

“Reflections on Religious Change and Persistence from the Mormon Story.”

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Abstract: This project explores how periodic episodes of conflict and defeat, which at first appear threatening to a religious community, can actually serve to strengthen it. I use archival and ethnographic methods to analyze five critical moments in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). In each period, the church faced external and internal pressures to change key beliefs and practices. I answer the question: How do religious beliefs and practices gain strength - remaining salient, distinctive, and demanding of commitment - even as they are undergoing drastic changes. I argue that the Mormon belief in ongoing divine revelation serves as a cultural resource and ritual symbol that allows them to become more Mormon by changing what it means to be Mormon. This accounts for Mormon organizational vitality that cannot be explained by contemporary theories within the sociology of religion, organizations, or social movements. It can also be applied to a wide range of cultural and ideological formations in order to understand the persistence/change dynamic of robust cultures. Explicit comparisons are made with contemporary American Christian organizations changing policies toward gays and lesbians and contemporary Turkey's efforts to join the European Union.

I open with 2 contrasting public perceptions of Mormons, the first from Missouri's Governor in 1838, Gov. Boggs, in a written order to the commander of the state militia:

"The Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated, or driven from the State if necessary for the public peace. If you can increase your forces, you are authorised to do so to any extent you may consider necessary."

Missouri Gov. L.W. Boggs, October 27, 1838 (cited in Mulder and Mortensen 1958, p. 103)

"The Mormon contribution to American life is beyond measuring....They are the contributions of love and joy; of faith and family; of work and community. They are a dedication to the values that are at the heart of free nations-and good ones-and they are a faith in the promise of tomorrow."

President Ronald Reagan, July 24, 1987 (cited in Ludlow 1992, p. 230)

These quotes illustrate two very different public perceptions of a religious minority as voiced by official agents of the United States government. At first glance, they may be dismissed as little more than the product of the historically contingent political situations which gave rise to them. The first is from a mid-19th Century frontier Governor desperate to rid his state of a small but troublesome sectarian religious minority in order to avoid further violent bloodshed. The second is from a late 20th Century President grateful for the votes of a large de facto religious voting bloc. Yet they do not merely represent two quirky historical anomalies. Rather, these quotes reflect a very real change in the public opinion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly called Mormons¹, broadly described as a movement from severe marginalization to the center of the mainstream. While part of this movement resulted from

¹ The term "Mormon" has a complicated history in describing members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. While the term has been used from near the very beginning of the Church's history by both members and non-members, many of the original usages of the term were as a pejorative epithet based on the Church's claims to have discovered and translated a new Scripture titled *The Book of Mormon*. That book claimed to be a collection of writings of an ancient people dwelling in North America compiled by a prophet named Mormon. As such, many members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints contend that the term "Mormon" was never intended to refer to members and prefer the term "Latter-day Saints" or more simply "Saints." I use the term "Mormon" because of its commonly understood contemporary meaning and because it was the dominant term used by both Church members and non-Church members throughout the historical periods from which my data is drawn

increased tolerance of religious minorities among the American public, most of it has been the result of profound changes on the part of Mormons themselves, including changes in family and gender norms, bureaucratic structure, economic arrangements, self-identity, political persuasion, racial practices, and core doctrines. These changes have largely coincided with widely recognized global transformations during the same period, among them the rise of modernity, globalization, and a growing concern for civil rights. My work explores these changes in the Mormon Church across the roughly 180 years of their history.

Yet aside from a story in social change, more importantly, I tell a story of cultural persistence. While the Mormons have throughout their history made large changes to core and salient religious beliefs and practices, with the Church essentially doing an about-face on the content, goals, and character of their entire moral project at the turn of the last century; they remain impressively distinctly Mormon with members firmly committed to salient identities as part of a community of memory continuous with previous generations. Thus, theirs is a story of both cultural change and cultural persistence over a long period of time. My talk today focuses on the lessons the Mormon story provides for our understandings of both religious change and religious persistence in our contemporary era. I will focus especially on two areas of great interest to many of us: 1) the relationship between conservative religion and gay and lesbian sexuality in the United States, and 2) the role of religion in the contemporary Middle East, focusing especially on Turkey's potential entrance into the European Union.

