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CAN THERE BE A “SECOND HARVEST”? : CONTROLLING THE COSTS OF LATTER-DAY SAINT MEMBERSHIP IN EUROPE¹

Armand L. Mauss

*The Church in Europe must live again. The work of the Church has run on the backs of its European Saints since the beginning. Don't think that you are just minding the shop waiting for the Savior to come. Don't think that the great days of gathering in Europe are over. This is our time. . . .*²

*Most of the world today is certainly not secular. It's very religious. So is the U. S. The one exception to this is Western Europe. One of the most interesting questions in the sociology of religion today is not, How do you explain fundamentalism in Iran? but, Why is Western Europe different?*³

*European exceptionalism [must be seen] in the proper perspective. As long as their religious markets are highly regulated, the apparent secularization of many European nations will be sustained. But should significant and authentic competition arise, it seems likely that other Europeans will embrace religion*⁴

¹ This is a revised and expanded version of the keynote address delivered at the inaugural conference of the European Mormon Studies Association held at the University of Worcester, England, August 2 - 4, 2007.

² Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, as quoted from a 1995 seminar for stake and mission presidents in Paris by Hoyt W. Brewster, Jr., *The Promise: The Prophesied Growth of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Netherlands and Belgium and All of Western Europe* (Netherlands Mission, Amsterdam, November, 1998). Brewster, then President of the Netherlands Mission, also quotes a comparably optimistic prediction by Elder Henry B. Eyring made two years later at a similar meeting in Rome, and still another made by President Hinckley himself in 2000 about a “second harvest” soon to come in Sweden (Erik Nilsson, “Göteborg, Sweden: A Second Harvest,” *Ensign* 30[7]: 77 [July 2000]).

³ Peter Berger, “Epistemological Modesty: An Interview with Peter Berger,” *Christian Century* 114:974 (October 29, 1997). In the 1960s, Berger had been among the most confident social theorists predicting the final decline and fall of religion in Europe and elsewhere in the face of the inevitable onslaught of modernism and secularism (see, e. g., his *The Sacred Canopy* [New York: Doubleday], 107-08).

⁴ Massimo Introvigne and Rodney Stark, “Religious Competition and Revival in Italy: Exploring European Exceptionalism,” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Re-*

INTRODUCTION

It is not often that we see a convergence in predictions between apostles and sociologists, though, to be sure, this is not the first prediction from Rodney Stark that has proved pleasing to the LDS leadership.⁵ Yet, for today's LDS members in Europe, the coming "great days of gathering," or, in President Hinckley's terms, the "second harvest," must seem as far off as the Millennium itself. And certainly the earlier projections by Stark of enduring Church growth have proved rather optimistic so far, as the influx of new converts has barely kept pace with the defection of unconverted or disillusioned members. The seemingly static Church membership size in Europe (at least in Western Europe) is no secret, nor is the ongoing struggle of the Church to retain its members. Well-researched articles on such topics have been appearing for more than a decade, and in 2005 a series of articles in the *Salt Lake Tribune* brought the problem starkly to the attention of the general Church membership.⁶ More recently, a devout and energetic young LDS scholar has established a website rich in data about the nature, distribution, and retention of the membership, and he has published a telling critique of the LDS missionary program, along with many suggestions for improving both the conversion and the retention rates.⁷ On balance, the prospects so far seem quite mixed for the future of the LDS Church as a worldwide religion in a meaningful sense, especially in Europe.

search on Religion 1(1):14 (2005, Article 5). Berkeley Electronic Press (www.bepress.com/ijrr).

⁵ I have in mind here primarily Stark's predictions during the past two decades of gigantic Church growth (compiled and updated most recently in his *The Rise of Mormonism* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2005]), edited by Reid L. Neilson, as well as certain other observations in that same book.

⁶ The series ran for several issues in the SLT during the summer of 2005. See, e. g. Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Keeping Members a Challenge for the LDS Church," *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 26, 2005.

⁷ Both the website (www.cumorah.com) and the book have been produced by Dr. David G. Stewart, Jr., a pediatric orthopedist. The book, privately published, is *Law of the Harvest: Practical Principles of Effective Missionary Work* (Henderson, NV: Cumorah Foundation, 2007).

