

“The Long Approach to the Mormon Moment: The Building of an American Church”

Dr. Laurie Maffly-Kipp

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Maffly-Kipp

Thank you so much, Marie. It’s really a pleasure to be here, and I want to thank the graciousness of everyone that has been hosting me; Marie, in particular, Debra, who has made everything run so smoothly, and everyone at the Center. It’s been really lovely to be in St. Louis on a beautiful afternoon, and to join you all.

The long approach to the Mormon moment. Unless you’ve been living in a cave or asleep for the last half year, you know that we are living in an era that the media has dubbed “the Mormon Moment.” Aided by the religious affiliation of not one, but—remember, a few months back—two Mormons, Mitt Romney and John Huntsman, in the latest presidential election cycle, this moment has led to a flurry of media interest in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. It also hasn’t hurt that at about the same time, the creators of South Park, Trey Parker and Matt Stone, produced *The Book of Mormon*—not the Book of Mormon, but *The Book of Mormon*, a smash Broadway musical that placed the Latter-Day Saints squarely in the public eye. In other words, we’ve seen a perfect storm of interest in things Mormon in the last year. Now, I must admit to having mixed feelings about this course of events. I’ve been teaching a class on Mormonism at the University of North Carolina since 1999, and several years back I realized that there was a tremendous need for greater knowledge of this religious tradition. So I’m in the midst, as Marie mentioned, of researching and writing a book about the history and current status of Mormonism. And the more that happens in the news, of course, the more there is to write about, so as a historian I just want to stop the deluge of news for at least a few days and catch up; but every day, something keeps on coming.

In my larger project, I seek to explain the history and current configuration of Mormonism to outsiders, but I also hope to cast light on what the Mormon experience in the U.S. tells us about the rest of us: about our notions of which differences are valuable and which are threatening, and about our tolerance of religious variety and the limits of that tolerance. Today, my task is to bring some, I think, needed historical perspective to the current collective conversations about religion and public life, because I believe that this moment, like many such events that seem to come out of the blue, actually has been about a hundred years in the making. In short, my argument today is this. Since the beginning of the 20th century, Mormons in the United States and other Americans have struggled with a particular but pervasive problem: how to recognize Mormons as U.S. citizens, with all the obligations and privileges that attend that designation. The last few years marks only the latest round in a series of events that have shaped, but never completely resolved, this question. The issue of Mormon citizenship has been molded over time by many factors; Mormons themselves have continued to test the boundaries of acceptable difference, and frequently have bumped up against barricades that they did not know existed. So today I’ll begin to map out some of the contours of this battle over the concept of citizenship to try to figure out what they might reveal about this moment, and I’m going to start by giving some historical background on the 19th century church and its relationship to American public

and political life, and then move into the 20th century. I didn't know how much background knowledge to presume that people might have about the church in the 19th century, so I wanted to make sure to bring everyone as quickly as possible up to speed before moving on into the 20th century.