In a 1970 article on state-building, Norbert Elias (1970) noted with regret the retreat of sociological theory away from the study of long-term developments in favor of short-term analyses of contemporary culture. This retreat, however, has largely been welcomed by sociologists of religion, who in recent decades have tended to abandon the secularization theory

that had dominated theories of religious development for so long. Contending that secularization theory blinded the eyes of mainstream sociologists to the powerful role that religion plays in contemporary society by assuming incorrectly that religion was perennially on the demise, these analysts were happy to dance on its grave in the hopes of giving new life to scholarship on religion. Yet the field could not (and should not) shake off an interest in exploring long-term developments in religion completely. Yet just as Elias puzzled over how to continue to explore long-term developments in state-building without succumbing to the dangers of simplistic evolutionary frameworks, sociologists of religion have yet to identify useful tools for analyzing both religious change and religious persistence at the same time over the long term.

As Peter Beyer (unpublished) put it at the 2005 annual meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion in Philadelphia, if “globalization” is a successor term to “modernization,” synthesizing the best of the classical theories on modernity while moving beyond their limitations and correcting their blind spots, then sociologists need a successor term for “secularization” as well in order to be able to properly discuss the present state of religion. My research clarifies this process of persistence in change, and more specifically, persistence BY change, naming it “dynamic endurance.”

The concept of dynamic endurance originated in an article on regional literature to describe instances where cultural changes, which are often perceived as cultural threats, actually help to reproduce cultural strength (Griswold and Wright 2004). In that article we used data on which local fiction writers are read by whom to illustrate how high rates of geographic mobility are reproducing strong local cultures rather than threatening them. Mormons are another instance of dynamic endurance, a case where the various changes they have made to their

religious beliefs and practices have paradoxically made them stronger and more distinctive rather than less so.

This attention to dynamic endurance when applied to religion brings the somewhat marginalized disciplinary subfield of religion into the mainstream of the professionally more central sociology of culture. As Jason Kaufman argued in a recent *Annual Review of Sociology* article (Kaufman 2004), the relationship between cultural stasis and cultural change is perhaps the most exciting frontier in the sociology of culture today. While explanations of cultural change that do not treat culture as the mere whipping boy of social structure have become increasingly common, the relationship between cultural change and cultural persistence and how both of these are embedded in social structural contexts remains a fruitful area of research. Beyond these theoretical frontiers, studying dynamic endurance helps us understand how groups can still remain who they are after some event that may seem to threaten their identity. To name just a few examples not often seen as belonging in the same category: 1) moving from the margins to the mainstream (ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians, indie music subcultures), 2) losing cultural battles with the mainstream (Muslim schoolgirls in France forced to uncover their heads, Southern tobacco farmers forced to find new ways to earn a living), or 3) voluntarily giving up something once viewed as vital (Turkey taking steps toward joining the EU, Christian colleges allowing dancing). Finally, studying dynamic endurance can help us understand how cultural notions that are supposed to be immutable can in fact change all the time, a process eminent legal historian Lawrence Friedman has puzzled over in Constitutional and statutory law, for instance (Friedman 1985).

Mormons are an excellent case for studying dynamic endurance for several reasons. First, since changes to religious belief and practice are assumed to be more difficult, more

salient, and more threatening to adherents' identities and ways of life than are other changes, religious beliefs and practices are considered a "hard case." Second, Mormons are an especially good case when it comes to religion because their changes to belief and practice have been frequent and the reasons for them have been varied. Sometimes they changed because their existing beliefs and practices were in direct conflict with external groups who they "lost" to, such as their need to end plural marriage in order for Utah to be accepted as a state. At other times, their changes resulted from being swept along by changing trends in the world around them, such as the pressure to extend the priesthood to blacks after the civil rights movement. And at even other times, they have needed to change because of their own success, such as the need to de-Americanize the content of their faith when they moved from a Western United States phenomenon to become a global world religion. Finally, they are a good case study in dynamic endurance because their persistence and success as distinctively Mormon during and after each of these changes remains puzzling to scholars.

Yet naming religious change and persistence over a long period of time "dynamic endurance" does not itself mean that dynamic endurance is a new theory solving old problems in the field. On the contrary, I mean the term as primarily descriptive rather than causal. It is a purely empirical claim that religion both changes and persists in the modern world, not a theoretical model for how it does so. Furthermore, I am far from the first person to argue that religion both changes and persists not only under conditions of modernity, but throughout recorded history. Nevertheless, I argue that an explicit emphasis on dynamic endurance is necessary to shift analytic attention away from more typical approaches to the study of long-term religious development. These other approaches include the Growth/Decline approach, the

Assimilationist approach, the Cultural Preservation approach, and the Social Movements Conflict approach.

