



Universidad de Valladolid

FACULTAD de FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS
DEPARTAMENTO de FILOLOGÍA INGLESA
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Religious Diversity in Utah: Deep into the Mormon
Culture

DANIEL LÓPEZ GÓMEZ

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Tutor: MARTA REVILLA RIVAS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the following paper is to provide an approach and a better understanding of the Mormon culture that inhabit the state of Utah in the United States of America. In order to do this, the main figures of this religious branch, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young will be put into the context of their time to explore the difficulties they had to face, and if it is really true that they were the immaculate and virtuous people that the Mormon Church claims they were. Finally, a series of few interviews with people of different Christian faiths will show if it is truly a good relation what the people of Utah have when it comes to religious coexistence by comparing and contrasting their answers to some questions to unveil why it was possible for Utah to flourish as a state with people coming from so different backgrounds.

Keywords: Church, Smith, Mormon, Utah, Salt Lake, faith.

El objetivo del siguiente trabajo es otorgar al lector un mejor entendimiento de la cultura Mormona del estado de Utah en los Estados Unidos de América. Para ello, los dos principales pilares de esta rama religiosa, Joseph Smith y Brigham Young, serán puestos en el contexto de sus vidas, explorando las dificultades que tuvieron y si realmente fueron personas llenas de virtud y bondad como realmente la Iglesia Mormona cuenta. Finalmente, una serie de breves entrevistas a personas de distintas fes Cristianas mostrarán si realmente Utah tiene una buena relación entre sus gentes en lo que a convivencia religiosa se refiere, comparando y contrastando sus respuestas a una serie de preguntas para desvelar como Utah emergió como un estado floreciente pese al distinto fondo de sus habitantes.

Palabras clave: Iglesia, Smith, Mormón, Utah, Lago Salado, fe.

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INTRODUCTION

Deserted, hot and dry. This is the setting for a story that goes back two centuries in the state of Utah. Here, Joseph Smith's followers finally established their home after a long pilgrimage from the American east coast. This paper presents an evolution of the Mormon faith from its very conception to the present.

To begin with, a journey through the life of the first Mormon prophet and founder of the Church, Joseph Smith, will be presented as well as all the challenges he had to face and the process of how he made his way to be the figure he is today among Utah's history despite being a controversial figure shrouded by secrecy and superstition.

The story will continue with his successor, Brigham Young, the man in charge of guiding the Mormon people on their pilgrimage through the vast American landscape, to finally settle down near the Great Salt Lake, where an approach to the first years of Salt Lake City will be given to provide a better understanding of how people from so different backgrounds could coexist.

Finally, this paper will end with a series of brief interviews that were exclusively recorded by the author of this paper to throw a firsthand opinion of Utah citizens and religious authorities of different Christian denominations. They will face a few questions with the aim of understanding their relationship and coexistence. The people interviewed are: a member and TV producer of the Mormon Church (Glen Rossin), a pastor of a Presbyterian Church (Matthew Jones), and finally a priest of the Catholic Church (Martin Díaz).

PART 1: THE TRAIL OF THE PROPHET

Among the many fractures that the Catholic faith has experienced during the last few centuries, there is one particularly interesting branch due to its recent beginning and its swift development across the world. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints often referred as the Mormon Church is a branch of the Christian faith established in the United States of America (U.S.A). Mormon people suffered from great prosecution for many decades to the point that they became a nomad people, wandering several times across the territory of the U.S.A to find their place in the New World. They confronted rejection, prosecution and murdering of their main leader among many other conflicts until they finally made the state of Utah their home. This was a place to develop their beliefs, a place to settle, and a place for praying in their temples. This congregation was formally organized on April 6, 1830 by Joseph Smith Jr. And it is precisely his figure and all the way up to the foundation of this church what this first part of the research will focus on. But was Joseph Smith the man that he and his successors claimed to be? Was the Mormon Church as prosecuted as they still claim? According to Jan Shipps, “Joseph Smith was just one of a proliferation of preachers and prophets who found God along the stony ridges and narrow lakes in the first half of the nineteenth century” (3).

Joseph Smith Jr. was born on December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont. He was one of the many children of the marriage between Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith. During his childhood, Joseph Jr. received his religious influence from his father. Although Joseph Sr. was not particularly aligned to any specific faith, what really caught his interest were the early times of Christianity when Jesus Christ and the Apostles established the ancient order of this faith. He enjoyed contemplation as he thought about the current state of Christian faith. One of these nights of thoughtful state of mind, Joseph Sr. retired to his bedroom where before waking up next morning he had a vision depicted by his wife like this:

I was alone in this gloomy desert, with the exception of an attendant spirit, who kept constantly by my side. He answered thus: ‘This field is the world which now lies inanimate and dumb in regard to the true religion or plan of salvation, but travel on and by the wayside you will find on a certain log a box,

the contents of which, if you eat thereof, will make you wise, and give unto you wisdom and understanding'. Yet, in the midst of all this I was perfectly happy, though I awoke trembling. (Proctor 63-64)

Shortly after this visions started, the Smith family moved to Lebanon, New Hampshire in 1811 where they finally found a period of lasting prosperity. With such background, it is easily recognizable how strong the environment was where Joseph was raised in a religious way of speaking. And young Joseph was in the middle of all these teachings and traditions. As Remini stated: "he was indoctrinated into a life of daily prayer, dreams, visions, magic and seer stones" (5). Joseph was a prefabricated model of his time and his family. Years passed in peace for the Smith family, Mr. Smith continued having more of his visions which led him to a stronger religious sense and search of answers which was quickly spread to Joseph Jr.