Now, citizenship may seem like a simple and obvious idea to us today, and its relationship to religious belief and practice has been sorted out in the courts for decades. In the narrow sense, citizenship denotes a particular form of political representation, as well as the potential for participation in the federal government. So it's worth bearing in mind that throughout the 19th century, the Mormon movement was effectively barred from making any substantive claims on U.S. citizenship. The church had been founded by Joseph Smith Jr., a young farmhand from upstate New York, in 1830. Very soon, however, Mormons, as their numbers grew, were forced to flee the East and regroup in the Midwest, right here, first in Missouri and in Ohio, where in the mid 1830s Mormons began to gather in Jackson and then Clay counties, and later in the newer settlements of Caldwell and Davies counties. From the start, their arrival, coming as it did in large numbers—now we're talking in the thousands, probably somewhere under 10,000—and through continuing streams of immigrants from both the Eastern states and Europe, caused political and economic tensions with older settlers. After years of sporadic violence and threats on both sides, the Mormons were forced to flee Missouri after Governor Lowburn Boggs issued an order in 1838 that Church members should leave the state or be exterminated. A worse fate met them in Nauvoo, Illinois, where, after a few years of relative calm, Joseph Smith was killed by a mob, and the community once again forced out. Now my point in reciting this early history is simply to underscore that as much as the Mormons appeared to threaten the political stability of older settlements in Missouri and Illinois, their tenure in these states was never long enough or peaceful enough that the issue of Mormons themselves as political actors came to the fore. The scattering of Mormons after 1844 brought a new chapter to the saga, and one that I'll rehearse briefly, again for those less familiar with it. The religious movement split into a variety of factions after Smith's death, most of which were relatively small, and fairly quickly assimilated into American society. But the largest group of exiles from Nauvoo, perhaps 5,000 or so, moved further west to Utah, where over the next half century they built a self-sufficient society in the Salt Lake Basin. This group, by now known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, represented the germ of a community that would grow to over 200,000 people, the majority of them Mormon, by 1890. But the U.S. government was not far behind. Mormon settlement in Salt Lake began just before the Mexican war, before Utah had any status in American political life, and was still a gleam in the eyes of those believers in Manifest Destiny. Once annexation occurred, however, the Mormons found themselves again tangling with the federal government over their practice this time of polygamy. But this time they were blocked from full participation in the nation because they lived in a territory instead of a state, a district without representation in Washington or the ability to elect its own leadership. Over the next half century, then, the U.S. government and Church leaders conducted an elaborate cat-and-mouse game. The U.S. held out the carrot of Mormon citizenship in exchange for the Mormon promise to obey the laws of the land and discontinue the practice of polygamy. But failing to convince the church to capitulate, the federal government turned the screws, and made life increasingly difficult for Mormons. By 1890, all Church properties, including the LDS sacred temples, were in imminent danger of federal confiscation, and as a result, the religious community teetered on the precipice of economic collapse. Finally, in a dramatic meeting of the minds, the Church ended its practice of plural

marriage, and the U.S. government conferred statehood in 1896. This, then, is where our story really begins. With statehood came the new problem of the Mormon citizen. Although many Americans had harbored suspicion towards the Church for many years previously, the threat that it posed had been contained in the far West, and limited in its ability to affect the fortunes of the nation. The 19th century Mormon threat was a moral and symbolic threat, but never seriously a political one. Now, starting in 1896, Mormons would be participating in the daily practices of public life. Once statehood was conferred, their threat would be unleashed in the halls of Congress, and eventually, as we know, would lurk in waiting outside the West Wing itself. So the Western “problem,” as others saw it, of Mormonism, now became the internal challenge of the Mormon within the body politic.

If this is how Mormonism looked from the outside, let’s now turn our attention within the religious community. How did the saints set out to embrace this new political identity? How did individual church members, previously cushioned from the need to become political actors by the disempowering embrace of territorial status, step into this brave new world of citizenship? The first thing to be said is that the Mormon Church had been honing its public relation skills from its earliest years.

First, Mormons faced immediate criticism and public defamation from detractors starting from the very earliest years. In 1834, a scant four years after the founding of the new movement, the newspaper editor Abra D. Howe published the scathing, “Mormonism Unveiled,” a compilation of accusations, affidavits, and other evidence of what Howe took to be the frauds perpetrated by Joseph Smith. More criticisms followed, and Mormon apologists early on fell into the pattern of spreading the word through debate and polemic, arts that required superior communication skills. Having been born in the early years of publishing, the Mormon movement availed itself of the latest technology, the printing press, that could help to plead its case to the public. The second reason for their PR savvy, connected to the first, was the deeply ingrained Mormon missionary impulse. Smith counseled his followers that their primary task was to spread word of the restoration of the gospel to all peoples. Within months of establishing a church, the new prophet sent followers to preach to American Indian populations to the west, and shortly thereafter sent another small band to England, to begin a mission to Europeans. Missions required robust marketing skills, and Mormons knew that theirs had to be especially good in places where other Christian groups not only had already landed but also had spread word about Mormon heresies. Pragmatic in their approach, Mormons sharpened their tools in situations of intense competition for followers, and a desire to level the playing field with other Christian groups. In their years of isolation in Utah, moreover, the saints also practiced public relations by appealing to the small bands of cross-continental travelers who stopped for a visit among the odd but generous Mormons. Tourism increased dramatically in the 1870s and the 1880s with the completion of the railroad, and Mormons used their notoriety as the ideal opportunity to charm guests with their well-appointed hotels, clean city paths, and ingenious agricultural techniques. Dozens of books and memoirs remain as a testimony to this period, when “visiting the Mormons” represented the height of adventure travel for many well-heeled Americans. Some of whom then became outsider advocates, who could turn around and testify to Mormon virtues. This was certainly the role played by Elizabeth Kain, a non-believer touring through the Salt Lake Basin in the early 1870s. She went, expecting to find neglect and despair within the Mormon households she visited, and she actively sought out evidence that polygamy was enslaving women. Instead, she