By far the most scholarly attention given to Mormons has focused on their very impressive rate of growth. Mormons have surprisingly gone from one of literally hundreds of quirky small religious upstart movements to become what sociologist Rodney Stark has called “the first major faith to appear on earth since the prophet Muhammed rode out of the desert.”

In the subfield of religion, scholars have noted how the Mormon story runs counter to secularization theory, which predicted that as religious monopolies gave way to religious pluralism, religious commitment, belief, and influence would be undermined and give way to fully secular institutions. Since Mormons grew significantly after abandoning a theocratic state and embracing pluralism, they serve as a powerful counter-factual to this explanation. And Rodney Stark et al have used the Mormon case to advance their alternative “religious economies theory,” a rational choice approach articulated in opposition to secularization theory that argues that religious pluralism heightens religious activity. Yet this position also argues that religious groups that are willing to generate tensions with mainstream society are poised to grow while more mainstream religious groups unwilling to generate such tensions are poised to decline. Since Mormons have grown most explosively very recently while working hard to downplay their distinctiveness with other religious groups and with the secular mainstream, the Mormon case is a counter-factual for the newer Religious Economies theory as much as for the older Secularization theory.

Moving outside the subfield of the sociology of religion, scholars have tried to explain Mormon growth by appealing to other theories as well, most notably Political Process and Resource Mobilization theories in Social Movements and New Institutional theories in

Organizations. Now without denigrating the utility of any of these theories in many instances, none of them work when applied to the Mormons across 180 years for a very simple reason. Mormons employed radically different strategies at various points in their history. Thus, slapping a mono-causal theory across 180 years is doomed to fail at capturing the success of these multiple strategies.

For this reason, I believe the truly interesting sociological question when it comes to Mormon growth is NOT “What explains Mormon growth” but rather “How have radically different strategies for growth across different historical periods been held together as part of the same moral and ideological project?”

A second typical approach is to comment on Mormon assimilation away from distinctive practices and toward mainstream American ways of life. In the subfield of religion, this is the church-sect problem, with religious groups fated to either being an isolated sect so outside the mainstream to be irrelevant or an integrated church so attached to the mainstream that they can't be distinctive. In the larger discipline of sociology, this is a story of cultural accommodation. Just as Noel Ignatiev sought to explain *How the Irish Became White*, this approach asks “How the Mormons became Christian/Protestant/Mainstream/Something.”

Now the problem with this approach is that while the Mormons have made many changes to assimilate into the mainstream, they have also remained very distinctively Mormon, with high levels of commitment to distinctively Mormon beliefs and practices and very salient Mormon identities.

Thus, the truly interesting question here is NOT “How have Mormons become mainstream?” but rather “How have Mormons remained distinctive while shedding the obvious markers of distinction?”

The flipside of the Assimilationist approach is what I'm calling the Cultural Preservation approach, an approach which seeks to identify an essentialized Mormon "core" and then explain how this core is preserved in the face of external threats. As Fred Kniss argued in his excellent book on American Mennonites, this approach has two crucial problems. First, it is a very safe bet that any apparent "core" has in fact resulted from significant contestation within the religious community. Second, this contestation has already been interpenetrated by the economic, social, and political contexts in which they are embedded, in terms of the content of what they're fighting over, the tools and resources used in the fight, and in determining the outcome of who wins. For this reason, Kniss argues that a history of a religious community should be interrogated to discover who the conflicting parties were, what interests they had, how they mobilized their resources, what determined who won, and what the consequences were for the winners and the losers. In doing so, Kniss suggests that sociologists need to take "fewer theoretical cues from Durkheim and Parsons, and more from Weber and Gramsci."

This Weberian/Gramscian approach makes up the fourth typical approach to the study of religious and cultural groups over the long-term, the Social Movements Conflict approach. This approach is becoming increasingly common, with Melissa Wilde's work on how the progressives won Vatican II (Wilde 2004) and Christian Smith's work on how secularist activists wrested control of education, politics, family, and other institutions away from the hegemonic Protestant authorities (Smith 2003) as prominent recent examples. It has much to offer and is a crucial first step in studying religious and cultural groups over time. Yet it remains insufficient for a true study of dynamic endurance. To truly understand how a group can change and persist at the same time requires bringing Durkheim back in. Following Randall Collins (1988), the dynamic endurance approach asks how the Durkheimian moment of ritualized solidarity arises out of the

Weberian and Gramscian moments of conflict. So here the crucial question is NOT MERELY “Who are the winners and losers in conflicts and what determines who won?” but more importantly “How do periods of intense conflict produce moments of ritualized solidarity that result in renewed organizational strength?”

