains statements concerning the Utah War of 1857 when government troops were sent to install a territorial governor to replace Brigham Young. It also highlights the Mormon belief in the sacredness of the United States Constitution and how the persuasion of Brigham Young helped "make the Saints industrious and faithful." The gold rush which occurred in California shortly after the arrival of the saints in Utah, gave Brigham Young a difficult task of persuading the saints not to leave because of the lure of wealth. Other topics include the Mormon leaders civil war stance, the coming of the telegraph and railroad to Utah, and polygamy.

An extremely helpful work is The Mormon Experience, a history that examines the movement topically rather chronologically. Written by Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, this work not only examines Mormon beginnings, it identifies seven important "Appeals of Mormonism." The authors ask the question, "What did Mormonism have to offer" in the nineteenth century world? (27).

The first appeal relates to the "Restoration of the

true Church." The Church has taught that it is the Church of Christ that was lost to the earth and restored with the full "authority to act in God's name." A restoration of the true church was something many people were looking for. The Mormon Church "came as a recognizable variation of the primitive-gospel ... the assumed corruption and apostasy of Christianity, the need to return to pure biblical practices" (28).

The second appeal is "Biblicism." The early Mormons used the Bible as the foundation of their faith. The missionaries and preachers of the Church used the Bible in their discussions with non-members and chose scriptures which illustrated, "(1) the primitive church pattern; (2) the expectation of apostasy and later restoration; (3) millennialism; and (4) the uniformity of the gospel." In addition to using these biblical texts, the Church uses Joseph Smith's "inspired" translation of the Bible (30).

A third appeal, according to Arrington and Bitton, is that the Book of Mormon "was something tangible" that "could be read and reacted to" (30).

"Modern Revelation" is a fourth appeal. Here was a church that offered answers to members questions, but these answers were given by a prophet who claimed to talk with God. This was an attractive belief, along with the notion that individuals can receive revelation for themselves. Further the content of some of the revelations received by

Smith seemed to attract people because of the theological and practical guidance they offered (34-35). These revelations "were seen not as contradictory to the Bible or the Book of Mormon but as a magnificent amplification of them," write Arrington and Bitton (36).

The fifth appeal is "eschatological." Early members and those living today believe in a millenium and the "Second Coming of Christ." These teachings centered on a specific place for the second coming, called Zion by the members of the Church and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth (37).

This new religion offered people something to do on the earth during their lifetime, "an immediate challenge of kingdom-building that was still charged with eternal significance for the working out of God's purposes in history" (36-37). This concern with temporal life and its possessions which include the ownership of property and livestock etc., is seen as an attraction and not a weakness, "evidence that religion had application to the here-and-now rather than being concerned only with a 'beatific vision' or 'mansions above,' and that it dealt with the whole man rather than dightomizing the spirit and the flesh" (37).

A sixth appeal is the idea of "Mythic potency," a term borrowed by Arrington and Bitton from Mircea Eliade. It relates to Fisher's narrative paradigm centering on "myths," or as Eliade describes them "true stories" or "sacred histo-

ries." When looking at the Mormon story, "the Christian gospel as restored by Joseph Smith provided a satisfying 'true story' of sacred events." Arrington and Bitton write that this trait "most clearly separated Mormonism from the many other restorationist groups, with which it shared many features and from which it drew many of its converts." Smith in establishing new programs, frequently used the phrase the "ancient order of things" and the revelations he received followed "what God's pattern was--in very ancient times" making the message of the new religion even more powerful in the minds of those who embraced its teachings (38-39).

A seventh appeal is related to the movement's "Religious authoritarianism." In this regard, Arrington and Bitton cite Mario S. DePilllis's The Quest for Religious Authority and the Rise of Mormonism. DePilllis discusses "the widespread search in the nineteenth century for divinely authorized religion." He argues that the feelings of many at the time that what was needed was "not just another, alternative mode but the one true and divinely authorized Christian religion." Mormonism, with the claim of priesthood authority restored directly from God through his servants, spoke to this need. The restoration of the "divine authority" claimed many members of other "restorationist" movements including Campbellite preachers, "Sidney Rigdon, Lyman Wight, Parley P. Pratt and others" (39).

Not only did the Mormon Church claim to have the divine

Priesthood, it gave power to male members of the Church. "For the masses of Latter-day Saint converts, Mormonism supplied an opportunity for status, prestige, and power" (39).

Arrington and Bitton explain power elements of the movement to involve and hold converts:

Once in the fold, the convert found himself reinforced by a variety of influences. Immediately he became involved. The dramatic appeal of gathering required action that usually meant breaking with friends and relatives.... Involvement by physical removal was reinforced by the lay nature of the Mormon organization, which required most adults to take part in some kind of leadership or missionary role.... The movement was not designed to encourage lukewarm bystanders or occasional attenders; it required a willingness to participate as teachers, branch leaders, missionaries, scribes. Activity created lines of connection that were difficult to sever. (41-42)

Allen and Leonard's The Story of the Latter-day Saints is a recent history of the Mormon Church published in 1976 and contains a comprehensive general bibliography of works written about the Mormon Church. Joseph Fielding Smith's Essentials in Church History contains valuable information

and was first used as an instruction text for the priesthood meetings of the Church. Smith, the tenth president of the Church and a grandson of Hyrum Smith, prepared the manuscript to reduce the Church's history into one volume.

A current counselor in the First Presidency, Gordon B. Hinckley, wrote Truth Restored: A Short History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1979. That volume tells the story of the Church from the beginning to today. The final chapter entitled "The Sunshine of Goodwill" profiles each president of the Church through President Spencer W. Kimball. Another valuable history is Leonard J. Arrington's Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints which covers the economic history of the Saints from 1830 to 1900.

A biography of Joseph Smith by Donna Hill entitled Joseph Smith: The First Mormon paints a comprehensive historical overview of the prophet's life including his murder in Carthage. It contains a valuable bibliography in its notes section and an appendix listing Joseph Smith's contemporaries. Francis M. Gibbons work, Joseph Smith, Martyr, Prophet of God, offers valuable material concerning the prophet as does his book, Brigham Young, Modern Moses, Prophet of God. Arrington's history of Brigham Young contains some valuable portraits of the second prophet of the Church.

Sociologists focusing on religious studies have written

a number of books and articles on Mormonism. Rodney Stark's article, "The Rise of a New World Faith" examines the rapid growth of the Church. He outlines the opportunity for scholars in religious studies to observe first hand the development of a major new religious movement. He traces the growth of the Church to the early 1980's. Stark writes, "The 'miracle' of Mormon success makes them the single most important case on the agenda of the social scientific study of religion. From the Mormons we can see how a successful movement differs from the thousands of failures" (26). Stark also comments favorably upon the sophisticated "social research department" of the Church and the comprehensive and accurate figures that it generates. He examines the "superiority of recruitment strategies" of the Church to expand its message to "new social networks" (26).

Gordon and Gary Shephard's, A Kingdom Transformed: Themes in the Development of Mormonism, was published in 1984. The Shepherds examine the themes of Latter-day Saint conferences held from 1830 thru 1979 from a sociological perspective. They write, "We have attempted to identify general sociological themes ... such as group identity, social solidarity, organizational commitment, sectarianism and secularization--and use them as organizing constructs for an institutional analysis of Mormonism past and present" (1). Their book looks at the changing "leader rhetoric" as identified in the themes used by leaders throughout Church

history in their conference sermons. Using conference records to examine changing rhetoric makes sense, they claim, because "Mormon conferences have always marked occasions when church leaders have conveyed to members official position on matters of doctrine, policy, and expectations of all sorts." Mormons accept these conferences "as authoritative" and they have "become one of the major institutional mechanisms for sustaining belief in the Mormon doctrine" (13).

The Shepherd's study of these conference themes, in 30-year periods, over the history of the church suggest:

three major thematic categories: (1) Various utopian and millennial themes which are clearly associated with early Mormonism, (2) certain respectability and family themes most strongly identified with modern Mormonism, and (3) a number of ultimate authority and exclusive truth claims which have been more or less regularly emphasized in both early and modern periods of Mormon history. (201)

The authors indicate that "the concept of a Mormon kingdom is primarily a metaphor, or perhaps more accurately a profound aspiration--a vision--of the Mormon religion which has shaped the character of Mormon attitudes and institutions." They admit that even though there have been "major changes in both the form and content of conference

addresses," there are many reoccurrent themes that "would be as familiar to the first Mormons as they are to the current generation. The history of the Mormon kingdom is one of both change and continuity" (201).

In Mormonism: The Story of A New Religious Tradition, Jan Shipps traces the development of the religion and how it differs from traditional Christianity. Shipps points out the similarities between the Mormon religion and the early Christians and how Mormonism stood apart from Christian traditions from the day of its founding, and "is a separate religious tradition and that it must be understood and respected on its own terms" (ix-x).

Shipps recounts the early history of the Church through Joseph Smith's narration. The work argues that "what happened to Mormonism as it came into existence is typical of the process through which new religious traditions pass as they are established" and prove to be lasting. In chapters six and seven, changes to the Mormon community, such as the ending of plural marriages and the end of political domination in Utah by Mormon leaders, are studied as the Church, which had been isolated, entered "the mainstream of American life" (xiv). Shipps also provides a valuable chronology of Mormonism in the nineteenth century.

A Catholic sociologist, Thomas F. O'Dea's volume entitled The Mormons published in 1957 is an effective overview of the social institutions of the Mormons and also investi-

gates Mormon values. It reviews the pioneer journey and the establishment of Zion in the mountains following the death of Smith and the leadership of Brigham Young.

Religious reference works written by Mormons were also helpful. James E. Talmage's Jesus The Christ which is nearly accepted by the Church authorities as scripture. Talmage examines the life of Christ and his teachings in great detail. Bruce R. McConkie's works, The Promised Messiah and The Mortal Messiah, deal with Christ and his major importance to the Church. Joseph Fielding Smith's Doctrines of Salvation (3 vols) presents much of the doctrine of the Church in an easy to read format. He addresses all the major beliefs of the Church and explains them in detail.

Another reference work written by Milton V. Backman Jr., Joseph Smith's First Vision, contains different versions of the prophet's vision beginning with the 1832 version. It also has a complete discussion of the religious environment Smith was in living in New York in 1820, and includes an entire chapter about "the Burned-Over District," so called because of the religious revivals and intense religious activity in the area near Palmyra.

Of great value also were the Journal of Discourses a 26 volume compilation of speeches given by Presidents of the Church, Apostles of the Church and Counselors in the first presidencies from 1852 to 1888. The official magazine of the Church, the Ensign, also has been used as has its predeces-

sor The Improvement Era. Priesthood manuals and Relief Society (the women's organization of the church) study guides have also been consulted.