found similarity to her own life. At one stop, she met a woman with a tidy house, including a prominently displayed Bible, and she had to admit grudgingly that the woman “appeared to be happy and contented.” In her first Mormon church meeting, Kain searched for what she called “hopeless, dissatisfied, worn expressions” on the women’s faces that others had led her to expect. Instead she noted that Mormons looked much like any other rural congregation she had encountered.

By the time statehood arrived in Utah, Mormons were ready for America, and they had the skills to meet the challenge of, if not a 24 hour news cycle, then certainly the pace of the various dailies that graced newsstands in 1900. And most saints met the challenge of Mormon citizenship gladly, knowing that it provided both a measure of security for their own families and community, as well as the opportunity to spread their religious message to places that previously had been blocked, if not entirely closed to them. And it was in that moment of arrival on the American political scene that the peculiar talents of an oppressed religious community became useful, in another sense. The saints had learned to live with the gaze of the world upon them, and that self-consciousness would become an ally in their campaign to assimilate as citizens.

Now I want to pause here and underscore that the argument I’m making runs against most scholarly views of early Mormon history. Much of what’s been written previously asserts that Mormons *resolved* their relationship with the federal government after 1890. So, in other words, studies would say that before, we have Mormons living in close-knit tribes held together by radical communal practices, and after 1896 the church removed polygamy as an issue and became instead a community bound less by communal ritual and more by doctrines of personal morality. So scholars have characterized this transition as a relatively straightforward movement from isolation to accommodation, from a Mormon community able to set its own religious, political and economic course to a group that had to learn to negotiate in American society as just one more religious denomination. And its most visible byproduct, the cessation of polygamy by members of the LDS church, certainly reinforces the idea that Mormons were becoming one among many American churches. In exchange, these theories go, leaders thereafter emphasized individual moral practices; tithing, the keeping of health codes—no tobacco, no alcohol, among others. These became the new markers of what it meant to be Mormon. In other words, this research would say, Mormons were exchanging a communal code for a personal ascetic code. Now, this story is true, but I think only in a very narrow sense, and only if one focuses exclusively on the primacy of personal choice and individual agency that have become hallmarks of Mormon teachings. It conveys the impression that ordinary Mormons, encouraged by their leadership, simply decided to start observing new behaviors to mark themselves as distinctive. In this way, they could still be different from other Americans, but different in a way that was similar to the ways that other religious groups expressed their difference: through eating different foods and through having certain personal moral codes. Now, I want to suggest that this focus on individual piety and practice obscures the politics and institutional dimensions of this transition. It also shortchanges the extent to which Mormon citizenship came with particular promises and perils for those outside the church as well as those inside. Instead, it’s more clarifying to see the Mormon entry into American public life in the 20th century as a carefully orchestrated dance, a performance figured as an intricate set of actions and reactions, with each side shifting constantly its movements to take into account the others latest gesture. Now even if this gesture doesn’t precisely capture the shifts taking place—it doesn’t, since Mormons were actually dancing with

multiple partners simultaneously, so that's why the metaphor breaks down—they were appealing variously to liberal religious reformers, to the media, to educators, and even to Christian evangelicals, as we'll see. Mormonism as a collective religious expression may have resolved one major issue by obeying the laws of the land—so, it solved one Mormon problem—but it took on another. Individual church members, and the church as an institution, still had to figure out how to become part of the body politic, how to function simultaneously as Mormons and as American citizens.