The “dynamic endurance” approach can now be summarized into two key questions, both of which highlight the relationship between change and persistence: “How do episodic periods of defeat, conflict, and change, which appear to threaten a religious group, actually serve to strengthen it?” and a second closely related question “How do religious beliefs and practices gain strength, remain salient, and continue to demand commitment as they are being altered considerably?”

I argue that Mormons accomplish these difficult tasks by employing the powerful cultural resource of their distinct emphasis on ongoing new divine revelations, revelations which may in fact contradict and take the place of previous revelations. But this belief is simultaneously an object of contestation and a ritualized totem of solidarity. While it was never a simple matter of an authority merely saying God revealed some truth and having it neatly accepted, I demonstrate that the Mormon belief in ongoing, new revelation allows the bitter pill of making significant changes to (or even eradicating) lesser beliefs and practices to be swallowed more sweetly. While all religious groups have undergone important changes, Mormons have successfully managed to make these changes themselves their distinctive key ritual symbol. This is how Mormons can in a very strong sense become *more* Mormon (“we believe in ongoing revelation”) even as they alter considerably what it means to *be* Mormon (certain beliefs and practices). As such, their story indicates that in some circumstances culture acts like a muscle, drawing strength from resistance.

Just to briefly give you an idea of where I'm coming from theoretically, I argue that the Mormon belief in and practice of new, ongoing divine revelations serves as a cultural object with high cultural power (Griswold), the most key ritual symbol of all (Ortner, Turner, Durkheim, Geertz, Douglas), and a very deep cultural schema embedded in a set of powerful resources (Sewell). Taken together, this has served as a cultural resource for the church that has allowed them to strengthen during periods of conflict or defeat by making drastic changes to belief and practice without sacrificing distinctiveness, salience, or commitment.

In demonstrating how this works, I limit my analysis to five critical moments in Mormon history. First, the death of Joseph Smith and succession of leadership by Brigham Young, during which the cultural schema of ongoing divine revelation was transferred from the personal charisma of Joseph Smith to a routinized bureaucratic office embedded in a set of powerful resources, a routinization process that nevertheless preserved the charismatic authority of the church.

Second, the establishment of the theocratic state of Deseret in what is now Utah, complete with plural marriage, communal economic arrangements, a religious political party, and even their own alphabet, all of which put them in intentional sharp contrast with the neighboring United States.

Third, the complete dismantling of this theocratic state and subsequent embrace of monogamy, the free market, and (initial) entrance in equal numbers into the mainstream political parties of the United States. Given the centrality to the Church's moral project of each of the things being abandoned, this was a complete about-face on the Church's goals, content, and everyday experiences, an about face facilitated by the same cultural resource of divine revelation used to establish these things in the first place.

Fourth, I jump ahead several decades to efforts to extend the Priesthood to blacks (which was successful) and to women (which failed). There was intense social movement activity within the church on both sides of both issues, all of which seemingly melted away after the church's official ruling on each in the form of divine revelations. Consequently, Mormons have not fractured into liberal and conservative factions at odds with each other at every turn, a condition that arose during this period in nearly all other religious groups in the United States (Wuthnow 1988).

Finally, the current period, which has seen the Church deemphasize the peculiarities of its Western United States history as a result of its rapid globalization, and it is facing internal challenges on issues of sexuality and intellectual scholarship.

Unfortunately, I don't have time today to walk through the empirical data and theoretical argument from each of these periods. But in each period, I pay attention to how the Church successfully utilized its key ritual symbol of new and ongoing divine revelations to preserve some identities, beliefs, and practices while making very contested and difficult changes to other core identities, beliefs, and practices. I stress that it was the *ritual expression* of revelation that mattered, not the content of the revelations or the process whereby the revelation was discerned. It was never merely a matter of simply saying that God said it and therefore it must be accepted. In each period, both what God did or did not say and how those messages were to be determined or recognized were explicitly and heavily contested, and often left completely undefined in the end. Yet once decisions were made, they were implemented via powerful totemic symbols and rituals celebrating *their* Church as the distinctive vehicle for revelation. The hard work involved in ritualizing their changes have made the Mormons remarkably successful in dynamically enduring. They have changed, yet they have remained the same.