Dialogue and Sunstone magazines have been consulted. The two are not official publications of the Church and are considered to be "left of theological center," in Mormon thought, although Dialogue is much more mainstream in its editorial stance than Sunstone. Neither are sanctioned journals of the Church and were founded to give the intellectuals in the Church a communication forum.

Pamphlets published by the Church were also of value including The Abundant Life, What is the Book of Mormon, Christ in America, The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony, and Which Church is Right?

Douglas Monty Trank's dissertation, A Rhetorical Analysis of the Rhetoric Emerging from the Mormon-Black Controversy, again written in 1973 before the revelation giving the Black's the Priesthood was valuable as was David G. Wright's master's thesis, A Content Analysis of References to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in General Magazines in the United States Between 1953 and 1964. The thesis provides insights into the view of the Church held by the United States during that period of time. Others theses examine the rhetoric of various Church leaders such as Ezra Taft Benson and Charles Pentecost.

Notes

1. Virgil I. Baker and Ralph T. Eubanks, Speech in Personal and Public Affairs (New York: David McKay, 1965, 95-102; Clyde Kluckhohn, Mirror for Man; Stow Persons, American Minds (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1958); Jurgen Ruesch; Steele and Redding, Weaver Williams, Jr., 438-504.

2. The Doctrine and Covenants will be referred to in this thesis in citations with the abbreviation D&C with the section and verses following.

3. In 1979, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints completed work on a set of standard works "with explanatory notes and cross references to the standard works of the Church" (The Holy Bible i). This standard works are considered by the Church to be the King James version of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. The set also contains excerpts from the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible in the Appendix that Smith completed before his death in 1844. The King James version of the Bible is the version quoted in this thesis.

CHAPTER THREE

THEME ANALYSIS

Narrative Fidelity and Coherency

This Chapter analyzes the narrative fidelity and coherence of Mormon fantasy themes. Fisher explains that human beings are in the "constant habit of testing narrative fidelity," that is, deciding "whether or not the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives" (64). All of us construct our lives based on the narratives we are familiar with and have "lived." Fisher says, "Narratives enable us to understand the actions of others 'because we all live our narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives'" (66).

What follows is a look at the fidelity of Mormon themes as they relate to Rieke and Sillars' American value systems. By relating the Mormon fantasy themes to the American value clusters, the analysis, in effect, identifies the degree to which the themes "ring true" to the stories inherent in the value systems. Drawing from a wide variety of material, Rieke and Sillars have identified six major American value systems that reoccur in American culture. Their work incorporates a "cross section of sources from a variety of disci-

plines" including Baker and Eubanks, (1965); Kluckhohn; Stow Persons, (1958); Ruesch; Steele and Redding, Weaver, Williams, Jr., (Rieke and Sillars 118).¹

These systems or clusters "provide a fair view of the standard American value systems, they do not provide convenient pigeonholes into which individuals can be placed. They represent broad social categories." It must also be recognized that these value clusters are not mutually exclusive for "many individuals and groups will cross over value systems, picking and choosing from several" (118). However, "the vast majority of Americans will subscribe to some combination of these value systems," Rieke and Sillars argue that "there are specialized value systems among subgroups of the culture: Blacks, Mormons, Catholics, Latinos, Italian-Americans, Amerasians" (124). Applying the notion of specialized value systems, this study will identify a Mormon value system.

Rieke and Sillars' six value systems are: 1) The Puritan-Pioneer-Peasant Value System; 2) The Enlightenment Value System; 3) The Progressive Value System; 4) The Transcendental Value System; 5) The Personal Value System and 6) The Collectivist Value System (118-123). Two others are named by Rieke and Sillars because they "are common in these systems and sometimes operate alone: nature and patriotism" (124).

"The Puritan-Pioneer-Peasant Value System is rooted in the idea that persons have an obligation to themselves and

those around them, and in some cases to their God, to work hard at whatever they do." This system incorporates those that think "great benefit is in the striving against an unknowable and frequently hostile universe" and many "see it as a means to salvation." Americans that fit this system believe "they have an obligation to others, must be selfless, and must not waste." This system involves strong religious implications and it must be noted that these are not necessarily Calvinistic although Puritan in character. The peasant heritage is part of this value system (119). Rieke and Sillars add that:

because work, selflessness, and thrift are positive value terms in this value system, laziness, selfishness, and waste are negative value terms. One can see how some adherents to this value system object to smoking, drinking, dancing, or cardplaying. These activities are frivolous; they take one's mind off more serious matters and waste time. (119)

Positive terms linked to this system are: "activity, work, thrift, morality, dedication, selflessness, virtue, righteousness, duty, dependability, temperance, sobriety, savings, dignity." Negative terms are "waste, immorality, dereliction, dissipation, infidelity, theft, vandalism, hunger, poverty, disgrace, vanity" (119).

The Enlightenment Value System can be seen in the founding of America. Rieke and Sillars write: "The Declaration of Independence is the epitome of an enlightenment document. In many ways America is an enlightenment nation." The belief in "order" and that the world is governed by "natural laws" that are "harmonious" is a part of this system. Those subscribing to this value system "may worship God for God's greatness, even acknowledge that God created the universe and natural laws, but they find out about the universe because they have the power of reason." Positive value terms are "freedom, science, nature, rationality, democracy, fact, liberty, individualism, knowledge, intelligence, reason, natural rights, natural laws, progress" and the negative terms are: "ignorance, inattention, thoughtlessness, error, indecision, irrationality, dictatorship, fascism, bookburning, falsehood, regression" (120).

Rieke and Sillars begin their discussion of the third system, The Progressive Value System with the statement that "Progress was a natural handmaiden of the Enlightenment," and it "is still a fundamental value in America" today.

If these laws were available and if humans had the tool, reason, to discover them and use them to advantage, then progress would result. Things would continually get better. But although progress is probably an historical spin-off of the Enlightenment, it has become

so important on its own that it deserves at times to be seen quite separate from the Enlightenment. (120)

Richard Weaver, writing in 1953, went so far as to say that "one would not go far wrong in naming progress" the "God-term" of the period and the "expression about which all other expressions are ranked as subordinate." It should be noted though that today the notion of unlimited progress is questioned by a number of neo-conservative thinkers and others as being naive, simplistic and utopian. "Some of the key positive words of the Progressive value system are: practicality, efficiency, change, improvement, science, future, modern, progress, evolution" and the negatives are: "old-fashioned, regressive, impossible, backward" (121).

A fourth value system, the Transcendental value system, is based on the idea "that there was a faculty higher than reason;" being "intuition" and that "for the transcendentalist, there is a way of knowing that is better than reason, a way which transcends reason." Another part of this system is "the centrality of love for others," and "communal living." The positive terms identified in this system are: "humanitarian, individualism, respect, intuition, truth, equality, sympathetic, affection, feeling, love, sensitivity, emotion, personal kindness, compassion, brotherhood, friendship, mysticism" and the negative terms are: "science, reason, mechanical, hate, war, anger, insensitive, coldness, unemo-

tional" (122).

The fifth value system is the Personal Success Value System that places stress on "a highly pragmatic concern for the material happiness of the individual." Rieke and Sillars write that the term "selfish" doesn't fit completely here because the idea is more centered in the phrase that "The Lord helps those who helps themselves," a statement that is used "by some of the most devout in our nation." Positive terms are, "career, family, friends, recreation, economic security, identity, health, individualism, affection, respect, enjoyment, dignity, consideration, fair play, personal," while the negative terms are, "dullness, routine, hunger, poverty, disgrace, coercion, disease" (123).

The final general value system is the Collectivist Value System. That system is important in America because "there has always been a value placed on cooperative action.... Much rhetoric about our 'pioneer ancestors' has to do with their cooperative action." Collective action when necessary has been a hallmark of America. Rieke and Sillars cite "the civil rights movement" as "a collective action for freedom," and they argue that "there is no doubt that collectivism is a strong value system in this nation" (123). The positive terms associated with this value system are "cooperation, joint action, unity, brotherhood, ... order, humanitarian aid and comfort, equality" and the negative terms are "disorganization, selfishness, personal greed,

inequality" (124).

Rieke and Sillars make it clear that "these six do not constitute a complete catalog of all American value systems. Combinations and reordering produce different systems" (124). As one combines and reorders these five general American value systems there are distinct permutations of the systems that help explain specific movements within America. These permutations lead to the development of new value systems rooted in the more general value systems. The value system of the Mormon Movement is one such permutation.

In addition to the above American value systems, this study suggests the inclusion of an additional American value that centers on matter and physicality, the Physicality Value. Frentz and Farrell suggest this value when they discuss their notion of a "dialectical opposition in American History" between a physically oriented "positivist impulse" and a "contrary transcendent impulse." They argue:

Throughout the history of American thought, two countervailing impulses have alternatively dominated the nation's consciousness. There is ... a positivist inclination [that] ... regards any statement to be meaningful only in terms of its verifiable and observable referents, ... distrusts the abstract, ... The counterpart of Positivism in American thought, Transcendence, ... yearn(s) for that which is general and

ideal. (41)

Fisher makes a parallel dichotomy between what he sees as the social tension between materialism and moralism. His "materialist myth," is grounded on tangible results in the here and now which Fisher believes is part of the Puritan work ethic" (161). Frentz and Farrell's positivist impulse and Fisher's materialistic myth suggest another key American value orientation that centers on the concrete, specific and the empirical. This orientation is labeled the physicality value and many Mormon themes incorporate this value.

The "Physicality Value," then, is defined as:

1. An orientation that stresses the reality and importance of the material, e.g., the physical nature of God and his universes.
2. A concern for the temporal and tangible, the here and now. This concern with temporal life and its possessions which include the ownership of property and livestock etc., is seen as an attraction and not a weakness, "evidence that religion had application to the here-and-now rather than being concerned only with a "beatific vision" or 'mansions above,' and that it dealt with the whole man rather than dichotomizing the spirit and the flesh" (Arrington 37).
3. An appreciation of and an attraction to physical structures and material objects. For the Mormons, this appreciation is expressed, for example, in their temples and cha-

pels, their Book of Mormon, and their gold plates.

4. The narration and re-telling of physical acts about people achieving spiritual goals by overcoming tremendous physical obstacles. This narration is manifest in the dramatization of the pioneer migration of the Mormons from New York to Ohio to Missouri to Illinois and finally to the "Zion" of the Great Salt Lake Basin. This dramatizing is also evidenced in the retelling of the persecution and imprisonment of early Mormons and the murder of their founder, Joseph Smith.