And so, young Joseph spent a few more years without joining any Christian faith and no remarkable events in his life although he suffered opposition and persecution from every single different religious order. It was 1823 and Joseph, as usual, continued laboring the fields with his father during the third harvest time since the family opened their new farm. All members of the Smith family took an active part in assisting their parents cutting down the grain and storing it for the upcoming winter.

And it was that night on September 21, when Joseph saying his prayers and asking for forgiveness to Almighty God asked for a manifestation that could lead him into the right way. While still on his prayers, he discovered a light appearing in his room, it continued to shine increasingly until it was brighter than the sun itself. Suddenly, a figure emerged from the light standing in the air since his feet did not touch the floor. Soon a blinding white light filled Joseph's bedroom as the strange figure addressed to him:

He called me by my name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do, and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues; or that it should be both good and evil

spoken of among all people. He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fullness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants; also, that there were two stones in silver bows and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim, deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted “seers” in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book. (Proctor 103)

The figure set into Joseph’s mind the image of the place where the plates could be found. After that, the light of the room began to gather around the figure until he vanished through a small conduit from which he ascended and entirely disappeared. Then, the room turned dark again. Surprisingly after, Joseph discovered that the light was gathering once again in his bedroom followed by the same messenger repeating the same process, same speech, same vanishing. When this heavenly figure ascended for the second time, Joseph was left overwhelmed with astonishment about bringing back to Earth the light and intelligence that for such a long time were lost from this world; and that is when he went to get the plates, he must be on his guard otherwise his mind will be filled with darkness. Finally, the angel told him to tell his father everything about all he had both seen and heard.

Early that morning, Joseph was reaping the fields with his father as usual, he stopped for a few seconds looking into the horizon, his father urged him to continue the work and so he did. Again, after some time he did the same, this time Joseph’s face was deeply pale. His father noticed it, and he sent him home to get rest and get some attention from his mother. On his way back home, exhausted, he sat down for a while under an apple tree. It was in that very moment when the angel from the previous night asked him why he did not tell his father about the message he received from him, Joseph replied that he was afraid that his father would not believe a word. To this, the

angel said that his father would believe every single word he said. Joseph promised to do so as the angel commanded, he returned to the fields and told everything to his father. As the messenger predicted, his father believed everything Joseph said, and he even encouraged him more to follow his instructions and do not miss any part of the message. Soon after his conversation with his father ended, he did not waste a second more and he headed to the place where the plates were deposited. Joseph describes the place as follows:

Convenient to the village of Manchester, Ontario County, New York, stands a hill of considerable size, and the most elevated of any in the neighborhood. On the west side of this hill, not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates, deposited in a stone box. This stone was thick and rounding in the middle on the upper side, and thinner towards the edges, so that the middle part of it was visible above the ground, but the edge all around was covered with earth. 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. I looked in, and there indeed did I behold the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate, as stated by the messenger. (Proctor 109)

Joseph now descended back home, gathered his family and told them every single aspect of what had just happened. He warned his family that if people realized that Joseph got the plates, he would be persecuted, their names would be cast out as evil and their lives would be in danger because of the gold. The golden plates contained all the information and records that Native American tribes gathered after they were visited by Jesus himself before dying in the cross, and the Urim and Thummim were two transparent stones with apparently the power of translating that ancient language into English. This particular aspect of Joseph's tale is strongly attacked; digging for golden materials below the soil and translating Holy Scriptures was used to question and doubt about the veracity of his claims. "When the translation of the plates was complete and

published to the world, the temporal juxtaposition of these two apparently antithetical activities was used to bring the prophet's integrity into question" (Shipps 13).

This astonished the family very much, since they did not understand how anyone would be so willing to take their lives just for a thing like this. Finally Joseph asked his family if he would have their entire support, and so they did. From then on, Joseph Smith Jr. would continue to receive information and instructions from time to time as the family gathered every evening to discuss and study what the young member of the family shared with them. They were convinced that God would soon bring to light something that would give them a more perfect knowledge about the plan of salvation and the redemption of the human family than anything which had been taught before.

A short time after, a man from Chenango County named Josiah Stowell came to Palmyra County to buy grain. In that way, he got in touch with the Smith family. Also, he possessed a document which contained information about silver mines somewhere in the neighborhood in which Joseph resided. Joseph tried to persuade him from his vain pursuit, but he was inflexible in his commitment and offered high salaries to him and those who would dig for him in search of the silver. He finally agreed and with a few members he started digging. After working for a month without success, Joseph prevailed upon him to cease his operations. It was during this time working for Mr. Stowell that he met Isaac Hale and through him he met his daughter, Miss Emma Hale, to whom he immediately made an approach and subsequently married her.

During the consequent years, Joseph Smith and his wife Emma worked hard transcribing all his visions, revelations and messages from God into a compilation of writings called the Book of Mormon. As soon as the Book of Mormon was translated in 1829, Joseph dispatched a messenger to his father, telling him about the completion of his work and inviting both him and his mother to make a visit as soon as possible.