Their efforts at inclusion focused intensely on civic and institutional inclusion. In 1905, John Henry Evans, a church leader, published *One Hundred Years of Mormonism*. Marking the anniversary of the birth of the founding prophet Joseph Smith rather than the birth of the church, Evans nonetheless focused his attention on the movement's arrival through the growth of its infrastructure. If his publication represented a means of introducing the new Mormonism to the world, as I believe it was, this new religion was marked by its success in joining the ranks of progressive American institutional life not by the promotion of temperance or individual morality. Becoming American meant building a church and participating in a public sphere quite different from the ones that the saints had known in Utah. As much as their adherence to moral codes, that campaign to enter public life set them down the road to Mormon citizenship.

I want to turn now then to a closer assessment of some of the features of that belonging. How did Mormons actively claim and enact this national identity? I'm going to focus in the short amount of time I have, fairly schematically, on three critical dimensions of this process: one cultural, one educational, and one I'm calling ecumenical. These I think are significant because they parallel strategies used by other religious outsiders in 20th century America who have tried to insert themselves into the American mainstream. Now, the most obvious means of joining the nation was of course to become involved in politics by running for office. Indeed, it was the trial in 1904 through 1907 of elected US senator Reed Smoot, a church leader from Utah who met with fierce resistance to being seated in the Senate, that precipitated a realization on the part of church leaders that a broader campaign for acceptance would need to be launched. If Mormons were to become citizens, they would need to find a variety of ways to ensure their membership. Smoot eventually was seated, and he served in Congress into the 1930s, but the resistance to his claims—brought not because of anything he had done himself, but because of his leadership in a church that was still suspected of breaking federal laws by harboring polygamists, was a lesson learned well by the saints. Instead they looked to other modes of inclusion.

So first I want to start by talking about the cultural outreach or the cultural element of this. Building on the perceived success of the Utah state exhibit at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, Mormon leaders wagered that culture gatherings—such as world's fairs and expositions—offered a non-threatening way to present a positive image to the American public and to emphasize contributions of the Mormons to the nation. Their first approaches quite purposefully diverted public attention from overtly religious practices. Whereas a focus on religion might have prompted consideration of recent battles over the legacy of polygamy or unusual practices such as the baptism of the dead, early Mormon exhibitors instead steered public gaze towards the economic, agricultural and technological achievements of Utah—which was still a Mormon majority—and its surrounding areas. So, in 1904, to take one example, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, which was held in St. Louis, which was then the fourth largest

city in the United States, Utah officials came to St. Louis and erected a reproduction of Little Zion Valley, a valley out in Utah, that showed small farms ringed with mountains as its agricultural offering. In the exhibition palace, the Utah displays won prizes in education, mining, metallurgy and irrigation. Again, these are framed in the context of the state of Utah but these are being presented mostly by Mormon citizens of Utah. A year later, the state garnered even more acclaim in Portland, Oregon at the Lewis and Clark Exposition, when Ogden-based Mormon Tabernacle choir—there were actually two Mormon Tabernacle choirs at the time, one in Ogden and one in Provo—performed at that point to sold-out crowds. The piece they sang, composed by a fellow church member, was entitled “The Irrigation Ode,” dexterously honoring local technologies and simultaneously showcasing the superior musical skills of the choir. I wish we could hear that, I wish I had a recording of the Irrigation Ode to play for you. More than a thousand people reportedly were turned away from their final concert, and Mormon leaders considered the show a rousing success in increased national acceptance of the church. After a dozen similar forays into public expositions over the next few decades, Mormons felt emboldened to present themselves not merely as technological wizards or superior irrigation specialists, but as participants with a religion. By the time of the second World’s Fair in Chicago, in 1933, Mormon contributions more overtly addressed the church’s religious distinctiveness. Mormon volunteers distributed religious literature, recited the 100-year history of the church, and proudly displayed a miniature replica of the Salt Lake Tabernacle in Oregon to approximately 4,000 visitors per day in the hall of religions. Church members clearly saw this achievement as the ideal union of evangelism and positive public relations. One LDS visitor exclaimed about the possibilities. “Twenty-three hours of pulsating human contact! One hundred and forty thousand precious minutes of continuous revelation! Hundreds of thousands of tracts and pamphlets distributed to truth-seekers,” he wrote. The mission president for the Chicago region, George S. Romney—now, not George W. Romney, who was the father of Mitt Romney, but George S. Romney, who I think was Mitt’s great uncle—noted how ably the exhibits showcased Mormon family life, which was now safely monogamous and nuclear in structure, and he remarked on how hungry visitors seemed to be for the Mormon message.