In this paper, I propose first to review what seems to me the most important deterrents to the growth of the LDS Church in Europe, and then to identify both a theoretical basis and some operational developments that nevertheless might justify the optimism of the Church leaders cited above (Note 2). This approach will give my paper a kind of “bad news vs. good news” bifurcation, with the “bad news” reviewed first.

I will concede at the outset that my own *personal* knowledge about the Church membership in Europe is quite limited, based mainly on 1) some fairly extensive study of membership data; 2) first-hand accounts from informed European members (to be cited as I go along), and 3) some interviews and other communications with knowledgeable Church leaders and members in Europe.⁸ In travels during the past decade or so, I have also attended perhaps a dozen ward meetings of the Church in England, Belgium, and Sweden. I’m well aware that this record does not make me a great expert, but it has left me with some experiences and impressions, both cognitive and emotional. I should emphasize, furthermore, that my observations and generalizations apply mainly to the LDS experience in *Western* Europe. Some of these will be far less applicable to Eastern Europe, where the religious and political histories are quite different, and where a significant LDS presence is more recent. From my reading and observations, I have concluded that it is not easy to be an active Latter-day Saint *anywhere* in Europe, for there are many costs of membership, both obvious and hidden, costs which most American members can scarcely appreciate or even imagine. Some of these costs can be mitigated by creative changes in the Church program itself (to be addressed later), but many of them cannot be, for

⁸ I want to acknowledge with deep appreciation how much I have benefitted by the information and advice offered by many colleagues who have read and criticized earlier versions of this paper. Deserving of special mention in this regard are Drs. Wilfried Decoo, Bruce C. Hafen, George K. Jarvis, and O. James Stevens. I alone am responsible, of course, for whether and how I have made use of their suggestions.

they are built into the cultural and political contexts of European societies.⁹

II. SECULAR CULTURE AND THE REGULATION OF RELIGION

Social scientists have been predicting the decline and fall of religion ever since at least Auguste Comte almost two centuries ago. So far, however, historical developments during those centuries, and especially the periodic religious resurgences, have proved to be obstinate counter indications of secularization. Nevertheless, many scholars and commentators have observed that contemporary Europe, especially as contrasted with the United States, is permeated with a secular culture of disbelief in traditional religion and with moral permissiveness toward a variety of personal behaviors once regarded as major vices.¹⁰ The con-

⁹ As I explain later, the term “cost,” as used here, does *not* refer primarily to financial cost.

¹⁰ See, e. g., Walter Van Beek, “Ethnization and Accommodation: Dutch Mormons in Twenty-First Century Europe,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29(1): 119-27 (Spring 1996); and his “Mormon Europeans or European Mormons,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 38(4):27-32 (Winter 2005); also Gary C. Lobb, “Mormon Membership in Europe among People of Color: Present and Future Assessment,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33(4):62 (Winter 2000). Incidentally, I do not mean to insist that religious disbelief and moral permissiveness are always causally connected, though historically the morality of a culture has usually been “enforced” by some sort of supernatural beliefs. A recent Pew survey found that many people in the U. S., and most people in the rest of the industrialized world, do not believe that morality is necessarily connected to religion. Public opinion is not necessarily empirical reality, and in any case such opinion in secularized societies could be expected to deny a connection between religion and morality. Also, much depends on how “morality” is defined, and, in particular, on whether the issue is civic morality or personal (especially sexual) morality. See the article about this survey (and about secularism in general) in *The Christian Post* (http://www.christianpost.com/article/20071105/29971_Survey:_Wealthier_Nations_Less_Religious.htm). I am grateful to Dr. Wilfried Decoo for calling this article to my attention. On the other hand, Stark and Bainbridge have found empirically that in a society with high religious participation, rates of crime, delinquency, and other deviance are lower *even* among those who are *not* religious or do not attend Church. See Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge, *Religion, Deviance, and Social Control* (New York: Routledge, 1997)..

trasting persistence of religious belief in the United States has tended to be regarded, somewhat dismissively, as “American exceptionalism.”¹¹

POST-WAR TRENDS IN THE EUROPEAN RELIGIOUS SCENE¹²

European observers seem astounded that surveys find belief in God and an afterlife among Americans so much higher than among Europeans, at least in Western Europe. Furthermore, such religious belief as there is does not seem to be accompanied by Church going in Europe nearly as much as in the United States. Depending on the survey and the region, one finds a majority of Americans in Church on Sunday, compared to around 20% or less in Europe – a situation leading British scholar Grace Davie to see a theme of “believing without belonging” in her study of religion in contemporary Britain.¹³