In March 26, 1830, the Book of Mormon was finally printed; a new biblical book for the Mormon Church. The book contained, supposedly, the final compilation of all the information revealed by the angel Moroni to Joseph during his visions. "And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (The Book of Mormon, MORONI 9:23 - 10:6). And it took him a considerable short period of time to translate the golden plates from an unknown language into English. For authors that question the authenticity of this book, this is almost a miraculous achievement. "This massive

translation was completed in sixty working days by an uneducated but highly imaginative zealot steeped in the religious fervor of his age” (Remini 8).

Around one month later, on April 6, the church was officially organized under the name of Church of Christ, and on that very day Joseph Smith baptized his parents the same way John the Baptist did with Jesus Christ, by submerge them under water and bring them back. After this event, during the next several years, most members of the Smith and Whitmer family went on missions across the state trying to sell copies of the Book of Mormon to spread the new word as fast as possible. As it was expected, during their trips, they encountered many challenges and oppositions as it was typical during each try of sharing their work to any other different faith. Joseph and Emma Smith decided to move their residence to Kirtland, Ohio.

In 1836, the Smith marriage spent six long years in the little village of Kirtland. The influence of his faith grew strong and fast followed by numerous revelations, miracles over the population of the town, and many more new members joined the faith through the missionaries’ labor. The church grew that much that they started to plan the building of the very first house of the Lord of this new faith, the first Mormon temple. This house of the Lord progressed unstoppable besides all the threats and oppositions they encountered. When the project was finally finished on March 27, it brought great rejoicing to its members. The very next day after the temple’s construction, Joseph preached to all his faithful companions, and over a thousand people attended.

Contrariwise, there was also something that was growing strong in Kirtland: an opposition to Prophet Joseph and his new faith. For all of them, Joseph did not bring any new Gospel or God’s will. His opposition was concerned since the very beginning that all around his figure there was nothing but the schematic plan of a very charismatic man. His traits, later studied by the German sociologist Max Weber, he stated that the “unusual qualities... which are attractive to others and result in special attachments, if not devotion, to his leadership” (359). Joseph was sure that this opposition was motivated mainly by the jealousy and frustration of his enemies. They became discouraged and ceased their operations when they found that despite all their efforts they still built the house of the Lord and that Mormon people experienced prosperity in everything they had set their hands.

That same night, Joseph received another revelation where the Spirit warned him of immediate danger and fastened his escape as soon as possible. At night and after packing sufficient resources to make the trip comfortable enough, alongside his family, he set course to Missouri. Joseph Smith would never see Kirtland again.

They finally established in the town of Far West, Missouri. During the first few days, life seemed to give some rest to young Joseph, when a terrible event took place. Joseph was writing and praying as usual at his new shelter when his mother saw through the window a large company of soldiers moving forward to the city, but, at that time, his mother did not warn anybody about it since she thought it was some kind of training day. Shortly after this, she saw the officers dismounting and eight of them started to walk to the Smith's house. They broke into the house with menacing manners, Joseph's mother invited them to sit and they replied: "We do not choose to sit; we have come here to kill Joseph Smith and all the Mormons" (Proctor 362).

Joseph came downstairs to check with his own eyes what was going on. He looked to all of them with the best of his pleasant smiles and one by one giving them his hand in a way that convinced them that this person was neither a criminal nor a mad man. They started to stare at each other as if a ghost just entered the room. Next, he grabbed a chair and began a conversation with these armed men about the views and feelings of Mormon people, how their course had been, the way they were treated by their enemies since the beginning and their never-ending seek of the true Lord.

The militia was deeply shocked about the man they just met. The meeting was so intense for them, that after Joseph finished his speech and headed to a different place, two of these men willingly offer Joseph to escort him all his way out there. Finally, once they arrived where Joseph wished to go, those men promised him to disband the militia and never return to his home. They even said that if anytime Joseph would be in need of any of them, they will return and follow him anywhere. "I guess this is my last expedition against this place. I never saw a more harmless, innocent-appearing man than the Mormon Prophet" (Proctor 363).

Still, and sadly for Joseph, this was only the beginning of harder prosecutions. After this event, the people of Far West raged even more against Joseph. So loud and noisy the protest were, that the Governor of Far West signed an order stating that Joseph Smith and his faith must be ended once and for all and its leaders taken to prison. On October

31, 1838, Joseph and his brother Hyrum were arrested and taken into custody in the tower level of Liberty Jail on charges of high treason, followed by the banishing of twelve thousand members of the Mormon Church from the state of Missouri. Once they were there, Mr. and Mrs. Smith stood next to the door of the house where their sons were to hear very distinctly how their children were tortured.

Their first thought was that Joseph and Hyrum were being murdered, especially after hearing around six guns being discharged. Mr. Smith lost his feet, he started to cry and groan with tremendous agony. Mrs. Smith joined her husband in his grieving and shortly after, Mr. Smith was immediately taken sick. A few hours later without news, a captain of the militia approached Mrs. Smith and encouraged her to follow him if she wished to see their children once again for they were about to take them to the town of Independence and the wagon would depart in shortly.

When they came within about three hundred yards of the wagon, they could not go farther because they were surrounded by people, and Mrs. Smith cried: "I am the mother of the Prophet, and is there not a gentleman here who will assist me through this crowd to that wagon that I may take a last look at my children and speak to them once more before they die?" (Proctor 406) One individual among the crowd made the pathway from the tumult to the wagon, this man spoke to Hyrum and told him that his mother was right here and wished to reach his hand.