My task now is to convince you that this approach to their story is relevant to understanding the present realities of religion, and that it even perhaps allows us to make some cautious predictions about the future of religion. The Mormon experience relative to the tasks of dynamic endurance has been unique in that they have had to face challenges more explicitly, more frequently, more recently, and under greater scrutiny from both the watchful eyes of opponents and the gaze of recorded history. They have been notably successful in solving these problems. Yet I do not believe this “uniqueness” precludes their experience from being representative. All religious groups, indeed all groups of any kind that have any sort of claims to a continuous cultural identity, must find ways to persist through change.

Given contemporary Mormon opposition to Proposition 8, people look at me awfully funny when I tell them that I’m writing a book about Mormons in part to convince mainstream conservative Evangelical Christianity that changing their beliefs and practices regarding gay and lesbian sexuality will not actually bring about their destruction. But this is in fact more or less what I’m up to. I also got lots of funny looks when I told folks I needed to travel to Turkey this past year as part of my research on Mormons. “Is there a sizable Mormon presence in Turkey?” they ask. But while Mormons are in fact present in very small (but growing!) numbers in Turkey, I was there instead to look into the ways the contemporary Middle East mirrors the late 19th Century American frontier, and I’m hopeful the analogy is instructive for understanding its future as well.

Here are two contemporary cases of great concern to many: 1) Mainstream Evangelical Christianity’s likely eventual movement toward ethically affirming gay and lesbian sexuality, and 2) The potential future of the Middle East as represented by Turkey’s efforts to join the European Union. In both cases, many perceive religion as an, if not *the*, impediment to

“progress”. In order for gays and lesbians to secure full rights and be fully ethically affirmed, those pesky Evangelical Christians need to disappear. In order for the Middle East to embrace peace and democracy, traditional Islam must be rejected. Since empirical indicators of the imminent demise of Evangelical Christianity and traditional Islam are obviously lacking, I’m comforted in my strong belief that those assumptions about religion’s inability to change are quite incorrect. In the 19th Century there were many, both Mormons and non-Mormons, who saw the peaceful merger of the pluralist United States and the Mormon theocratic kingdom of Deseret as impossible, not to mention undesirable for both parties. We’ve now largely forgotten that these two groups came to the brink of war on multiple occasions. At one point, US troops sent by President Buchanan were marching to Salt Lake City to remove Brigham Young from power, and Young had ordered Salt Lake’s residents to abandon the city except for a handful of men with torches, prepared to burn the city to the ground rather than allow the US to rule it. There are anti-US screeds from powerful 19th Century Mormons and anti-Mormon screeds from high ranking 19th Century elected Republicans in the US that will both make your hairs stand on end and chill you to the bone. Yet now we’ve got a Mormon Democrat as Senate Majority Leader and a Mormon Republican was almost a viable Presidential candidate. Several decades later, at the height of the Civil Rights movement, the Mormon Church was seen as immovable on the race issue, steadfastly refusing to allow black men to hold the priesthood that was seen as a spiritual duty for all white men. Yet move they did (eventually), paving the way for a truly unprecedented global expansion of a new world religion that remains strikingly distinctive.

So religions do change, but the change is neither easy nor automatic. Regarding the gay and lesbian issue, the long term trends are clear and irreversible. In a separate research project, I’ve analyzed data from multiple quantitative sources that seems to indicate that the key religious

predictor of failing to ethically affirm gay and lesbian sexuality is the level of social isolation into a religious community, *not* the conservatism or strength of beliefs. Others have found that young, Bible-believing, otherwise morally conservative Evangelicals are moving toward ethical affirmation of same-sex sexuality at more or less the same rates as the rest of the population. So there *is* a religious cleavage when it comes to same-sex sexuality, but it is *not* a cleavage between the religious and non-religious, nor is it a cleavage between liberals and conservatives.

These cleavages can temporarily put contemporary conservative Evangelical organizations in a tough spot. To give one example, I've conducted informal interviews at one Christian undergraduate institution with an overwhelmingly Evangelical, mostly Republican student body. I've been told that the College's President, Campus Ministries office, and a strong majority of the faculty are in favor of changing their policy to openly affirm gay and lesbian students. Estimates of student opinion from my sources vary, but most agree that if you remove the freshman class (many of whom enter the College from more isolated religious communities), a majority of students are in favor of this as well. Yet the College officials I've spoken to have told me they're scared to move, not because their own beliefs get in the way, but because they fear movement would shrink their applicant pool and alienate key constituencies, namely the Board of Trustees, alumni and other donors, and conservative Evangelical advocacy groups. They intend to move eventually, and are already taking steps toward doing so, but fear it is now too soon.