Church leaders in the same era also took advantage of other new representational technologies to highlight the church’s role in the national body. An adapted film version of Evan’s book premiered in February 1913, debuting in a Salt Lake theater to an enthusiastic Mormon audience. The film had two runs in Salt Lake City, and three prints of it toured—now the film has been lost, unfortunately—but it toured around in local venues with live lecturers all around the western states. More documentary footage of the April, 1913 general church conference was shot, and the film was amended slightly before attempting to go into larger release that summer. Though the extent of its distribution is unknown, there were reports of negotiations on the East Coast and London. Clearly Church leader saw this film as a way to counter negative views of the saints, and possibly to proselytize. It was followed also by other pro-Mormon films, that helped explain some of the finer points of Mormon practice, including the meaning of the Temple, to outsiders. Thus culture, in the forms of exhibitions, displays, and film, became an important means by which the church communicated with Americans and asserted its standing as a valuable participant in American public life.

A second characteristic mode of assimilation employed by Mormon leaders was outreach through educational spokespersons, church members who had been trained educationally outside

of the Salt Lake basin and could serve as bridge builders through both personal connections and common academic interests. Mormons had always valued education, so this seemed like a natural place to forge substantive ties that could help with other enterprises. The most prominent example of this trend can be seen in the career of James Talmage. A British-born convert to the faith, Talmage migrated to Provo, Utah with his family in 1877. After high school, he left for the East Coast, where he studied chemistry and geology at Lee High and Johns Hopkins universities, before receiving a PhD from Illinois-Wesleyan in 1896. Returning west, Talmage joined the faculty at the University of Utah, where he taught geology. In 1911, he was called as a member of the quorum of the twelve apostles, which is part of the highest level of leadership under the presidency of the church, and he served there until 1933. Along with his skills in science, Talmage was a master of public relations. In 1911, the LDS church had discovered that the interior of the Salt Lake Temple, considered a sacred site, had secretly been photographed. The perpetrators demanded a \$100,000 ransom for the photos. Church leaders agonized over their options, until Talmage proposed that the Saints commission their own photos and publish them, a brilliant suggestion that once again gave the Mormons the upper hand in controlling their public image. That same year, the first presidency appointed Talmage as an apostle, and thereafter he served as an exceptionally effective spokesperson. A staunch conservative on matters of scripture, he nonetheless held his own on the speaking circuit of interreligious conferences and exhibitions. So he also joined up with the cultural aspect of this, in going to those exhibitions. In 1915 Talmage orchestrated an invitation to speak as the church's representative at the Congress of Religious Philosophies, held in San Francisco, as part of the Panama Pacific International Exposition. There, scholars such as Emma Goldman held forth on atheism, and Murshida Rabia Martin presented on Sufism. Talmage spoke in a session alongside Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant luminaries. His paper on the philosophical basis of Mormonism was later prepared for missionary distribution—so it had uses both outside the church and inside the church. In each of these settings, Talmage presented Mormonism as a viable religious option among others, and in this regard his performance of civic parity with other religious leaders was as significant as the words he spoke. One evident effect of these forged intellectual connections was a score of sympathetic outsiders who began to publish accounts of the Church. “The Case Against Mormonism,” which was, despite its title, a sympathetic rendering and close analysis of what the author calls “the lies perpetrated against the saints” appeared in 1915. The author, who used the pen name Robert C. Webb, advertised the book as the product of a non-Mormon—so right on the title page, “Robert C. Webb: Non-Mormon”—and everything in its pages seemed addressed to an educated audience well-versed in the fields of economics, sociology, and theology. “What is needed in the premises is a careful and conscientious examination of the origin and claims of Mormonism in order that intelligent people may oppose it intelligently, if so disposed, or in any event estimate at a fair appraisal this system of teaching and practice.” Using anti-Mormon excitement as evidence of the significance of the subject, he criticized Christians who would easily dismiss the claims of the Mormons. “The candid observer of all this can scarcely fail to conclude that there must be something really interesting in a system in opposition to which people will thus stultify themselves and lie, as so many anti-Mormon writers have done, and which, in spite of the contemptible character ascribed to it, still seems sufficiently important to excite so great antipathy.” The author was, as it turned out, an Episcopalian and Harvard Divinity School graduate named James Edward Homans. During the course of writing his defense of the faith, he had lunched occasionally with James Talmage and shared his labors with him, thus demonstrating the efficacy of intellectual ties. Not all sympathizers shared such close