After this, the rest of the Smith family moved to the little village of Quincy in order to be much closer to Hyrum and Joseph. For some time, the Smith family stayed at Quincy without news from the captive ones. But one night, Mrs. Smith received a vision while she was lying on her bed. She saw her children running fast through the prairies with a single horse, totally pale and about to faint.

Next morning, she confidently started to make the preparations for their reception when suddenly somebody knocked on the door. The man behind the door was Caleb Baldwin who had apparently met the Smith brothers in prison. He told the family that Joseph and Hyrum were set free, and they would soon arrive to Quincy. This man spoke truth, since both landed soon after and immediately gathered with their family. When the news about the return and liberation of the Smith brothers went abroad the people of Quincy came down to the house and saluted them in the most polite manner. They spent the rest of the day cheering, eating and drinking.

Joseph Smith and most of the Mormon people moved and purchased the town of Commerce and renamed it Nauvoo in 1840 where they spend several years of relative peace. By 1844, Joseph was the president of his church, mayor of Nauvoo, lieutenant general of the Nauvoo Legion and candidate for president of the U.S.A., becoming the natural focus of his neighbors' wrath. When Joseph and the city council ordered the expulsion of the Nauvoo Exhibitor, a newspaper that criticized Smith in his only number, Illinois Governor Thomas Ford ordered Smith to go to trial in the nearby city of Carthage for not respecting the First Amendment. Ford then ordered Smith to be imprisoned under a brand-new charge of treason with no possibility of bailing or hearing. Joseph and his older brother Hyrum were sent to the prison in Carthage on June 25. With only one anti-Mormon militia guarding the jail, a mob of about two hundred men easily managed to get into jail on the evening of June 27, leaving only the murdered and mangled bodies of the Smith brothers.

Joseph died convinced during all his life that every vision he suffered, all those angels visiting him during his dreams, and all the conversations with God were completely true. This lack of self-criticism is related by some authors to some kind of traumatic religious experiences during a lifetime that may result in a complete lack of objectivity and reflection leaving only a person that blindly followed his point; “remain quite unmoved by criticism from whatever quarter it may come because they have had their vision and they *know*” (Shipp 18).

After Smith's death, the Mormon congregation entered a period of discussions over the succession of the President of the Church. One group claimed that succession should fall on Smith's son; another group postulated that this decision should be based on what the Council of the Twelve proposed. A group created by Joseph as a clear simile to the twelve apostles that followed Jesus Christ during his lifetime, to preserve the stability and continuation of the Mormon Church.

Brigham Young presented himself as Smith's successor and was accepted while others advocated a temporary succession until Joseph Smith III, then 12 years old, reached adulthood. Young's followers stated that Young had been chosen by revelation and divine inspiration, and not because he would have wanted, a thesis that eventually prevailed. However, this dispute provoked a schism within the Mormon Church, appearing the two branches that currently exist: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

day Saints, commonly known as “Mormon”, and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints of the Last Days, the present Community of Christ.

The group that accepted Young as leader was strongly led by him. Young, knowing that the episode of Smith's murder could be repeated, moved his followers to the American West where the colonization process had not yet ended. They settled in the present state of Utah in 1847, where Young was invested as second Prophet and President of this group. The Mormons called today the route that followed with Young "the Mormon Path". A route that went from Missouri to California passing through the territory denominated Utah, where they continue constituting the greater part of the population. The first settlement of Young's followers was located in the Great Salt Lake area, where under difficult conditions; they founded Salt Lake City, the present state capital of Utah. Nowadays, over 60% of the Utah population belongs to the Mormon Church.

PART 2: BRIGHAM'S LEADING AND SALT LAKE CITY EARLY DAYS

In 1847, Brigham Young led the Mormon pioneers through the American West in order to find a place where they could develop their culture, faith and traditions. The pioneers cleared the land in the Salt Lake Valley and planted wheat, rye, corn, potatoes, buckwheat, beans and squash. They had experienced a hard winter; food was running short, and the clothing they brought was not heavy enough to keep them warm. Everybody went on to the land and worked it hard. Thousands of immigrants were expected for the next months, and they would be in need of food. The labor of colonizing the Great Basin by the hands of the Mormon people had just begun. The more soil they conquered, the more started to love that land. Still, the most important issue lay ahead. The Mormon people were not alone in this trip, by the time they arrived at the Salt Lake Valley; this territory belonged to the Republic of Mexico. Moreover, numerous north American Indian tribes like the Ute tribe inhabited it and, pioneers from different Christian faiths were about to move to the valley with the intention of making it also their home.

The following chapter of the founding of modern Utah is meant to serve as an introduction the present day history of this state. The story of the development of Utah is a tale of understanding between many different factions and the establishing of the institutions of the recent U.S.A. in this corner of the far West. Since the very beginning, Mormon people had to share the religious scenario with many different Christian branches. By the time the pioneers arrived to the Great Basin, immigrants from different faiths did also and they demanded their place on this soil. The importance and vast presence of the Catholic faith in Salt Lake are represented in the huge Cathedral of the Madeleine located in South Temple Street from where you can see their very noticeable twin towers.

Contrarily, by the late nineteenth century, Brigham Young decided to close several public places where "Gentiles" (non-Mormon) used to gather for worshipping and praying. As a consequence of this measure, on November 12, 1871, the First Presbyterian Church of Salt Lake City was officially established with only twelve members. The followers of the several Protestant faiths played an important role in the foundation of the U.S.A, a fact that can be traced all over back since the times of the Protestant Reformation in the 1550's; where many people fled to the new continent in

search of religious freedom. By the early twentieth century, in 1905, the first Presbyterian temple was built with very recognizable red sandstone.