5. A notion that people gain spirituality and enlightenment by specific deeds and actions rooted in the physical world, e.g., the Mormon notion of the importance of "works" in achieving salvation.

6. The use of sensual, earthy, figurative language, a representative example of which is found in Smith's discussion of how people can become Gods. For example, Smith once described this teaching using the physical sense of taste:

This is good doctrine. It tastes good. I can taste the principles of eternal life, and so can you. They are given to me by the revelations of Jesus Christ; and I know that when I tell you these words of eternal life as they are given to me, you taste them, and I know that you believe them. You say honey is sweet, and so do I. I can also taste the spirit of eternal life. I

know that it is good. (Teachings 355)

He once described himself in very interesting language just a year before he died:

I am like a huge, rough stone rolling down from a high mountain; and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else, striking with accelerated force against religious bigotry, priestcraft, lawyercraft, doctorcraft, lying editors, suborned judges and jurors, and the authority of perjured executives, backed by mobs, blasphemers, licentious and corrupt men and women--all hell knocking off a corner here and a corner there. Thus I will become a smooth polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty, who will give me dominion over all and everyone of them, when their refuge of lies shall fail, and their hiding place shall be destroyed, while these smooth-polished stones with which I come in contact become marred. (HC 5:401)

Another example of Smith's descriptive language follows describing the adversity he faced at a young age:

It seems as though the adversary was aware, at a very early period of my life, that I was destined to prove a

disturber and an annoyer of his kingdom; else why should the powers of darkness combine against me? Why the opposition and persecution that arose against me, almost in my infancy? (Gibbons, Joseph 31)

Heber C. Kimball provided another example of this highly descriptive language when he wrote about a vision of Joseph Smith:

There Father Adam stood and opened the gate to them [the Twelve], and as they entered, he embraced them one by one and kissed them. He then led them to the throne of God, and then the Savior embraced each one of them and kissed them, and crowned each one of them in the presence of God.... The impression this vision left on Brother Joseph's mind was of so acute a nature, that he never could refrain from weeping while rehearsing it. (McConkie and Millet 126)

John Taylor, the third president of the Church, wrote these words following the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Concerning Joseph he said:

He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works

with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated! When Joseph went to Carthage to deliver himself up to the pretended requirements of the law, two or three days previous to his assassination, he said: "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men. I SHALL DIE INNOCENT, AND IT SHALL YET BE SAID OF ME--HE WAS MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD." (D&C 135:3-4)

Using the American value system as a measure, the study examines the following individual themes of the Mormon rhetorical vision beginning with the gold plates.

Theme One: The Gold Plates

In terms of American value systems, the gold plates and the visions of Joseph Smith do not connect very well with contemporary American values. Having said this, paradoxically, the gold plates do have a physical aspect associated with them that is attractive to a number of adherents and converts. To believers the Book of Mormon provides the "tangible evidence" of the truth of the religious movement. Indeed, the publication of the book providing material evidence allowing believers to "go public," as Bormann has said, to share their beliefs with others, thus spreading the vision.

Americans are physically oriented people. They like the "feel" of their possessions. They are impressed by the physical size of things and interested in what things look like, the texture of the material and its weight and dimensions. The physicality of Smith's visions hint at a central component of a Mormon value system, a system (shared by many Americans) that tend to favor that which is practical, concrete and physical.

As will be seen later when the coherence of the story is discussed, the theme of the Gold Plates plays an important role in the ultimate coherence of the story. The plates are tied to Smith's visions. According to the story, two

elements of this theme add a degree of credence to the existence of the plates: 1) that there were witnesses to the actual existence of the plates and 2) that there was a certain tangibleness to the vision, a kind of physicality in Smith's having seen God and Christ and later the angel who told him about the plates and their location. The visions were not out-of-body experiences, but concrete, material occurrences. Smith's description of his vision of God and Christ help us grasp the "physicality" of the vision: "I asked the personages who stood above me in the light, which of all sects was right and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them" (Pearl of Great Price 49).

These two "personages" talked to him, making this a concrete physical narration. He described them as beings with physical bodies like his own. When he saw the vision of the angel, Smith also described the physical details of what he saw: the angel told him "he was a messenger sent from the presence of God" and that he had "a book" that was written "upon gold plates" and as the angel described the place where the book was buried Smith said, "the vision was opened to my mind that I could see the place where the plates were deposited, and that so clearly and distinctly that I knew the place again when I visited it" (HC 1: 13-14).

When he went to the hill to see the plates, he tells of

his digging through dirt and lifting up the box that contained the plates: "Having removed the earth, I obtained a lever, which I got fixed under the edge of the stone, and with a little exertion raised it up." When he looked inside, things were as they had been described by the angel. In Smith's words, "I looked in, and there indeed did I behold the plates, the Urim and Thummim [the stones the angel had described] and the breastplate, as stated by the messenger" (HC 1: 16). The vision is one of physical action, a mortal man doing what he has been instructed to do. A prophet with dirt on his hands, interacting with God, Christ and an angel.

Three witnesses to the gold plates also give a sense of tangibility to the golden plates theme. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris were permitted to see and handle the plates and they also saw the angel Moroni. They declared "with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates and the engravings thereon" (Book of Mormon, viii). And the Book of Mormon itself serves as a kind of physical evidence supporting the claim that the plates existed. Cowdery wrote Smith's words as he translated from the plates and gave this description of the process:

I wrote with my own pen the entire Book of Mormon (save

a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the prophet, as he translated it by the gift and power of God, by means of the Urim and Thummin, or as it is called by that book, Holy Interpreters. I beheld with my eyes, and handled with my hands, the gold plates from which it was translated. (Anderson 61)

Theme Two: The Physicality of God and His Creations.

God as a Physical Being

Mormons see God as a physical being with a tangible body. He is not an ethereal being of nebulous substance, a force or a presence. He is a physically perfect being with mortal attributes. This view resonates with the importance most Americans place on the tangible and the concrete.

According to the story, Joseph Smith learned that God has a physical body when he retired to a secluded grove of trees and asked God which Church to join. Smith says: "When the light rested upon me I saw two personages ... standing above me" (Pearl of Great Price 49), and later, he wrote "The father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's, the son also" (D&C 130:22).

Consistent with the physicality of God is a strong realization of the physicality of God's children. Here again, there is not have an etherealized, idealized notion of human beings as essentially spiritual beings, a notion found in the Transcendental movement, and in such American-based religions as Christian Science, Religious Science, Unity and many New Age groups. Smith taught that a person's physical body is created in the image of God, and that God's children consequently possess the same physical attributes that he possesses. (Teachings 345).²

Smith taught that human beings can have an interpersonal relationship with God through prayer. This concept is also illustrated in Smith's first vision in which, while praying he communicated directly with God. He describes God and Christ in the vision as physical beings that were "standing" and ready to speak to him: "One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said, pointing to the other, 'This is my beloved Son; Hear Him!'" (Pearl of Great Price 49), and "if you were to see him today, [God] you would see him like a man in form--like yourselves in all the person, image and very form as a man" and he explains that God and man can walk and converse together "as one man talks and communes with another" (Teachings 345). These visions clearly establish the possibility and naturalness of an individual direct encounter with a physical God and prayer as a concrete experience much like interpersonal communication between mortals.

This belief in the possibility of a personal encounter with an anthropomorphic God is, of course, not limited to the Mormon Church. Evidence of this view is seen in the growth of evangelical and fundamentalist groups in America who focus on a relationship between Jesus and themselves and conceptualize Jesus in human-like terms. Still, there are many Americans that would be uncomfortable with the literalism and the anthropomorphic strains in the Mormon vision of God.

Man Can Become a God

A religious form of Rieke and Sillars' Progressive Value System is seen in the Mormon view that individuals are to become as perfect as God (Matt 5:44). Joseph Smith believed he was a "god in embryo" and taught his followers the same doctrine (Gibbons, Joseph 352). The concept of not only becoming like God, but becoming a God is seen in terms of progression, a step-by-step process. This, according to Mormon doctrine, eventuates in human beings having the potential to become gods.

Parley P. Pratt, a nineteenth century apostle, said, "God, angels and men, are all of the same species, one race, one great family ... in a series of progressive being..." (O'Dea 44). Smith himself made the statement, "You have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one" (Allred 228). And Smith says: "God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!" This progressivist view is thus illustrated by God's own progression through time while living on an earth and going "from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation." This is the pattern his children are following (HC 6: 305-306). The Puritan-Pioneer-Peasant Value System is also evident here as the progression is described as something difficult, but of

great value, because of the possible reward at the end of life's difficult journey.

The Physical Birth of Jesus

One of the most divergent and striking beliefs of the Mormon vision concerns the physical birth of Jesus. Mormons reject the notion of an immaculate conception of Jesus by Mary, holding the view that Jesus was the literal and physical son of God, the result of an actual physical, yet sacred, union of Mary and God. This doctrine is a natural extension of Smith's basic theology, illustrating that the Church is not afraid to follow Smith's ideas of physicality wherever they might lead. This includes the doctrine of the physical uniting of God the Father, a perfected immortal being, and Mary, the mortal mother of Christ.

McConkie addresses this doctrine in the Promised Messiah:

All ambiguity and uncertainty of meaning, if there is any, is removed by Alma [a Book of Mormon prophet], whose Messianic utterance announced: "The Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth ... he shall be born of Mary,... she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God" (Book of Mormon 224-25). Jesus, thus, is the Son of God ... and properly speaking Mary

was with child "by the power of the Holy Ghost," rather than "of the Holy Ghost." (464)

Talmage is more clear about this association of God the father and Mary:

That child to be born of Mary was begotten of Elohim, the Eternal Father, not in violation of natural law but in accordance with a higher manifestation thereof; and the offspring from that association of supreme sanctity, celestial Sireship, and pure though mortal maternity, was of right to be called the "Son of the Highest." (Talmage, Jesus The Christ 81).

Talmage further writes that Christ "was to inherit the physical, mental, and spiritual traits, tendencies, and powers that characterized His parents--one immortal and glorified--God, the other human--woman" (81). Through the inheritance of these traits, He was able to carry out his earthly mission which included the gift of life after death to all his children.

The World as Organized Matter

The Mormon belief that God organized the world from existing matter³ differs from the traditional ex-nihilo Christian belief of creation and puts the Mormon Church at

some distance from traditional Christianity. But Smith's notion parallels the contemporary scientific idea that matter exists as energy and this is the basic building block of the universe or cosmos.