connections, but many—such as John Phillips Meakin and George Wharton James—did. By the 1920s, the Church had also cultivated closer ties to major periodical editors on the East Coast, and some leaders even claimed that journals would only publish what the Saints told them to. It is probably more accurate to say that close bonds of collegiality between prominent Mormon scholars and other writers and intellectuals helped pave the way for a larger number of positive public assessments of the LDS church in this era. Increasing numbers of Mormons, by the 1920s and 1930s, forged paths similar to James Talmage, travelling roads that eventually lead to positions in business and government. By the 1930s, Church member J Rubin Clark served as the US ambassador to Mexico. Clark had received a law degree from Columbia and had then served as an attorney in the Department of State and under Secretary of State Calvin Coolidge. In this way, through the use of channels of education, the world of Mormon Utah inched ever closer to the networks of academic and professional power, forging ties cemented by shared academic sensibilities and liberal religious sympathies.

The third mode of entry into citizenship presented by far the hardest challenge for the Mormons, and it is an instructive example precisely because it demonstrates the discovery of the boundaries of religious inclusion Mormons encountered. Liberal Christians and academics may have been willing to take on their cause in the interest of fairness and inclusion, but evangelical Christians continued to have little use for the LDS church. Nonetheless, the Saints tried, remaining certain that acceptance in the world of American Christian leadership would solidify their inclusion in public life. After all, some members surmised, they had a great deal in common with evangelicals in the 19-teens, and they found themselves on the same side of a number of moral crusades, most notably the Temperance movement. So it seemed logical for the Saints to join gatherings of Evangelical, to band together in a public display of Christian unity. Now this story may sound deeply familiar to those of you who have followed Mitt Romney's campaign, but I want to remain in the early 20th century just a bit longer to underscore the similarities of that moment, and the differences, between that moment and the current one. In 1919, the National Reform Association, an Evangelical group formed during the Civil War to encourage the incorporation of explicitly Christian values into national life, held an international congress in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. James Talmage, just a few years removed from his appearance at the San Francisco Conference, seized on this meeting as an ideal time to spread his message of Mormon arrival among Christian organizations. Talmage, one of several members of the LDS church who registered for the conference, brought with him credentials from Utah's governor and the mayor of Salt Lake City, attesting to the fact that he was an official delegate. Initially, he was delighted to be brought into the fold of concerned Christians. "It was my privilege to attend several of the meetings, and I was much impressed by the able presentation of the principle subjects, and by the liberal provision made for discussion," he later reported. By mid-week, however, his reception was considerably chillier. The Congress met that year in the wake of the war, and participants registered a renewed sense of both crisis and moral possibility. The world had fallen apart in 1919, and Christians saw this as an opportunity to be the first to decide how it would be put back together. Sessions were thus organized around a series of threats to the attainment of lasting peace; participants addressed the problems of labor, of race, of economic development, and of Mormonism, as an impediment to religious progress. Talmage commented, "To this commendable order of things, there was one striking exception, which by contrast with all the rest of the program stands as midnight is to sunshine, as foul license is to wholesome liberty, or as pagan superstition to Christian truth." Here is his description of the presentations

about his faith that followed: “The preannounced topics included: report of the world commission of Mormonism, history and tactics of Mormon propaganda, the Mormon Menace, Mormonism and the Swiss—I don’t know what that one was about—defeating Mormon Proselytizing. The estimated attendance was over 2,000 during the forenoon and nearly double that number in the afternoon. The chairman, in announcing the opening of the conference on Mormonism, made plain the fact that denunciation, not investigation, would be the keynote for the day, and the appointed speakers, without exception, followed his lead.”