In October, 1845, inside the Mormon temple of Nauvoo a conference, where four thousand members of the church discussed the future of its members after the assassination of Joseph Smith, was held. The plan was to move the Church Headquarters to the West. Brigham Young stated: “We want to take you to a land where a white man’s foot never trod, nor a lion’s whelps, nor the devil’s; and there we can enjoy it, with no one to molest and make us afraid; and we will bid all the nations welcome, whether Pagans, Catholics, or Protestants” (McCloud 132).

During their trek west, they received many visits from people inhabiting the territories surrounding the Great Basin. Most of them were highly pessimistic, warning the Mormon expedition that no grain could be grown there; even some of these visitors offered a reward in money for the first person to show a bushel of corn grown in the Great Basin. Finally, they suggested to the company to move to California instead where the climate and the conditions were far more favorable. To this, Brigham replied:

I do not wish men to understand that I had anything to do with our being moved here, that was the providence of the Almighty. It was the power of God that wrought out salvation for this people, I never could have devised such a plan. We had to have faith to come here. Why did we not go to San Francisco? Because the Lord told me not for there are lions in the way, and they will devour the lambs, if you take them there. (McCloud 152)

On July 12, 1847, Brigham Young was struck with a high fever. He rapidly became ill, experiencing strong headaches and multiple aches on his back and joints. He was nearly mad with pain. This situation became so complicated that the expedition stopped to pray and beg for his recovery several times. Still, Brigham was to remain sick and bedridden for the rest of the journey. A few days later, on July 22, the group could stare at the valley for their very first time, the Salt Lake in the very horizon with its hills and its islands.

One day later, on July 23, Brigham recorded his first emotions after witnessing the valley:

I ascended and crossed over the Big Mountain, when on its summit I directed Elder Woodruff, who had kindly tendered me the use of his carriage, to turn the same halfway round so that I could have a view of a portion of the Salt Lake valley. The spirit of light rested upon me and hovered over the valley, and I felt that there the Saints would find protection and safety. That very evening, a thundershower washed the entire valley in which could be a benediction over that day. (Young 63)

And so, on August 25, The City of the Great Salt Lake was founded.

The way in which the Salt Lake City was organized is an exception to all other American settlements. The people who founded this town in 1847 were of course members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Mormons. But the difference is that they never went to the west as individuals, acting on their own. They were boldly organized, a group with a visible head, and they made all this way for religious purposes. Their main goal was to establish some sort of Christian utopia in the New World, a kingdom of God on Earth. In a similar way as the Puritans landed at the coast of Massachusetts more than two hundred years before, Mormon people considered as well that they were taking part on God's quest by bringing to reality a bright new society into the wilderness. "Let us train our minds until we delight in that which is good, lovely and holy, seeking continually after that intelligence which will enable us effectually to build up Zion" (McCloud 187)

One major topic that was always on the papers was the polygamy issue. This practice is still the most widespread feature associated with the Mormon Church. Establish by Joseph Smith, he reported that an angel commanded him to do it. On the contrary, for his critics, the implementation of this practice had nothing to do with holiness. "The natural weakness of the flesh probably made it easy for him to accept the teachings and spirit of free love" (Hales 165). By the end of the nineteenth century, many federal antipolygamy laws broke the church stability including the arrest of many Mormon

leaders. “Most of the church hierarchy was forced into hiding to avoid arrest and church finances fell into perilous disarray” (Phillips 75). Plural marriage was a firm weapon that counted with a wide public support to legislate against Mormon people. The history of Salt Lake City is a story of effort: it began with an initial great success, but soon, it had to take a few steps from their original Mormon identity in order to face the political, economic and social pressure from the outside. According to Phillips, the pressure reached its peak in 1857: “President James Buchanan responded to Mormon separatism and presumed insurrection by sending U.S. Army troops to occupy the Salt Lake Valley” (75). The history of this city is also the history of people and their unsteady will of progress united despite the diverse cultural background, religion and ambitions. For more than one generation after its foundation, the city was the type of society that its founding fathers intended in terms of values, traditions and expectations. They planned to centralize the cooperation and the imagination of all the citizens, seeking a homogenous city based mainly on minor industry and agriculture. The Mormon Church was still responsible for almost every single action over the city, making it really complicated to separate Church and State. “Colonization came early, and was considered a call nearly as sacred as a mission assignment” (McCloud 180). The city soon started to change. One of the reasons why that happened were the transcontinental railroad by 1869 and the following spread of a full network of trains all across the territory putting into an end the geographic isolation of Utah. Mining and construction were the leading industries. The development was in such a rush that a business district, which was not in the initial plans of the Church, emerged in Salt Lake City. Progress, prosperity and wealth attracted a lot of immigrants in search of a brand new future. As a result of all these new waves of immigration, the shape of the capital never remained the same for a long time, adding more traits and new traditions which consequently resulted in the slow banishment of its initial Mormon heritage.