Further, Smith taught that God created "the world out of existing matter he said: "The word create came from the word baurau which does not mean to create out of nothing; it means to organize." And "God had materials to organize the world out of chaos--chaotic matter, which is element." And later in the same passage he wrote that matter "can never be destroyed" (HC 6:308-09).

Smith's view of organizing the world out of existing chaotic matter is strikingly consistent with certain contemporary notions of science. For example, Lane notes that in the cosmos "there may be only huge amounts of compact energy, a sort of primordial foam" in which there is "a chaotic birthing process." (Lane 9C).

Mormons are instructed that not only is element eternal but that God has used the elements that exist in the universe to create multiple heavens or universes. Scriptural support is found in the Pearl of Great Price:

And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten....

But only an account of this earth, and the inhabit-

ants thereof, give I unto you. For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them.

And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying: The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine.

And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words. (4)

Again Smith's notion has a striking contemporary ring, for as Andrei Linde, a cosmologist, explains, "our universe was one of many 'bubbles' imbedded in this cosmic froth," and it became a "baby universe--or babyverse" connected to its "parent multiverse." And Lane notes that "the universe as we know it [is] only one of numerous universes spawned from a parent 'multiverse'" (Lane 9C).

While Smith's notions of creating the world out of existing matter and that there were multiple universes disconnected the Church from nineteenth century theological and scientific thought, these notions resonate well with contemporary scientific speculation and theory.

Another way that Mormon theology relates to scientific

theory is in its teaching that people live in an orderly world governed by physical laws. In this regard Cannon, Dahl and Welch write of Mormon theology that "understanding the creation helps us to see that God is a God of order and of laws.... The universe truly has system and order" (31). O'Dea writes that "For Mormonism, God's relation to the universe is not unlike that of man; God like man is subject to the law of progression" (123). Widtsoe amplifies this idea of God and the universe:

God is the supreme intelligent Being in the universe, who has the greatest knowledge and the most perfected will, and who, therefore, possesses infinite power over the forces of the universe. However, if the great law of progression is accepted, God must have been engaged from the beginning, and must now be engaged in progressive development, and infinite as God is, he must have been less powerful in the past than he is today. (23-24)

This notion of a universe regulated by natural laws is consistent with Rieke and Sillars Enlightenment Value System. As indicated, Mormons believe that there are natural laws governing the universe--laws even God himself must obey. It may be that certain phenomena do not appear to obey the natural laws of the universe, but ultimately, Mormon's

are convinced that when the breadth of these laws is fully understood they will indeed be consistent with natural law. Further, Mormons are taught to place great emphasis on the power of reason to understand the laws of nature and to solve day-to-day problems. So in their belief in natural law and the value of reason the Mormon rhetorical vision is grounded in the Enlightenment value system.

The Mormon rhetorical vision deviates from the traditional Enlightenment Value System in its notion of the relationship between reason and prayer. For the Mormon, there is a complimentary and reciprocal relationship between reason and prayer. For example, in solving a theoretical or pragmatic problem, the Mormon first prays for inspiration and while praying remains fully open-minded and receptive to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. After working through the problem using the power of reasoning, the Mormon is instructed to pray for confirmation that the action taken to solve the problem is correct (D&C 9:7-9).

Theme Three: The Centrality of Matter in God's Plan of Salvation

Plan of Salvation—Overview

The central purpose of a person's existence is contained in the "plan of salvation." The plan is a physical, concrete, person-centered plan which creates a vision of what people can become in the future. The Plan contains four sub-themes all of which are embedded in the notion of religious progressivism, related to the American Value System identified by Rieke and Sillars. The four are 1) pre-existence; 2) earth life or mortal probation; 3) death and the resurrection of our mortal bodies; and 4) the judgment which determines the physical locations in which God's children will dwell.

Pre-existence

The only other American denomination to articulate a theory of pre-existence is Christian Science, but the Christian Science doctrine is not well developed nor does it play a significant role in its overall theology. The doctrine might also be found in certain elements of the Transcendental movement. The Mormon belief in a pre-existence teaches that God's children lived with him as spirit bodies before coming to earth to obtain a mortal body. Joseph Fielding

Smith writes that "this earth was prepared; and we were sent down here to receive bodies of flesh and bones and to be quickened by blood ... that we might, through obedience to the principles of the gospel, know good from evil" (Smith 2: 1-2). While men lived in this pre-existence, the plan was presented and all spirits were given the opportunity to "accept or reject the plan." Those that didn't accept the plan "were not privileged to enter mortality" (Purpose of Life 2). Those that followed Satan and rejected the opportunity to come to earth were cast out of God's presence because they preferred Satan's plan that would force all to choose good and return to live with God.

Earthly Probation

The Progressivist Value System is also seen in the spirit children's advancement to this next stage of their existence so that they could obtain a physical body. Mormons believe it is necessary to have this body in order to become like God or to be a god. Joseph Fielding Smith writes that God "knew ... that ... only through our free agency and ... by knowing good and evil,... would we be able to come back into his presence and be worthy of exaltation [life with God]" (Doctrines 2: 2).

Learning obedience to God's commandments is an important reason for this earthly probation as well as the completion of certain ordinances necessary to perfection,

including "baptism for the remission of our sins" and the reception of the "gift of the Holy Ghost" (2: 4). Again Mormons believe the teaching found in the New Testament to become perfect as God is perfect (Matt 5:48). This is accomplished by obtaining faith in the Godhead, acceptance of "the infinite atonement of Christ" and His mission on earth and the repentance "of all our sins, giving our hearts to God with the full intent of serving him" (Doctrines 2: 4).

Death, Salvation and Resurrection

To pass from this earthly probation to the next phase of existence all mortals must die. The Mormon vision teaches that at death the spirit and the body will be reunited. Because of Christ's atonement, all mortals will be resurrected and live again. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22).

Mormons believe that righteous spirits will be resurrected at the Second Coming of Christ and those that are not righteous will be resurrected after the millenium. "After the resurrection from the dead, our bodies will be spiritual bodies, but they will be bodies that are tangible, bodies that have been purified, but they will nevertheless be bodies of flesh and bones" (Smith, Doctrines 2: 285). Once resurrected, our perfect physical bodies will be free from physical death forever (2: 285). Concerning death and restoration, the Book of Mormon offers a concrete description:

The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time" and later "and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame, as it is now or in the body.

(Book of Mormon 236).

Judgment

The judgment which follows the resurrection will send God's children to dwell on spheres which they have earned according to their obedience. Mormons are taught that there are three degrees of glory, three final dwelling places for God's children, the Celestial Kingdom, the Terrestrial Kingdom and the Telestial Kingdom (D&C 76). The most righteous will be with God in the Celestial Kingdom and only those in the Celestial Kingdom will have the power to create families and to become like Christ and God (Smith, Doctrines 2: 27).

These kingdoms are actual physical places, not some ethereal heaven. Joseph Fielding Smith teaches that the earth will become "a celestial body ... a fit abode for celestial beings only." Those who have kept the full law of God are those who "shall inherit the earth" (2: 26).

The physical and human character of this judgment can be seen in the journal of Heber C. Kimball, a nineteenth century apostle concerning a vision of Joseph Smith as quoted earlier in this study. In the vision Adam is seen

leading the apostles into heaven where they are "embraced" by the Savior (McConkie and Millet 126).

Salvation Based on Physical Works

The Mormons place great emphasis on physical "works." These physical acts of the individual earn them a place in the kingdom of God. Rejecting the notion that one is saved by faith alone, Mormons believe people will be judged by God based on their works and the opportunities of which they have taken advantage. Following this same reasoning, a recent president of the Church, Spencer W. Kimball said:

One of the most fallacious doctrines originated by Satan and propounded by man is that man is saved alone by the grace of God; that belief in Jesus Christ alone is all that is needed for salvation. Along with all the other works necessary for man's exaltation in the kingdom of God this could rule out the need for repentance. It could give license for sin and, since it does not require man to work out his salvation, could accept instead lip service, death-bed "repentance," and shallow meaningless confession of sin. (Miracle 206-207)

Even though the Church stresses the centrality of works in achieving salvation, it does recognize an important role to be played by faith.

Salvation of Those Without The Gospel Law

This section focuses on the portion of the plan of salvation that deals with those human beings who have lived without knowing the gospel and its laws. Mormons argue that these individuals will have the opportunity of learning the gospel and the plan in the spirit world where all human beings await the resurrection and judgment. Mormons are taught that following his crucifixion, Christ visited this spiritual realm and taught those ignorant of the gospel, finding scriptural support for this belief in I Peter 3:8 and I Peter 4:6. Joseph Fielding Smith has written that those "who have not heard the name of Christ, who are ignorant of the plan of salvation, because the gospel has never reached them in any form, shall not be under the same restrictions and condemnation." These people, without the law, "Christ redeems through his blood" (Doctrines 2: 29).

Mormons perform vicarious physical baptisms in their temples for the unbaptized dead as well as performing other necessary ordinances for the dead who will then have the opportunity to accept or reject the Gospel of Christ. Mormons find scriptural support for vicarious baptisms in I Cor. 15:29.

In analyzing the rhetorical appeal of the previous elements of salvation discussed above, the following can be seen as adding to the Mormon appeal. First the Mormon view of salvation would be attractive to many because it tempers

and broadens the notion of salvation held by traditional Christianity. The traditional view holds that God will welcome his righteous children to heaven or he will send them to hell. In the Mormon view, the righteous will inherit the kingdom of God, but the others will also receive kingdoms of glory, although lesser than the kingdom of the righteous, based on their obedience and physical works.

This concept of salvation has rhetorical appeal because there is a sense of equity and fairness built into it that is lacking in the rigid two-dimensional salvation theology of traditional Christianity. Additionally, there is a sense in which the Mormon description of salvation is appealing because it is much more specific and tangible than that of mainstream Christianity. One can see spelled out the various kingdoms one will inherit based on individual merit. In addition, one is made to realize that there is even salvation possible for those who have died without learning of the plan. That salvation is often made possible by the love of some Mormon who is baptized vicariously on behalf of the dead individual living in the spirit world. It describes a much more specific and tangible destiny for people than mainstream Christianity.

Theme Four: The Temple "Reentering Sacred Space and Time."