Large-scale cultural trends, however, are rarely self-generated. They are likely to follow upon important political developments that seem to call for new norms and values, and which render the old ways impractical, irrelevant, or at least “politically incorrect.” In the case of Europe, these political developments have included fundamental changes in the relationships between the traditional religions and national governments since the Second World War. Though a certain amount of disillusionment with religion in general probably followed that war (given the seeming inability of any deities to prevent such disasters), the main impact upon Church-state relationships was the attenuation, or even elimination, of government sponsorship for reli-

¹¹ See, e. g., the discussion in Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 220-23; and the analysis by Edward A. Tiryakian, “American Religious Exceptionalism: A Reconsideration,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 527 (1993):40-54.

¹² In the preparation of this paper, I wish to acknowledge gratefully the informative documents shared with me by two scholars connected with the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University: Dr. W. Cole Durham Jr., Director of the Center, and Dr. O. James Stevens, Fellow of the Center, and currently working in Brussels with his wife Joan as a service couple.

¹³ Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (UK: Oxford, 1994).

gion, including the traditional state Churches. In the Soviet-controlled east, of course, this meant the emergence of officially atheist states. In the west, however, under the influence of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signed in Geneva by much of the world in 1948, an increase in religious freedom was gradually institutionalized. The derivative European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) was signed in Strasbourg in 1950.¹⁴

Further institutional backing for these documents came in 1962 through a multilateral treaty establishing the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), also in Strasbourg. This court has issued many efficacious judgments against member nations for various violations and state persecutions of minority religions, often resulting in the rewriting of national laws. Not all European nations are signatories to the ECHR, but as one after another has signed on, Europe has come increasingly to share an ideology of "human rights" where religion is concerned. In this ideology, each individual is to be guaranteed freedom of conscience – that is, freedom to choose any religious belief or tradition – or none whatever.¹⁵ Starting in the 1990s, after the fall of the Soviet Union, religious freedom came to be a principal concern also of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE),

¹⁴ Comprehensive reviews of the contemporary religion-state relationships around the world will be found in James T. Richardson (ed.), *Regulating Religion: Case Studies from Around the Globe* (New York: Springer-US, 2003); and in Phillip Charles Lucas and Thomas Robbins (eds.), *New Religious Movements in the Twenty-First Century: Legal, Political, and Social Changes in Global Perspective* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006). Religious freedom for the *individual* had varied in extent among European nations for more than a century. The ECHR had the effect of bringing all member nations under one juridical "umbrella," legitimating such personal freedom where it was already established and pressing for change in nations where it was minimal.

¹⁵ Lasia Bloss, "European Law of Religion: Organizational and Institutional Analysis of National Systems and Their Implications for the Future European Integration Process" (New York: NYU School of Law, *Jean Monnet Working Paper 13/03*, 2003). This is among the many sources cited here that Dr. O. J. Stevens brought to my attention.

with 56 member states, as it has struggled to bring peace and security to the newly emerging states of Eastern Europe.¹⁶

As liberating as all this might seem at the level of *individual conscience*, however, the same ECHR also guarantees each member state the ultimate right to *grant or deny the status of “legal entity” to any religious body*.¹⁷ Thus legal entity status must be sought and granted in accordance with the laws of each country. The ECHR Court at Strasbourg, with some success, has attempted to require that legal status be granted in a fair and neutral process, without arbitrary delays or restrictions, without considering the preferences of the traditional state religions, and without any judgment about the religious doctrines of the applicant bodies. Yet the same jurisprudence permits a state to deny or restrict legal entity status wherever, in its judgement, the application for such status raises questions about public safety, order, health or morals.¹⁸

In Western Europe, generally speaking, the UK has been among the most liberal in granting legal entity status and France among the least liberal, with most other countries in between.¹⁹ Although the ideal of equal treatment is everywhere espoused rhetorically, *actual implementation* turns out to be quite complicated by a variety of competing traditional values in the various states, and more recently by the increasing assertiveness of Islam in many European countries.²⁰ Most of the

¹⁶ See the OSCE website: <http://www.osce.org> ; also <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/osce#history> .