Obviously, as the city changed, and particularly the diversity of its population, many conflicts arose between Mormon and non-Mormon people. The conflicts were particularly evident during election time. There were mainly two different parties, the Mormon Church’s People’s party and the anti-Mormon Liberal party. In the elections, people simply voted for or against the Church. It is not surprising that shortly after, society started to split into two in all aspects. Mormon and non-Mormon neighborhoods were built separately. There were two different school systems operating: a public and

predominant Mormon one and a private non-Mormon system. The breach between them was so high that even celebrations like the Fourth of July were held separately. For all of them, propaganda was a strong weapon to throw to each other, denying their beliefs, their writings and their traditions.

From 1890 on, the differences seemed to cool down mainly because of the high amount of pressure received from the federal government. At this point, Wilford Woodruff, fourth president of the Church and the rest of the leaders understood that it was more beneficial for everybody to start an accommodation into the large American society and share both their burdens and benefits. In this same year, Wilford approved a manifesto proclaiming the end of polygamy in Utah, this action divided even more the Mormon people, disbanding their political party and being assimilated by either the Democratic or the Republican party. Immediately after, the non-Mormon people disbanded their political party too. From this point on, Mormon people stopped seeing Salt Lake City as the alternative to the world they wanted to establish by becoming just another modern city.

After the publishing of that manifesto, a process of “Americanization” of Utah in general and the Mormon Church in particular began. With it, the doors for other churches to compete were open.

In 1890, the census of religious bodies reported that Protestants in Salt Lake City enjoyed a 9.1% share of the city’s church members; Catholics had a slightly smaller 7.7% share. By the 1906 religious census, Protestants had increased their presence in Salt Lake to 13.4% of the city’s total adherents, while the Catholics more than doubled their ranks to 16.3%. The Mormon share of Salt Lake City’s religious market fell from 82% to 70%. (Phillips 76)

The planned Mormon theocracy and desired isolation of Utah from the rest of the country did not last much, but in the end, the city of the Great Salt Lake never truly became the archetypical American city, it still remains unique.

PART 3: INTERFAITH INTERVIEWS

Mormon and non-Mormon people have been fighting each other in Utah for centuries. There has been an evolution and a progress but never something permanent. After observing their relations among each other along the nineteenth and twentieth century, the aim of this final part is to investigate and question how these relations have developed to present day. This third and ending part of the paper consists in three separate short interviews. The people interviewed are Glen Rossin, a Mormon historian and TV producer of Mormon material, Matthew Jones, a young Protestant pastor of a small congregation in the little town of Syracuse (Utah), and finally Father Martin Diaz, priest at the Cathedral of the Madeleine in Salt Lake City. These interviews were carried out, planned and appointed by the author of this paper. They all were recorded separately and in different days. Rossin's interview was held at his house, Jones' took place at a coffee shop in Syracuse (Utah) and finally Diaz's interview was held at the Cathedral of the Madeleine in Salt Lake City.

The purpose of these interfaith interviews is to compare and contrast their answers to five questions that are given to them in order to check how the relationships have developed from their perspective and what they think about their religious neighbors. The questions that these people were formulated and the answers received are the following:

How would you rate your church's relationship with the other two Christian faiths?

Glen Rossin: Better and improving all the time. There was a time, hundreds of years ago that even though the Mormons tried to welcome people of other faiths and they've always tried to welcome people of other faiths, they did not get along so well. But in the last decade or two there has been a serious effort on the part of the Latter-day Saints to reach out and assist not only other churches but people of other churches. We have seriously tried to be friends, just a short time ago I had a conversation with a fellow at church, public affairs, these are older seasoned individuals men with vast experience who are hired by the church to do nothing more than to make friends and assist people of other churches. We are trying to be a good neighbor.

Matthew Jones: I have just more relation with the Mormon Church than the Catholic Church because Catholic Church is not near a big presence here. Having said that, more Catholics attend or people with Catholic background attend my Church than Mormon people. There are a lot of similarities between those two religions for me. In terms of my relations, we have very good relations. Strategically we try to have great relations and I think nowadays there are more acceptances even at schools, they are less Mormon populated but because there is such a history there that animosity probably still exists.

Martin Diaz: In general is a very good relationship, in general people cooperating on their interfaith and in their communion level. What we cooperate on is issues of justice probably more than anything else trying to work with homelessness or working with people that are in need, whatever that kind of issues are that come up in society that would be the level that we would be cooperating on. There is what is called the Interfaith Round Table, it is a group of people from all across, they come together once a month they come to know each other better by just talking to each other and looking at issues together.

Commentary: The three of them agree that the current relationship is ideal; they admit that in past times relations were not that easy. They all understand the importance of common understanding in order to create a more solid society free from religious conflicts that would only cause trouble. This people love their country, their state and their communities and they are willing to go further beyond to fix every single problem that may appear. They have a sense of responsibility toward their neighbors and they will not think twice when it comes to gather and help someone in need although since everyone's religious point of view, they may differ in their final intentions.

Could you tell me something you like and something you do not like about Rest of Churches in Utah?

Glen Rossin: With Catholicism, the thing that I like is the emphasis on traditional values and families, I like that about Catholicism. The thing that I do not like about Catholicism is ritualized traditions, unbendable, inflexible, ritualized traditions. Now Protestantism is such a broad thing, there are so many different churches that fall within that. The thing I like about Protestantism is the basis on which it stands; they were born

on protest against tradition, they wanted to learn. I applaud the idea that these were people who began in a quest for truth. What I do not like about Protestantism in general is the way they hate and prosecute others in the name of Christ; I do not like it at all. Christianity should be tolerant; Christianity should be patient, kind and loving. The idea is to hate the sin but love the sinner not hate both of them. And sometimes, many times, I have discovered with Protestants that they are unkind and inflexible in the name of their religion. They just cannot be friends.