Mormons are temple builders. Former apostle James E. Talmage in a preface to his book, The House of The Lord, expounds on this characteristic:

Among the numerous sects and churches of the present day, the Latter-day Saints are distinguished as builders of Temples. In this respect they resemble Israel of olden time. It is not surprising that great and widespread interest is manifest respecting this peculiarity of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, nor that questions are continually arising as to the purpose and motive behind this great labor, and the nature of the ordinances administered in these modern Houses of the Lord. (Talmage)

These modern structures seek to be inspiring and elegant without being over adorned. A visitor will notice the physical care connected with the temples, their upkeep as well as their beauty. Mormon temples usually sit on a hill where they can be easily seen. Truman G. Madsen, a Brigham Young University scholar, has written that "for Joseph Smith no city or nation was truly a stronghold of Zion that was not crowned by a temple" (3). This Mormon interest in tem-

ples, although unique to the Church, connects with the American penchant for physical structures that stand out, that have size and mass. Examples in American culture include the "Empire State Building," "The Sears Tower" in Chicago, the "Century City" complex of buildings in West Los Angeles and, perhaps, the almost sacred regard Americans have for the buildings and monuments in Washington D.C. These are all of symbolic value and their size suggests significance.

Regarding the physical descriptions of the temple, it should be noted that during the many migrations from state to state in the early history of the Church, choice land was always set aside and dedicated as the place where the temple would be constructed. Many of these buildings were constructed in the face of adversity. Joseph Smith's Kirtland Temple dedicatory prayer described the Saints as a people "having sacrificed and endured 'great tribulation' to build the temple 'that the Son of Man might have a place to manifest himself to his people'" (Cowan 358-59). Mormons would not leave Nauvoo until the temple was complete despite the persecutions they faced. The reason is found in Joseph Smith's statement that "The Church is not fully organized, in its proper order, and cannot be until the Temple is completed, where places will be provided for the administration of the ordinances of the Priesthood" (Madsen 3). Brigham Young said of the Nauvoo Temple:

We want to build the Temple in this place if we have to build it as the Jews built the walls of the temple in Jerusalem, with a sword in one hand and the trowel in the other. How easily some men are scared. I have not been frightened yet. (HC 7: 256)

When the Saints first arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in the summer of 1847, land was set aside for the future place where the temple would stand. Talmage says that a Temple Block consisting of a "square of ten acres" was set aside for the building of a temple. Beginning on August 3, 1852 a wall was built surrounding the property and "the site was dedicated and ground first broken for the foundation [of the temple] February 14, 1853" (House 113-115). It took 40 years to build the Salt Lake Temple.

For Mormons the temple is a symbol of purity, the place where the plan of salvation and its meaning is taught. It is considered to be "sacred space." W.D. Davies offers a parallel found in the Jewish faith:

For many Jews in the first century,...Israel, and the land—a land which finds its quintessence in Jerusalem and the temple--were joined together by what has been called an unbreakable umbilical cord. This meant that for many religious Jews, the Land Jerusalem and the Temple were of central if not essential importance (qtd

in Madsen 1).

For Mormons the temple is, likewise, of central importance. It is a sacred place where ordinances are received and covenants are made with God, and a place where Mormons can escape the pressures of everyday life. Only faithful and worthy members are allowed to enter temples.

Something of the Puritan-Pioneer Value System can be seen in this view of the temple, as people promise to God that they will produce righteousness and good works in the face of worldly temptations and difficult opposition. Referring to the Mormon peoples feeling for their temples, Shipps has written:

Although their everyday lives are ordinarily lived out in a profane and, in very many instances, Gentile world, twentieth-century Latter-day Saints still possess the means of reentering sacred time and space. By their very nature temples are sacred space, and time spent therein has a ritual sacredness attached to it."
(129)

Joseph Smith thought that modern day temples would be for the same purposes as "temples built by ancient Israel, which were special, sanctified edifices where ordained priests engaged in the higher ordinances and rituals and

where, on occasion, divine revelations were received and heavenly beings appeared" (Gibbons-Joseph 191).

An example of such a divine revelation is related by Smith in the Doctrine and Covenants:

We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber. His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun, and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters... (110:2-3).

Smith also records in the Doctrine and Covenants that Christ himself was pleased with the construction of the Kirtland temple:

I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house.

Yea, I will appear unto my servants, and speak unto them with mine own voice, if my people will keep my commandments, and do not pollute this holy house.

Yea the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out, and the endowment with which

my servants have been endowed in this house.

And the fame of this house shall be spread to foreign lands; and this is the beginning of the blessing which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people" (D&C 110:7-10).

Joseph Smith, speaking in Nauvoo in 1844, referred to the temple ordinances that would be performed once the building was complete: "we calculate to give the Elders of Israel their washings and anointings, and attend to those last and more impressive ordinances, without which we cannot obtain celestial thrones" (Teachings 362) and he referred to the temple as the place where "men may receive their endowments and be made kings and priests unto the Most High God" (363).

This work, literally referred to as "temple work" by Mormons, ranges from baptism, the most basic ordinance which must be completed in mortality, to marriage sealings for time and all eternity. During the temple session each person receives instruction concerning the purpose of life. This instruction is called the "endowment," and contains covenants made between the person and God. Blessings from God are the result of obedience to the covenants made in the Temple. Talmage explains the endowment ceremony and its meaning in the following passage from his book The House of The Lord:

The ordinances of the endowment embody certain obligations on the part of the individual, such as covenant and promise to observe the law of strict virtue and chastity, to be charitable, benevolent, tolerant and pure; to devote both talent and material means to the spread of truth and the uplifting of the race; to maintain devotion to the cause of truth; and to seek in every way to contribute to the great preparation that the earth may be made ready to receive her King,--the Lord Jesus Christ. With the taking of each covenant and the assuming of each obligation a promised blessing is pronounced, contingent upon the faithful observance of the conditions. (84)

The Puritan Value System is clearly expressed in the preceding quotation. People are contracting or covenanting to practice what can be seen as traditional "American values." The Puritan work ethic obligations, what a person must do, are important considerations which lead to the fulfillment of meaning in life. Mormon and Traditional Christian belief centers on physical blessings being received based on righteous acts on the part of God's children.

Also depicted in the temple is the Progressive Value, from a religious positioning, as the person is taken from the pre-existence of God's spirit children and progresses to the promise of life with God in the Celestial Kingdom.

Theme Five: The Mormon Church "A History of Physical Acts"

The work of Joseph Smith and his successor Brigham Young, the pioneer trek, the actual physical acts of the Mormon movement in crisis, moving from community to community, attempting to establish "Zion," the building of temples, all of these acts symbolize the drama and reinforce the notion of a progressive value held among Church members that they are moving and progressing toward salvation. This theme that centers on these historical acts is important because the modern day Mormon often recreates the past history of the movement and sees the important acts of his or her own life in terms of the past. Today many Mormons use the historical acts of courage and sacrifice of the early pioneers as a kind of model to test their worthiness.

Writing in a recent issue of the Ensign, the LDS Church official magazine, Ronald K. Esplin indicates the images that the mass movement of the Saints from Illinois to the Great Basin recreate today:

Mention of the exodus of the Latter-day Saints from Nauvoo and their subsequent trek to the Rocky Mountains often evokes images of persecution, injustice and suffering, of Brigham Young leading a people driven westward by hostile neighbors. But such images preserve

only a portion of the story. Traveling with firm purpose and only after lengthy planning, the pioneers also saw themselves fulfilling a prophesied destiny. "You may think you have driven us," Brigham Young told a government official in 1857, and "so you have." But only "through the will and pleasure of him who dictates the nations of the earth." (Esplin 7)

The vision of "Zion" today serves to inspire members to face the contemporary challenges of life. Mormons are building their portion of "Zion" and are thus connected by their actions to all Mormons who have gone before them. Each year Utah residents, members and non-members alike, celebrate the entrance of the Mormons into the Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847. The parade, the largest in the United States, is held on July 24th and always has a number of floats depicting a pioneer theme and pioneer costumes, handcarts and wagons characteristic of the method of travel by the pioneers to Utah. A recent Deseret News editorial discusses this "Days of 47" celebration and parade and the mark the pioneers left on the state of Utah and the Church.

But despite the more than 140 years since that event, the procession ... has the power to awaken memories and powerful emotions....

Part of this emotional immediacy surely is due to

the fact that a big portion of today's Utah population had relatives who were among the first or subsequent pioneer companies who trudged across the plains at great cost ... [the loss of] 6,000 lives.

With the emphasis by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on family history and genealogy, that past tends to remain alive and more personal than near-forgotten history....

Those early pioneers had little in the way of earthly possessions. They had sacrificed most of those things. But they have gone down in history because they had a cause to which they could give their lives.

(16A)

Shipps talks about today's Mormons moving again into "sacred space and time" by recreating and thus reliving the past. This contemporary connection to the history of the movement recreates the vision for today's members:

Certain places and events in the everyday world trigger that reentry when the spirit is truly sensitive. The reading of the history of the pioneer period, standing in Temple Square, ... sitting in conference when the whole community is symbolically gathered back to the center place, participating in or even simply watching the pioneer parade on 24 July each year--these are

examples of customary situations that can take modern Saints back to the mythic time when the Mormon world was fresh and new. This does not happen all the time, nor does it happen to all the Saints. But the return to the uniquely sacred time in the Utah Mormon experience happens often enough to a large enough number of Latter-day Saints to guarantee that today's Saints live out their lives in a corporate community that still stands squarely and securely in the presence of the past. (129)

The Pioneer story retold is one physical act that plays an important part in the fidelity of the vision. Another that is highly powerful is the death of Joseph Smith. As Evans says:

But Joseph Smith dead is far more potent in Mormondom than Joseph Smith alive. To this day, eighty-nine years after his death in Carthage, Illinois, [now 148 years] hundreds of thousands of intelligent men and women, scattered throughout every civilized nation on earth, link the name of the founder of Mormonism with that of God and Christ in their public testimonies. Upward of a million [now over 8 million] people now living look upon Joseph Smith as a greater leader than Moses and a greater prophet than Isaiah. (7)

These visions of the past symbolically remind today's Mormons of what they must do to continue on the path to salvation and therefore relate to the Progressive Value System. The stories of the Mormon past also mirror the Puritan-Pioneer-Peasant Value System. Interestingly, one sees here not only the pioneer spirit which is often seen as focusing on rugged individualism, but also the Collectivist Value System. As Rieke and Sillars say about America, "there has always been a value placed on cooperative action.... Much rhetoric about our 'pioneer ancestors' has to do with their cooperative action" (123). What can be seen here is the ability of the Mormon value system to partake of elements of three different existing American value systems.