These fears parallel Mormon concerns over extending the priesthood to blacks throughout the 1950's and 1960's. And when they finally opened the priesthood to all "worthy males" in 1978, it did in fact alienate a number of their constituencies. But it was met with great acclaim and rejoicing from the majority of Mormons, and opened a door to tremendous

opportunities for growth among non-Mormons in the United States and especially abroad. Yet given the clarity of the previous position as core church doctrine, they needed to work hard to ritualize the change and to especially reach out to alienated constituencies and find ways to ritualize their participation in the Church in new ways. Ignoring the obvious social justice issues involved and speaking purely strategically, contemporary conservative Evangelical organizations would be wise in following their lead. First, failing to effectively ritualize their movement on gay and lesbian sexuality or ritually incorporate the alienated groups can have disastrous fracturing possibilities (possibly currently being witnessed in the global Anglican Communion at present). Yet doing the hard cultural work of maneuvering key Christian symbols to ritualize the affirmation will have tremendous payoffs over the long term. Second, while the activist within me wants to push for change immediately, the Mormon story may imply that timing *is* important. Had they opened the priesthood to blacks in 1957, the circumstances would likely have been very different than their waiting until 1978 when the public opinion of adherents had already changed so drastically in terms of race.

Turning to the situation in Turkey, the ruling Islamic party is seeking to lead Turkey into the European Union. This move threatens not just tradition-minded Muslims who occupy most of Turkey outside major urban areas like Istanbul. Joining the European Union also threatens the secularists in major cities like Istanbul who seek to preserve the Kemalist principles of Turkish self-autonomy that modern Turkey was founded upon under Ataturk. And while both secularists and Islamists have their own reasons for being skeptical about the EU, they both seem to blame each other for Turkey's failing to join the EU. Secularists claim that Islamists hope to control the officially secular government and introduce sharia rule across the country, thus making Europeans very skeptical of admitting Turkey into the EU. Islamists claim on the other hand that

it is the secularists who threaten military coups against democratically elected leaders and fail to trust the outcomes of the democratic reforms necessary for the EU. In a certain sense, they may both be correct. Turkey is not currently democratic enough to meet EU standards. But the more democratic they become, the more secularism is eroded and the more Islamic Turkey's public life becomes, thus making some segments of Europe very nervous. For their part, the quasi-secular, quasi-religious party currently in power, the AKP, believes it can be a leader in the Middle East by simultaneously embracing Western-style reforms, preserving Turkish secular self-autonomy and nationalism, and preserving the public expression of Islam in everyday life.

This is a tall order, but so was the transition from the Mormon Kingdom of Deseret to the State of Utah. In both instances, a region is characterized by theocratic religious groups known for oppositional (sometimes violent) relations with neighbors on the one hand and relatively newly secular elites on the other hand. In both instances, debates raged about pluralism, democracy, the relationship between religion and politics, and the relationship between religion and the law. Only 40 years passed from the 1850's wars between Young's Deseret and Buchanan's United States and Utah's acceptance as a State in the 1890's. For the Mormons, the hard work came after joining the Union. They again worked hard to ritually celebrate key symbols in order to preserve their identity while being forced to abandon many of their key practices. Utah's first elected Senator was refused a seat in the Senate for being a polygamist. Though a monogamist, his second elected Senator, Reed Smoot, was initially refused a seat as well, this time for being a Mormon Apostle. Yet Smoot went to trial in the Senate, eventually convincing both the Senate and his Church that he was capable of being both a pluralist secular United States Senator and a Mormon Apostle. In contemporary Turkey, the AKP has already

gone to trial for not being secular enough at home (and found guilty). They have lots of work to do in order to pull off their goals. But the Mormon story provides successful precedent.

So this is the conclusion: Religion dynamically endures. It is unlikely to go away (and why should it?), but it is also unlikely to remain forever unchanged. Movement is neither inevitable nor impossible. Nor is movement always about assimilation vs. resistance, secularization vs. sacralization, conflict vs. solidarity. Religion has always been all of these things at once, and always will be. Nor is movement just the result of self-interested social movement actors duking it out over resources. Rituals matter, and change that is successfully ritualized is change that is more successful over the long term.