Matthew Jones: I like a number of things about the Mormon Church and it is basically the culture that they have created in terms of community, neighborhood specifically. The idea that you do feel safe if your kids are playing outside and there is a general culture that the community get together to help each other like if somebody got a roof that has blown off everybody gets together and help him. In the negative side, I think it is doctrinal, it is just doctrinal. The doctrinal beliefs of the Mormon Church, the better you do, the more you can progress. The amount of blessings you may receive will depend on how good you are and this naturally leads people to hide the things that they are doing wrong. I do not need help with the things I am doing right, I need help with the things I am doing wrong and the only way I am going to get help for that is if I am in an environment where it is encouraged to be honest that stuff. And their environment creates an environment where it is hurtful to your family and to your position in the Church if you are honest about that stuff. One example of that is pornography with men, if you acknowledge that you are struggling with pornography then you will lose your position at the Church and that is just not healthy, we do not have that in our Church.

And on the Catholic side I just could not speak enough, I would say on the positive side of Catholicism I can only speak in the abstract, I can only speak to what I see in the news. They stand for some issues I care like abortion. And on the negative side, it is still a very work based world view or view of Christianity where if you had suffering in your life is probably as a result of sin in your life. I think it is really damaging to put the yoke on somebody who is going through suffering that all of this must be because of sin in your life.

Martin Diaz: One of the great things of the Mormon Church is that they have small congregations and because of the smallness of the congregation they are able to have a strong community connection with each other and I think that is a real asset in their

faith. Theologically, I would not really understand nor agree with their understanding of who God is so that would be something different.

In terms of the Protestant Church, I like the way they organize, they are not hierarchically organized that gives more responsibility to the particular parish of congregation. But theologically the difficulty is that there can be a great division among the different Protestant Churches which you know in Catholics it is unity, you come here you go there; it is the same Catholic Church.

Commentary: This was a very clear question for all of them, they all knew very well what they like and what they do not like about their counterparts. But the feeling after this question is that they hurried to say what they like about the other faiths to soon move into what they disagree about them. They showed a critical attitude towards each other; they wanted to draw a clear line in the ground. They love their communities and their people, but what they love more is their religious independence from the rest, it is important not to forget that for them, at some level, the rest of Christian faiths are wrong and only theirs is the true faith, a thinking that can easily lead to intransigency and irrational rejection.

Have you ever collaborated or would you like to in the future all the three major Christian Churches in some common project of social character in favor of the citizens of Utah?

Glen Rossin: I do not have any plans for any collaborative ecumenical projects at the moment although in the past with the work that I do, I am a Latter-day Saints historian, I produce movies and stuff for television things like that. I worked with Protestants in the past to get their perspective on our religion. Now even though I am not currently deeply involved in this interfaith movement I have a very dear friend who is, and he travels all over the world meeting with ministers and members of other faiths. One: to be friends and two: to make life better for all of us; to open up a dialogue and communicate so that we can work together on social issues.

Matthew Jones: That is a good question, in terms of in what have we collaborated with last summer the local LDS stake was putting kids together for the Libyan refugees and so they asked us if we wanted to be involved. That would have some meaning together

and then on a more not so much helpful but just in terms of partnering together there was a Christmas program that they did and we took our performers there and perform music. So anything again in the hypothetical situation anything that is going to be helping kids or your know students or homelessness, any type of social welfare type of programs that they were involved in, we will absolutely help with it.

Martin Diaz: I am not really good at remembering when we worked together, I know that we have. Right now we are working on the question of homeless people in Salt Lake City, so there are various people from the faith communities that are working together in this issue.

Commentary: Not only the state of Utah but the country of the U.S.A. is deeply concerned about two issues: safe kids and homelessness. They are two pillars that automatically make all people rise to help and provide a helping hand. The problems that these issues may cause are not subject to debate, and it is during this spontaneous sparks of charity when you really understand the sense of community that all churches try to encourage on their people every Sunday. However, it can be easily appreciated that in general terms none of the interviewees had any particular plan or intention on this common projects. Only kind words and presumed good will motivated maybe by the presence of the author's recorder.

Tell what sets your church apart from the others.

Glen Rossin: The difference between us and them is we have the gift and power of the Holy Ghost.

Matthew Jones: Authenticity, but it is personal authenticity. We encourage people and you will get more out of your Church experience if you just come as you are so we try to symbolize that by saying I would not encourage anybody to dress up for Church just dress the way your normally do because that almost symbolically says I act different in Church than I do everywhere else, so rather come as you are because you will get more, you are authentic, so yeah authenticity.

Martin Diaz: The difference between us and LDS is that LDS are not Christian. Christianity traditionally has been defined at the Council of Ephesus, so the father is

God the son is God the spirit is God each is God, God is one. So with the LDS faith they do not believe that God is one so it is not a monotheistic religion. They believe that the father is God, the son is God, and the spirit is God each has a wife and there are three people, so it is three people not three persons.