Theme Six: Physical Geography and The Mormon Church

America, The Promised Land

The discussion of fantasy themes has sought to relate those themes to major value systems in America. This last theme relates directly to the idea of America itself. In no other religion does one see the pervasiveness of a sacred American Patriotism as is seen in the Mormon rhetorical vision. Mormons are taught to have a "sacred" pride in the United States, its founding fathers and its Constitution. This belief in Patriotism is tied directly to what Rieke and Sillars identify as a special value of Patriotism that has become a dominate theme in American history.

A recurring theme concerning America is that it is a promised land, "a city on the hill," a beacon for all the world to see. This theme was particularly enunciated by the rhetoric of Ronald Reagan in the 1980's, but the theme of America's destiny has been part of the mythology of this country since:

John Winthrop first proclaimed that the New England Puritans would build "a city on the hill" for all the world to see and emulate, [and] the idea has endured that America is a fundamentally great nation, perhaps God-chosen, to lead the world to a better life. (Rieke

and Sillars 124)

Joseph Smith taught that "America is Zion itself from north to south, and is described by the Prophets, who declare that it is the Zion where the mountain of the Lord should be" (Teachings 362). From the Book of Mormon "we learn ... that the land of America is a promised land" and that "the city of Zion spoken of by David, in the one hundred and second Psalm, will be built upon the land of America" (17).

Further, the Mormons believe that America was prepared by the Lord for religious freedom and the restoration of the fullness of His gospel in the latter days and that the true church was taken from the earth due to wickedness and needed to be re-established. Mormons believe that all the events leading to the founding of this country were divinely ordained: the discovery of this land by Columbus, the war granting America freedom from England, and the documents outlining the principles of democracy. They are all part of God's plan to establish a climate that would allow the re-establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, preparatory to His Second Coming. This concept of America is explained by Joseph F. Smith in his book Gospel Doctrine: "This great American nation the Almighty raised up by the power of his omnipotent hand, that it might be possible in the latter days for the kingdom of God to be established in the earth"

(409).

The Book of Mormon in first Nephi, Chapter 13, foretells many of the events leading to the creation of this promised land of America and The current prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, has said that "The Declaration of Independence" signed by the founding fathers "is much more than a political document," it is a document concerned with human rights. "It constitutes a spiritual manifesto--revelation, if you will--declaring not for this nation only, but for all nations, the source of man's rights" (Benson 44).

Mormons trace the history of America and its choice as a promised land to the first mortal parents who were given the land by God after being cast out of the Garden of Eden. In fact Mormons believe the Garden itself was located on the American Continent and that Adam and Eve settled near the garden.

Alvin R. Dyer, notes that, "the geographic location of the Garden of Eden was made known to the Prophet Joseph Smith by revelation as here in the land of America, in Jackson County, Missouri, with Independence as the center place" (Dyer 44).

The Constitution according to Smith, is founded in the wisdom of God. He says:

We say that the Constitution of the United States is a glorious standard; it is founded in the wisdom of God.

It is a heavenly banner; it is to all those who are privileged with the sweets of liberty, like the cooling shades and refreshings waters of a great rock in a thirsty and weary land. It is like a great tree under whose branches men from every clime can be shielded from the burning rays of the sun. (Teachings 147)

In December of 1833, a time of persecution of the Mormons in Missouri, Smith received a revelation containing this statement: "And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood" (D&C 101:80).

Mormons believe that many of the founding fathers returned after death to demand that they receive their temple ordinance work. This work was completed for them in the St. George Temple by Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president of the Church, and others. Woodruff tells the story:

those men who laid the foundation of this American government ... were the best spirits the God of heaven could find on the face of the earth. These were choice spirits, not wicked men. General Washington and all of the men that labored for the purpose were inspired of the Lord.... Every one of those men that signed the Declaration of Independence with General Washington

called upon me as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ in the temple at St. George two consecutive nights and demanded at my hands that I should go forth and attend to the ordinances of the House of God for them ...

Brother McAllister baptized me for all of those men, and then I told those brethren that it was their duty to go into the temple and labor until they had got endowments for all of them. They did it. Would these spirits have called on me, as an elder of Israel, to perform this work if they had not been noble spirits before God. They would not. (Benson-Devotional 307)

Coherence of the Story

Bormann suggests a number of questions useful in assessing the rhetorical vision of a movement, but notes that "a critic need not, of course, raise all of such questions for a given piece of criticism" (402). The following questions are particularly helpful in getting at what Fisher calls the coherence of the story, that is, how well does the story hold together as a story? Or put another way, is it intrinsically or internally a compelling story, meaning does it meet the literary criteria of good storytelling?

Character Development

Bormann says that "once the critic has constructed the manifest content of the rhetorical vision," as has been done with the various themes of the Mormon rhetorical vision, the critic "can ask more specific questions relating to elements of the dramas" (401). Bormann suggests the dramatic value of a character providing the ultimate legitimation of a drama. He asks, "Does some abstraction personified as a character provide the ultimate legitimation of the drama." (401). In the Mormon vision, Joseph Smith is the character that provides the ultimate legitimation for the movement in his having seen a vision of God and Jesus Christ in which he was told not to join any existing Church because their

teachings and practices did not coincide with those of the original Church (Pearl of Great Price 49). Smith is legitimized further in the drama when later, in another vision, the angel Moroni tells him "that God had a work for me to do" and that he would be given a book "written upon gold plates" that contained "the fullness of the everlasting gospel." (52).

Good stories have significant heroes and villains that are three-dimensional and whose characters possess concrete detail. Consequently Bormann asks, "Who are the heroes and the villains?" and "How concrete and detailed are the characterizations?" (401). At the highest level, God and Christ are the central heroes in this drama because they acted to provide a plan of salvation for all people coming to earth. Joseph Smith is the hero in the drama of the nineteenth century Mormon movement because of his restoration of the primitive Christian Church and his sheparding of the movement until he was murdered in 1844.

Following Joseph Smith's death, Brigham Young emerges as the central character in leading the pioneer trek and guiding the development of nascent Mormon communities in the west. The pioneers are important supporting characters because they braved the wilderness, moving to the west to establish "Zion" (the Kingdom of God on earth) in the Salt Lake Valley.

Additionally, each Church member is a potential central

character in the drama because each has the possibility of becoming a God. In this sense, the Mormon rhetorical vision brings each member "center stage" because of the potential for godhood inherent in each member.

Today, Mormon Church members view the president of the Church, whom they believe is a prophet, his counselors, the twelve apostles and other general authorities as heroes. Leaders at the ward or local level are also considered indispensable players in the moral trenches intervening to provide spiritual counsel and direction to Church members. But the central human protagonist remains Joseph Smith who received the visions upon which the Church was founded and articulated its plan of salvation to humanity.

The major villain in the story is Satan himself and his followers who, of their own free will, rejected the plan of God and Christ in the pre-existence and were cast out of heaven. Mormons view Satan in concrete terms as a real being with great powers to tempt and seduce each member of the movement. Other villains are the persecutors of the early Saints who drove them from their homes in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, including the mob that murdered Joseph Smith in Carthage.

Today's villains are individuals and institutions who tempt Church members to betray their beliefs by, for example, violating the Word of Wisdom, a health code taught by Joseph Smith.⁴ Former members and others who write anti-

~~Mormon~~ literature would also be classed as villains, a prime example of a villain is Fawn McKay Brodie who wrote an extremely critical and unflattering biography of Joseph Smith.

There are a number of levels of Mormon heroes--from God himself to the individual member of the Church. What is noteworthy is that at every level, each hero is involved in an epic drama in which they play a central, though often different, role. The development of heroes at various levels not only adds to the richness and texture of the epic drama, it provides an appealing vision for Church members at all levels in the hierarchy, as well as having the potential to be appealing to possible converts. As will be seen in the following analysis both heroes and villains are dramatized in very specific and concrete terms as the plot lines develop.

Scene/Setting

The setting can have an important function in the overall development of a drama or story. It not only "sets the stage" for action but it often characterizes the nature of the drama and the magnitude of the problems and obstacles that arise during the course of the drama. Bormann asks, "Where are the dramas set? (401). The Mormon drama is set in America. The Church was established by Americans on American soil and America is characterized as the promised land where the Second Coming of Christ will occur. It is the

most sacred of settings and central to the entire Mormon plan of salvation. The setting, then, takes on great meaning for it is not just another nation but the holy geography in which the plot develops. The setting, then, is given supernatural sanction in the Mormon rhetorical vision.

Plot/Action

Having discussed character development and the setting of the vision, the plot/action scenarios are presented. Bormann asks, "What are the typical scenarios?" (401). There are seven central scenarios in the Mormon rhetorical vision: The Pioneer migration to Zion, the restoration of the Church, the continual revelations of God to his children, missionary action, the plan of salvation, conference participation, and testimony bearing in ward sacrament meetings.

Within the Mormon rhetorical vision the most dramatic and pervasive scenario is the retelling of the pioneer migration to Zion. It is symbolic of the dedication, courage and action necessary for each Mormon to fulfill his or her destiny in the eternal plan of salvation. The epic quality of the pioneer theme for Mormons past and present can be seen in the retelling of the pioneer trek in the typical Mormon Church meeting and in the Church magazines. This epic trek parallels the Israelites arduous struggle to secure and re-establish their spiritual homeland in Jerusalem. The pioneer Mormon migrations to Zion held all of the elements

of a good story. Pioneer pilgrims bearing persecutions and incredible physical hardships continued on until they accomplished their sacred mission of reaching the promised land. The following story provides a sense of the power of the pioneer theme.

The story is of a young girl and her pioneer journey to the Salt Lake Valley. On the Southern Utah University campus in Cedar City, Utah a monument stands to a member of the Martin Handcart Company, Ellen Pucell Unthank. The bronze statue depicts 'Nellie' as a happy young girl of nine years before her trek across the plains. Because of frost-bite she lost her legs below the knees and during the journey lost both her parents. This monument was dedicated in August of 1991 by President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church. He told Nellie's story in General Conference in October 1991.

He relates the arrival of a missionary company in the Salt Lake Valley returning from England in 1856 who told Brigham Young that many hundred pioneers were coming along the trail from the Missouri River to the Salt Lake Valley. They told him "most of them were pulling handcarts, two companies of these, with two smaller companies following behind with ox teams and wagons." Young was told "the first group was probably at the time in the area of Scottsbluff, more than four hundred miles from their destination, with others behind them." Hinckley stresses that it was "Octo-

ber, and they would be trapped in the snows of winter and perish unless help was sent" (Mission 52).

Hinckley quoted Brigham Young's sermon the next day in the Tabernacle:

Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now seven hundred miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be, to get them here....

That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess. It is to save the people.... I shall call upon the Bishops this day. I shall not wait until tomorrow, nor until the next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. I do not want to send oxen. I want good horses and mules. They are in this Territory, and we must have them....