Mormon Americans such as Talmage had bumped up against the immovable object of Christian citizenship. The noted anti-Mormon British author Winnifred Graham spoke first, and opened the section by comparing Mormonism to the late Kaiser and his power, emphasizing that even incipient claims to inclusion needed to be stopped before they ran out of control. As she phrased it, “Mormonism claims all the privileges of a church, and it steps outside of ecclesiasticism and claims all the privileges of a political party, a commercial corporation, a secret society, a civil government.” Graham was followed immediately by a former Church member, who rehearsed the litany of Mormon beliefs that other Christians found deeply offensive: the practice of polygamy, the idea that men would become Gods, the secrecy of their Temple rituals, the wearing of sacred undergarments, and the refusal of the LDS to release a complete financial accounting. The final blow was delivered by Lulu Loveland Shephard, an Evangelical powerhouse and public speaker known in her day as the “silver-tongued orator of the Rocky Mountains.” Shephard was a former president of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and a sought-after critic of the Mormon Menace. In her address to the delegation, she called upon Christians to wake up, and stop the Mormons from engulfing in another civil war. So if one author invoked the specter of the Kaiser, here she was bringing in the Civil War. If nothing were to change, she warned ominously, the Mormon Church would gain enough power to control the government. Indeed, she predicted that the church would appoint by fiat the next president of the United States, an act that would certainly lead to a war between East and West, unless “you people awake and throttle the power of the Mormon Church.” Talmage was aghast at the proceedings, which he described in detail in a church periodical later that year, but most instructive for our purposes is the object of his anger and the way he expressed what he was most angry about. He expressed astonishment that one of the speakers criticized an LDS church member who had served as a chaplain in the US Army. He claimed this was some kind of a fraud, that he was posing as a fraud. He also seemed astounded by the charges levelled at other American Christians that allowed Mormons to become an integral part of civil life. But he expressed particular consternation that when he passed a note to the aisle in the middle of the meeting and asked to be heard during the session, he was roundly denounced. “It was voted that I be allowed to speak for five minutes, as a courtesy, but with no recognition of any right to be heard, since I—not being a Christian—had no such right.” Note here the precise object of his concern: Talmage assumed that his expression of Christian belief would allow him a voice in this public setting, and that in certifying himself as both a church-goer and an upstanding citizen, proven through affidavits brought to the conference by a non-Mormon Utah resident, he would be allowed to participate alongside other Christians in this civic display. Here we see in stark relief the limits of Mormon inclusion into the American body politic in 1919. For Talmage and other Mormons of his educational and civic attainments, this reckoning came as a shock. Their previous interactions with liberal Christians, with educators, and with admiring crowds at public

exhibitions, had led them to assume that their full citizenship, including a right to speak and to participate in public life, had been won by their hard-fought efforts.

Now, 1919 did not mark a conclusion to this battle, and in fact one might more accurately gauge that it was not until the 1950s that Mormons won the day. So now I'm jumping up a bit farther to talk a bit about the 50s and then up to the present. Although I don't have time here to discuss this heyday of Mormon acceptance in the 1950s, we should not miss the fact that this decade was probably the apex of Mormon civic inclusion. And if we are to judge on the basis of the practices of politics in everyday life, in the participation of saints in the government and in the educational and business sectors, and in the acknowledgement of Mormon cultural achievements, this was the Mormon moment. The popular media of the 1950s heralded the Mormon business acumen and bevy of successful corporate leaders as a cause for admiration, and gushed that their close-knit communities presented a model of civic cooperation. In 1952, *Coronet Magazine* published an article entitled "Those Amazing Mormons," in which they were described as vigorous and independent. A *New York Times* magazine writer in 1952 lauded them for their welfare program and ability to care for members. In 1965, the Pulitzer Prize winning author Wallace Turner published "The Mormon Establishment," an analysis of the LDS church that traced its path from a small homogenous community with some radical economic and social ideas to a worldwide corporate and American entity. He admired the buildings lining Temple Square in Salt Lake City, he appreciated the vast Church welfare system put into place in the Great Depression, and he favorably compared George Romney—this time, the father of Mitt Romney—then a potential contender for the Republican presidential nomination, with other moderate party members such as Mark Hatfield. With a few reservations, he concluded, he "found their doctrine to be humane, productive of progress, patriotic, wholesome, and praiseworthy." The Mormons, Turner concluded, had become a modern American church.