Commentary: This was possibly the best question in terms of checking their differences. Somehow, they want to show that they are all unique and always in their humble opinions they belong to the one true faith. They assume that what they are, the others are not. It could be contradictory that all they preach to have great relations among them, but in the end what they want is to see all people converted into their faiths. They might have different procedures and different techniques, but the same goal. On the other hand, they are very acquainted of each other's church history. They understand that in religious terms Utah will probably always be a battlefield and their spot must be secured and defended. In order to do so, they are willing to bury the weapons and try to create a better community through understanding and gathering. But at the very bottom of all these wishes and good intentions it lays a fallacy or at least some hints of one: the idea that their religion is truly the one and only and not the neighbor's.

Would you say that the Mormon Church negatively interferes or interfered at some point in some way with other churches?// Since the Mormon Church is the largest in Utah, do you feel respected by them when it comes to preaching your faith?

Glen Rossin: The answer to that is no. There has been a misunderstanding, traditionally, historically and even presently. But one of the first Mormons to come to Utah was Brigham Young and Brigham Young helped establish the other Churches in Salt Lake City. That government of early Salt Lake City was completely under the control of the Mormons. And yet the Mormons brought and allowed and even helped construct other Churches for other faiths as they came in the Salt Lake City. We did not have to let them in, as Mormons. But we did, and we welcomed them, we helped them, built their churches and we have always done that, we have always tried to maintain a friendship so no, we are not interfering with them, we have not interfered with them and we will

help them every chance we get. In a matter of speaking, we understand that everyone in Utah is not going to be a Mormon. Ideally we think it would be the best to have everyone be a good practicing Christian and a good Latter-day Saint. Does that mean that every good Christian is a Latter-day Saint? No, absolutely not. Some of the Mormons are the worst Christians. My neighbor across the street does not want to be a Mormon I am going to encourage him to be a good Catholic, a good Christian and a good neighbor and I hope he does. I would rather him be a good Protestant Christian than nothing at all.

Matthew Jones: Yes, but when we started fifteen years ago, absolutely. We would have our services and often time a local representative from the local Mormon Church would come right before service began to make sure none of his members was sitting in the crowd, because we were seen as a very much a threat and you can look at that very cynically and say they are trying to whatever but I would act the same way if they were my children and somebody from a different faith was trying to lead them astray.

One anecdote, a few years ago we had a very devote LDS couple of girls to our service. They were encouraged to come by their Brigham Young University professor , they were encouraged to take one Sunday and go to a different Church and so they came, as part of their religion class but they ended up coming every week for the whole fall. I asked them why do you keep coming back and they thought it was a really good supplement to what they were learning at their own Church.

Martin Diaz: The strongest thing that still goes on today is that what can happen, I do not say it happens every time, what can happen is that the assistance that the LDS Church will give to someone is based on them to becoming LDS. They might help you with like finding a place to live or finding a job but it is contingent to at least the strong implication is that you need to become one of them, if you become baptized you will then have a job a have a place to live so some people feel like coerced into that. People in the lower level leadership, they push a little strong on leaving the Catholic faith in order to get that job so that would be the one difficulty.

Commentary: Both the Protestant and the Catholic representatives come to agree that the Mormon Church has not acted under the rules of fair play, not only at present day but also during the history of the state of Utah. Both agree that many times the main goal of Mormon help leads to Mormon baptism thought promises of a well remunerated

job or a decent place to live. From the Mormon side, all this is viewed as a misunderstanding. They claim that since the very beginning their only purpose was to respect and befriend all people no matter their beliefs and creed. Still, as it was presented in the previous part of this paper, the Mormon Church had some troubles accepting and letting preach in peace other Christian denominations. A problem that still after two hundred years, it causes confrontation between them.

CONCLUSIONS

The state of Utah has suffered broad changes since its very foundation. But people endured. They knew that they came from different backgrounds, and their beliefs were in opposite corners, but something stronger overcame their differences, the love for this land and their wishes of prosperity as it is reflected in their capital, Salt Lake City.

Joseph Smith, their prophet, may not be the immaculate figure the Mormon Church claims he was or the scammer his opposition claims as well. It might be that most of his actions will never be proven right or wrong, for the interests in conflict are of such magnitude that agreement is not likely to occur. Despite the veracity of his actions will probably always be subject of controversy, he founded a new Christian denomination that has reached millions of members, and he made his way to become a strong American figure in its short life.

The followers of the Mormon Church have come a long way in order to preserve their own identity. There will always be a layer of mystery and doubt over them along with their doctrine and their traditions. It has been shown that they also practiced religious prohibition towards the rest of emerging Christian denominations in America. From the very beginning they sought to establish a Theocracy in the U.S.A, a Theocracy with Mormonism as its core. They went from being a prosecuted religion to prosecute others as was seen during Brigham's administration in Salt Lake City. Religion, regardless of its denomination, tends to unify everything under one single banner.

Their hierarchy can be discussed and many contradictions will be found in their speech as in any other religion; but, during generations, these people have earned this piece of land called Utah paying the ultimate price in blood, sweat and tears. Their foundations are very solid; they know very well where they come from and what their mission in the world is. In fact, year after year, the church sends hundreds of these young new members abroad, to every single corner of the world to carry their message and add new members to their ranks. For them, the problems of the world are well located: distancing from God, consumerism and materialism. But they do not seem to locate their own problems with the same precision since many people consider that the methods of the Mormon Church are aggressive, insistent and capitalist based.

Whatever the future holds for Utah, it will be closely tied to the Mormon community. They are still a clear majority in that state and they will not surrender the reins that easily.

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