I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion will never save one soul of you in the Celestial Kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. Go and bring in those people now on the plains. (Mission 52-53)

The teams left the following Tuesday morning with twenty-seven men and sixteen good four-mule teams to rescue

the stranded saints. Hinckley says of Nellie:

She was born in a beautiful area of England where the hills are soft and rolling and the grass is forever green. Her parents, Margaret and William Pucell, were converts ... From the time of their baptism in 1837 until the spring of 1856, they had scrimped and saved to go to the Zion of their people in the valleys of the Rocky Mountains of America. Now that was possible, if they were willing to pull a handcart one thousand miles across a wilderness. They accepted that challenge, as did hundreds of their fellow converts. (53)

Nellie's parents and the two daughters, fourteen and nine, left loved ones behind in England, leaving Liverpool at the end of May 1856 with 852 others also seeking the Great Salt Lake Valley. They arrived in Boston after six weeks and then took "the steam train to Iowa City." Upon arrival the "handcarts and wagons" were not prepared. "There was a serious and disastrous delay. It was not until late in July that they began the long march, first to Winter Quarters on the Missouri, and from there to the Rocky Mountains" (53).

Hinckley's account of the crossing of the plains, paints a poignant portrait of these and many other pioneers who crossed the wilderness to be with the Saints in the valley:

With high expectation they began their journey. Through sunlight and storm, through dust and mud, they trudged beside the Platte River through all of the month of September and most of October. On October 19, they reached the last crossing of the Platte, a little west of the present city of Casper, Wyoming. The river was wide, the current strong, and chunks of ice were floating in the water. They were now traveling without sufficient food. Bravely they waded through the icy stream. A terrible storm arose with fierce winds bringing drifting sand, hail, and snow. When they climbed the far bank of the river, their wet clothing froze to their bodies. Exhausted, freezing, and without strength to go on, some quietly sat down, and while they sat, they died.

Ellen's mother, Margaret, became sick. Her husband lifted her onto the cart. They were now climbing in elevation toward the Continental Divide, and it was uphill all the way. Can you see this family in your imagination?--the mother too sick and weak to walk, the father thin and emaciated, struggling to pull the cart, as the two little girls push from behind with swirling, cold winds about them, and around them are hundreds of others similarly struggling.

They came to a stream of freezing water. The father,

while crossing slipped on a rock and fell. Struggling to his feet, he reached the shore, wet and chilled. Sometime later he sat down to rest. He quietly died, his senses numbed by the cold. His wife died five days later. I do not know how or where their frozen bodies were buried in that desolate, white wilderness. I do know that the ground was frozen and that the snow was piled in drifts and that the two little girls were now orphans. (53-54)

The rescuers found these people in "desperate and terrible circumstances-hungry, exhausted, their clothes thin and ragged..." (54).

Hinckley said that the people in the valley were gathered at the tabernacle for Sunday services. Young exhorted the congregation to aid the pioneers:

As soon as this meeting is dismissed I want the brethren and sisters to repair to their homes.... The afternoon meeting will be omitted, for I wish the sisters to ... prepare to give those who have just arrived a mouthful of something to eat, and to wash them and nurse them.... Some you will find with their feet frozen to their ankles; some are frozen to their knees and some have their hands frosted ... we want you to receive them as your own children, and to have the same

feeling for them. (54)

Hinckley's account says that the two girls had frozen limbs but Nellie's were the worst.

The doctor in the valley, doing the best he could, amputated her legs just below the knees. The surgical tools were crude. There was no anesthesia. The stumps never healed. She grew to womanhood, married William Unthank, and bore and reared an honorable family of six children. (54)

Hinckley adds an interesting sidebar to Nellie's story. He tells of a group in Cedar City who were one day criticizing the Church for allowing the Martin Handcart Company to leave so late in the fall. Hinckley quotes from a document he has in his possession that recounts one old man's reaction:

One old man in the corner sat silent and listened as long as he could stand it. Then he arose and said things that no person who heard will ever forget. His face was white with emotion, yet he spoke calmly, deliberately, but with great earnestness and sincerity. He said in substance, "I ask you to stop this criticism. You are discussing a matter you know nothing

about. Cold historic facts mean nothing here for they give no proper interpretation of the questions involved. A mistake to send the handcart company out so late in the season? Yes. But I was in that company and my wife was in it and Sister Nellie Unthank whom you have cited was there too. We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation, but did you ever hear a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism? Not one of that company ever apostasized or left the church because every one of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we became acquainted with him in our extremities.

(54)

Hinckley then told those listening to his conference address: "I have spent a long time telling that story, perhaps too long. This is October of 1991, and that episode of 135 years ago is behind us. But I have told it because it is true and because the spirit of that saga is as contemporary as is this morning" (54).

There are many stories told in Mormon families about the Pioneer crossing and the sacrifices made by the early Saints. It is of interest how the rhetorical vision of the Church members today embraces the sacrifices made by the early pioneers.

Reynolds believes the pioneer spirit is very important

to members and converts alike, "The pioneer heritage belongs to all of us." He writes:

The Church is led by first-generation converts from the far corners of the globe as well as by sons and daughters of great pioneer families. But, regardless of our unique biological heritage, we are brothers and sisters in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we are engaged in his work together. (Reynolds 16)

The Deseret News editorial mentioned earlier in the study discusses the power of the pioneer scenario to the Mormon vision that allows the past "to remain alive and more personal than near forgotten history" (16A).

The second scenario is that of the restoration. The return of the original Church in its pure and primitive state has been an appealing theme throughout the history of Christianity. It was appealing to the early Mormon converts and remains an attractive appeal today (see Arrington and Bitton).

The revelation scenario is appealing because it asserts that God continues to reveal himself to humans as he did in the days of Moses, Jesus and Joseph Smith. The "revelations ... and ... addresses that formed the foundation of the Church, both in its organization[al] structure and its doctrine" are key elements of the movement. Smith's new

scriptures include over "a hundred revelations" contained in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price (My Kingdom 8).

Another scenario is the importance of missionary work. The successful missionary program of the Church was begun by Smith and continues today. The missionaries of today tell the same basic story of the Book of Mormon as Samuel Smith, Joseph's brother, told when he presented the book to the family of Brigham Young on his first mission.

Not only is the Mormon taught an epic rhetorical vision, he or she is strongly encouraged to act on that vision in ways that reinforce the vision to the missionary and cause the vision to be chained out nationally and internationally. Persuasion theory suggests that attitudes and beliefs are reinforced in the individual when that individual is required to actively publicize them. So, in effect, when the Mormon missionary seeks to convert another he or she is also reinforcing the same attitudes and beliefs they are asking the convert to accept.

Another scenario is the plan of salvation. As discussed in detail in the section on fidelity, an important appeal of the plan of salvation is that each individual is accorded the possibility of becoming, through progressive stages, a god who will create kingdoms. Underlying this scenario is the positive notion of the worth and stature of each member.

The activities of the semiannual conference of the

Church is another scenario. At these conferences, Mormon leaders give speeches that retell many of the stories about the pioneer past, the restoration of the true Church, the life and deeds of Joseph Smith and other prophets, the mission of Christ and the importance of obedience to God's commandments, etc. These are not simple retellings, but a relating of each historical and theological topic to the immediate needs of the contemporary Mormon. These are practical speeches many of which are designed to use the past to help modern day Mormons cope with the problems of life.

The underlying fabric keeping the Mormon rhetorical vision strong is the individual testimony of each member. A testimony is a manifestation described as a burning in the heart, received following study of the gospel concepts and prayer desiring to know the truth. This manifestation is given by the Holy Ghost that tells the member that the Mormon Church is the true Church of God, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that Joseph Smith was called by God as the prophet of the restoration.

Testimonies are personal, but the sharing of the testimony in the ward sacrament meetings the first Sunday of each month, is a tremendous device that strengthens each member and links the vision of the Church to them.

Bormann then asks, "What acts are performed by the ultimate legitimatizer?" (401). Joseph Smith's followers believe he was, "chosen [by God] to stand at the head of the

work of the Lord in the last days" (Smith, Doctrines 1: 184). His acts are summarized in the Doctrine and Covenants and include the translation of the Book of Mormon, the teaching of the "fulness of the everlasting gospel," the beginning of the Mormon missionary movement, revelations and commandments he claims to have received from God and the foundation of Nauvoo, Illinois (135:3).

Smith's death is an important part of the story. The persecution the saints suffered for their cause culminates with Smith's murder and renders the story even more powerful.

Another question posed by Bormann centers on the immensity of the movement. He asks, "How rich the total panorama of the vision? How capable is the drama to arouse and interpret emotions?" (402). The magnitude of the vision and its immensity is a definite attraction to the movement. What could be more all encompassing than the possibilities of the central characters in the vision becoming a god, similar to the Heavenly Father? The vision says that all people are his children, that he loves each of his children and wants them to return to live with him in his celestial kingdom. Every man, woman and child, can have a real relationship with God and with Jesus Christ through prayer. Obedience to the laws of the gospel is all that is required of each of his children to someday achieve eternal life. The grandeur of this vision encompasses more than just this world, but

the many worlds that God has created as discussed in the Pearl of Great Price and previously quoted (4).

Finally, Bormann asks, "How does the movement fit in history?"(402). The Mormon movement has grown significantly since its founding and given its huge missionary program the growth is expected to continue. The religion is one of the most successful religions founded in the history of America. The pioneer movement is a part of the American movement westward and Mormons settled a large portion of the west including all of Utah as it exists today and parts of Arizona, Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming, and California.

Notes

1. Virgil I. Baker and Ralph T. Eubanks, Speech in Personal and Public Affairs (New York: David McKay, 1965, 95-102; Clyde Kluckhohn, Mirror for Man; Stow Persons, American Minds (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1958); Jurgen Ruesch; Steele and Redding, Weaver Williams, Jr., 438-504.

2. See also Genesis 1:26-27 for scriptural support of the creation of men and women in God's image. In the second chapter of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price the creation is again discussed.

3. In the Doctrine and Covenants, Smith says "There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; We cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter" (131:7-8).

4. This revelation given to Joseph Smith in February of 1833 outlines the health code of the Mormon Church. In section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants the entire revelation is contained. The preface to the section states that "As a consequence of the early brethren using tobacco in their meetings, the Prophet was led to ponder upon the matter; consequently he inquired of the Lord concerning it." The result was the revelation today called the Word of Wisdom by Mormon Church members.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

From its founding, the Mormon Church focused on missionary efforts attempting to persuade others to accept its vision. The success of the Mormon vision is seen in the rapid growth of the organization. The Church reached one million members just before 1950 and the growth has increased rapidly since. Mormon Church membership was nearly five million at the end of 1981 and ten years later the Mormons claimed more than eight million members (LDS Church News 4).