So the question for us today is what happened after that Mormon arrival? By all measures—and certainly in the eyes of many Mormons—the Saints by 1960 had successfully assimilated into American life, demonstrating admirable civic engagement, educational attainments, and involvement with as many interdenominational religious efforts as would accept them. The Church worked long and hard to build legitimacy as a player in American public life. Why is it that a significant minority of people polled about their voting preferences today say that they would not vote for a Mormon candidate? And what light can this brief history that I've outlined shed on the reasons for that invisible boundary to Mormon citizenship?

So, in the time I have remaining, I wanted to suggest a few answers to these questions. I don't have definitive answers, but I certainly have more questions. The short answer, I think, is that America too has changed dramatically since the 1950s. That story obviously is too long to tell here, but by the early 1960s, journalists began to report more negatively on the LDS hard-sell evangelistic techniques, their control of Utah politics, and their rigid conservatism; so, in other words, the very virtues that were being extolled in the 50s were, by the 60s, somewhat suspect. Writers expressed alarm over the unquestioning belief in Church leaders. The Civil Rights Movement, which swept away many previously segregated white churches into an interracial embrace, left the Mormons behind as holdouts in the move toward full integration of African Americans. In sum, the rules of inclusion began to change dramatically, and the Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter Day Saints did not seem to be keeping up with the tectonic cultural and political shifts broiling around it.

A second feature of the current political climate and the way it has developed since 1960 is the pervasiveness and cultural combativeness of anti-Mormonism. Now some of this to be sure has been around for a long time, and one of the reasons I wanted to talk about the National Reform Association in 1919 is how similar in some regards it is to the anti-Mormon flavor of some evangelical rhetoric today—but there are also differences. The growth of conservative Evangelical political strength in the 70s and 80s was accompanied by a movement to police the boundaries of Christianity. Thus we witnessed the growth of an anti-cult movement that targeted the Mormons as a dangerous social force. The big issue now was not that Mormons were so unlike Americans because they practiced polygamy and other things that in fact they didn't practice at the time; it's because that they were so much *like* Evangelicals. The difference has sort of been flipped. I want to give one brief example of this in the anecdote of the Southern Baptist Convention and the leadup to their annual meeting in Salt Lake City in 1998. Now, this had been anticipated and was presented in the press as a chance to share the Southern Baptist faith with Mormons. There was educational literature distributed to delegates who were going to the conference to tell them what to say to Mormons when they met them and to educate them about the Mormon Church. This is what I call when I teach this to my students the Invasion of the Body Snatchers Scenario, in which the Southern Baptists depict a wholesome family scene, a united, happy family, and there's a voiceover that comes in in the movie over it, that says: "They could be your neighbors. They look normal, and they act like everyone else, but they harbor a dark secret. Christians often are shocked to learn about the theology behind Mormon emphasis on the family." So, in other words, this is another way of saying, 'They may do everything in the right way, they may act like a Christian, they may walk like a Christian they may talk like a Christian, but it's their theology that it's a problem, and therefore they've been taken over by this alien theology that's somehow going to sprout from their bodies.'

The other difference I think between the earlier Evangelical engagement and this one now is this time I think there are fewer liberal sympathizers and more liberal enemies around to become detractors of Mormons. Now I think it's atheists often that are the cultural combatants, as well, and even liberal pundits such as Maureen Dowd in the New York Times seems to love taking pot shots at temple rituals and sacred undergarments, in ways that you can't quite figure out her motives. But it is interesting that there isn't the significant force of the liberal sympathizers that I think we might have seen in the 19-teens. So in other words, Mormons are getting it from all sides in an interesting way, that I think is somewhat different from the way things were configured in 1919.

I would also say that for Mormons, I think the response to this can be quite puzzling, just as it was for Talmage, because of this long leadup, this long Mormon moment. Mormons had begun to think that they knew how to be citizens: how to participate, how to be accepted. They had practiced this for a century, and it still somehow isn't good enough in a way. So it raises an interesting theoretical question for all of us, which is, "What would Mormons have to do, short of renouncing their religion, to be accepted in significant ways in the public square?"

So I would just conclude by saying that the stakes of this long Mormon moment have crystallized in this election cycle. Romney's candidacy has served as the catalyst to solidify the tensions and problems of a long history of attempting to sort through what it means to be Mormon and an American citizen at the same time.