Sociologist Rodney Stark believes that based on the previous growth rates, "the Mormons will become a major world faith" (23). Significantly, Stark says that when Protestants are broken down "into their constituent groups," the Mormons have "become the fifth largest religious body in the nation" (23).

This study investigated the enduring appeals of the Mormon rhetorical vision. These appeals help account for the growth of the Mormon Church. The study did not seek to account for all rhetorical and non-rhetorical appeals of the vision, but focused on central themes that have remained constant since its founding in 1830. Themes that "would be

familiar to the first Mormons as they are to the current generation" (Shephard and Shephard 201).

This study has utilized Ernest Bormann's Fantasy Theme Analysis which is a communication model that explains how small groups of people can develop imaginative ideas and concepts called fantasy themes that combine to form "rhetorical visions" that "chain out" into the larger society (396-97). Bormann's Fantasy Theme model, while valuable in studying public communication, does not fully articulate a procedure to carry out the description, analysis, and evaluation of rhetorical visions. Recognizing this, the study has used two compatible analytical tools to strengthen the procedural component of Bormann's model: Fisher's notion of "narrative rationality" (64) and Rieke and Sillars description of "American Value Systems" (118).

Fisher's narrative theory, can be profitably used to analyze and evaluate stories or narrations using two of its constituent parts, narrative fidelity and narrative coherency. Fidelity relates to the extent to which new stories or dramatized themes "ring true" with existing stories audiences hold to be true (64). Coherence relates to the degree to which a story or dramatic theme holds together internally as a believable story. Coherent stories are intrinsically compelling in terms of such traditional literary concerns as character development, scene, plot, and action.

Bormann poses a number of questions that are useful to the critic in evaluating the coherency of stories such as the Mormon story and Rieke and Sillars' description of "American Value Systems" is very helpful in assessing the fidelity of the Mormon Rhetorical Vision.

In effect, then, Bormann's Fantasy Theme analysis is used as an overall approach in investigating the Mormon Rhetorical Vision, while Fisher's Narrative Rationality and Rieke and Sillars' American Value Systems are used as procedural enhancements to Bormann's model.

Fidelity

The Mormon Rhetorical Vision displayed significant fidelity with three of Rieke and Sillars' American Value Systems. The Mormon vision borrows heavily from the Puritan-Pioneer-Peasant Value System, the Progressive Value System, and the Patriotic Value and at times it is seen in the Enlightenment, Transcendental, Collectivist and Personal Value Systems as the themes of the Mormon rhetorical vision are examined.

Another value is identified in the Mormon rhetorical vision named the "Physicality Value" in this study. Mormons as well as other Americans are physically oriented people. As outlined earlier, they are impressed and influenced by the physical size of things and are fascinated by what things look like, the texture of material objects and their weight and dimensions. The physicality value in the Mormon

rhetorical vision is seen in Smith's visions, the Gold Plates, God as a physical being with a body of flesh and bones and the physical future of the vision contained in the Mormon plan of salvation as men progress to become gods. It is also seen in the Mormon view of the creation, God using existing matter or materials to create the world. The building of temples, held sacred in Mormon belief, and the importance of America are central to the physicality value in the Mormon story.

Coherence

Bormann's questions were particularly useful in getting at what Fisher calls the coherence of the story or vision. These questions helped identify the Mormon vision as a concrete story, rich in detail and specificity, a story that holds together remarkably well. The study identifies four such areas which show the coherence of the Mormon rhetorical vision. The first, for example, is found in Bormann's suggestion that the dramatic value of a character provides the ultimate legitimation of a drama when he asks, "Does some abstraction personified as a character provide the ultimate legitimation of the drama?" (401). In response to this question, the Mormon story provides Joseph Smith as the character provided to play the part of restoring the Church and implementing the plan of salvation as sanctioned by God. His vision of God and Christ, telling him not to join any existing church because they were all false, creates a

concrete, specific character acting under the direction and sanction of God (Pearl of Great Price 49). The presentation of the gold plates to Smith by an angel sent from God further solidifies his legitimacy. Smith's translation and publishing of the Book of Mormon provides a physical or material support to solidify his character as central to the drama.

Good stories have significant heroes and villains that are three dimensional and whose characters possess concrete detail. This second area allowed the study to look at the heroes and villains in the Mormon vision. Bormann asks, "Who are the heroes and the villains?" and "How concrete and detailed are the characterizations?" (401). In the Mormon vision, God and Christ at the highest level are central to the drama as they created the world and presented the plan of salvation to God's children. Joseph Smith and the other leaders who have followed him are central characters as are the pioneers, who endured great hardship and sacrificed material possessions for the vision. Additionally, each individual has a significant role in the drama as he or she participates in God's plan of salvation. The stories of villains are powerful and "real." Mormons believe Satan to be a real person who rejected God's plan in the pre-mortal existence and remained a spirit. The overall vision is highly appealing to every Church member.

The third area is the scene. The Mormon vision is set

in America and although today the vision is spreading worldwide, the Church was organized by Americans on American soil. The scene in a story has an important function in the overall development of the drama. In addition to setting the stage, the scene often characterizes or determines the nature of the drama and the magnitude of the problems and obstacles that arise during its course. America is central to the Mormon plan of salvation and the Mormon story teaches that Zion will be set up on American soil as a sacred city at Christ's second coming. America is then the sacred place or the holy geography in which the plot develops.

The fourth area centers on the actual plot and action of the drama. Four of Bormann's questions are addressed in this study focusing on plot and action. "What are the typical scenarios?" "What acts are performed by the ultimate legitimizer?" "How rich the total panorama of the vision?" "How capable is the drama to arouse and interpret emotions?" and "How does the movement fit in history" (401-02). Bormann wants the critic to look at the typical scenarios contained in the vision. Six are central to the vision of the Mormon church including the pioneer theme, the restoration of the Church, revelation from God, missionary endeavors, conference participation and individual testimony bearing in local meetings of the Church. Each of these are scenarios that would be familiar to participants in the story, central to the individual members acts as characters

in the drama.

The pioneer scenario has an epic quality for Mormons past and present. The stories of the pioneers crossing to the west are retold and parallel, as noted, the Israelites struggle to secure and re-establish their spiritual homeland in Jerusalem. The pioneer migrations of the Mormon people hold all the elements of a good story. The restoration scenario has attracted many to the story as the idea of returning to original Christianity in its primitive state is stressed within the Mormon Church. Revelation is another attractive scenario. It allows the participants in the drama to receive direction from God in their everyday lives. God reveals himself to the prophet in the Mormon vision and also to each individual member entitled to personal revelation. The missionary scenario allows every participant the opportunity to help spread the vision. Members are encouraged to give their friends the Book of Mormon and to introduce them to the Church and its teachings. The plan of salvation presents the path each participant is to travel and the promise of the possibility of becoming a god and creating kingdom's in the future. The semiannual conference is another scenario where Mormons are given instruction by their leaders. Many of the stories contained in the vision are retold during the conferences and the immediate needs of the participant in the drama are discussed. Testimony is the last of the scenarios and involves the sharing of indi-

vidual belief with other participants in the drama.

The acts performed by the ultimate legitimatizer center on the creation of the Church by Joseph Smith. His acts give the story coherence. He founded the Church, obtained the gold plates, translated the Book of Mormon, started the missionary effort, claimed direct revelation from God, gathered the members to a great city in Illinois and then was murdered, and with his death he "sealed his mission and his works with his own blood" (D&C 135:3). These acts all form stories that are told and retold to members of the vision. They are the ingredients of a fascinating and appealing story.

The magnitude of the vision and its immensity is a definite attraction to the movement providing the answer to Bormann's question "How rich the total panorama of the vision?" and "How capable is the drama to arouse and interpret emotions" (402). As noted in Chapter three, what could be more all encompassing than the possibilities of the central characters in the vision becoming gods, similar to the Heavenly Father? In the Mormon story every person can have a "real" relationship with God and Christ through prayer. The bigness of this vision encompasses more than just this world, but the many worlds God has created (Pearl of Great Price 4).

The Mormon story is the story of a successful religion founded in America. Its pioneer migration is a part of

American history and the founding of the west. Bormann wants to know how the movement fits in history (402) and the success and growth of the Mormon Church is an American success story that continues to expand not only in America but worldwide. The story is part of American history which lends strength to the plot and action of the vision.

The Mormon rhetorical vision is based on persuasive means and devices that strengthen the membership. The characters in the drama participate in the storytelling. The Joseph Smith story is told and retold by members as are the stories of the pioneers. In testimony meetings, members reinforce their own beliefs by stating those beliefs in front of other members, a powerfully persuasive action. Young men and women do missionary work which provides them the opportunity to strengthen their own individual beliefs by telling others the Mormon story, and at an age when they would be normally questioning their own beliefs and shaping their own attitudes and values concerning religion. All members are encouraged to do missionary work by telling their friends about the Church. Home evenings provide opportunities for parents to explain their beliefs to their children and conferences provide messages from leaders, again retelling the Mormon story and reinforcing the Churches importance in the everyday activities of the members.

The language of Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders

is described earlier in the study as being earthy, concrete, figurative language, language that appeals to others. Many of the stories often retold in the Mormon vision use just such language. The messages of the Mormon vision are often conveyed with this rich and concrete language. Several examples are cited in Chapter Three including Joseph Smith's statement that "This is good doctrine. It tastes good. I can taste the principles of eternal life, and so can you" (Teachings 355).

Implications for Future Study

One interesting Mormon study could review the Mormons as prolific record keepers. The early Mormon convert was usually fairly well educated and as a result many kept journals as they journeyed from their homeland to Zion. Mass media techniques employed by the Mormons and designed to improve the image of the Church across the country would be another area of future study.

The ways in which the Mormon vision has withstood counter-visions that have made direct attacks on it could be another area of study. Over the years, there have been groups which have gone to great lengths attempting to discredit the Mormon Church. One could look at how the vision has stood firm and unchanged in its theology despite, at times, severe criticism. Another interesting study could focus on the adaptation of the Mormon vision moving from a group that was not part of mainstream America in the 1840's

to a people accepted as part of American culture today. Adjustments to the Mormon vision of Blacks and the elimination of polygamy would be part of this study.

Other studies could involve the international appeal of the movement and the persuasive process used by the large Mormon missionary force at work to ensure the continued growth of the Mormon Church.

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