¹⁷ Silvio Ferrari, “New Religious Movements in Western Europe,” Milano: University of Milan, 23 October 2006, published by *ReligioScope* (www.religion.info).

¹⁸ W. Cole Durham Jr., “Re-Evaluating Foreign Evaluations of the 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations: The Perspective After Ten Years” (Provo, UT: BYU International Center for Law and Religion Studies, 16 February 2007), unpublished paper presented at a conference of the J. Reuben Clark Law Society.

¹⁹ Ferrari, “New Religious Movements . . .”

²⁰ Marco Ventura, “Equality in the Regulation of Religion,” in M. L. P. Loenen and J. E. Goldschmidt, eds., *Religious Pluralism and Human Rights in Europe: Where to Draw the Line?* (Antwerp/Oxford: Intersentia, 2007). The intertwining of religious and ethnic prejudice is another complicating factor.

former Soviet states in the east, meanwhile, have proved quite restrictive, especially after their traditional religious bodies began to re-establish the old ties with their governments and to push back against the initial successes enjoyed by Mormons and others after the Soviet collapse. Yet, even in those countries, the ECHR Court in Strasbourg has had some impact with a succession of rulings upholding access to legal entity status.²¹

In sum, there are at least three implications of the current jurisprudence governing religious association in most of Europe: 1) As important as are the principles of freedom of religion, or freedom of association, the *legal entity status* for any religion, so essential for even the most basic legal and social privileges, ultimately depends upon the laws and their interpretations in each nation; 2) therefore, there is considerable variation from one nation to the next in both the process and the obstacles involved in gaining legal entity status; and 3) each nation may retain a state Church or otherwise privilege traditional religious bodies over newer ones, and may continue to extract a religious tax from its citizens.

RELIGION IN EUROPE AS SEEN BY SOCIOLOGISTS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS

In most of Europe, all of this has led to a “two-tiered” (or even multi-tiered) system of religious registration and recognition, according to which the conventional religions in each nation are privileged not

See, e. g., Fact Sheet No. 34, “Religious Discrimination and Legal Protection in the European Union,” issued in October, 2007, jointly by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), www.enar-eu.org, and the Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe (CEJI), www.ceji.org, both based in Brussels. ENAR is a network of some 600 European NGOs working to combat racial and religious discrimination throughout the European Union. The Fact Sheet concludes (22) that much remains to be done in establishing equality even in *individual* freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, to say nothing of *legal entity status* for religious organizations. Once again, I am grateful to Dr. O. James Stevens for calling my attention to these and many other documents referenced in this paper.

²¹ W. Cole Durham Jr., “Re-Evaluating Foreign Evaluations . . .”

only by tradition but also by cooperative – even organic – relationships with the government.²² These integrated relations between governments and the traditional religions had, of course, already existed for centuries, comprising what some sociologists have called “pillars,” by which social and civic life in Europe was carried on. Thus Catholic citizens had their births, schooling, employment, marriages, and funerals through institutions provided by the Catholic “pillar” and Protestants received the same through a Lutheran, Reformed, or other traditional “pillar.”²³ Where conventional religious “pillars” proved insufficiently inclusive, eventually secular pillars were created, such as a socialist, a liberal, or a union “pillar.” In this system, religious institutions had vital secular, civic functions, supported by public taxes, whether or not citizens were Churchgoers.

To be sure, my description of this process here is very superficial and, indeed, somewhat obsolete, for the religious “pillars” have eroded considerably in more recent years, partly because increasing numbers of citizens, especially immigrants, have been difficult to assimilate into one of the traditional religious pillars, and partly, perhaps, under the influence of changes encouraged by the spreading ECHR regimen in Europe. The necessary social services and amenities are increasingly available outside the religious “pillars,” so that religion is less salient as an organizational basis for society. At the same time, the more ancient spiritual functions do not seem to have been sought by the citizenry in any greater numbers, so Church attendance remains very low. Having been themselves secularized through years of integration with governments, the traditional Churches seem to have lost their *raison*

²² W. Cole Durham Jr., “Facilitating Freedom of Religion or Belief through Religious Association Laws,” Chapter 15 (321-405) in *Facilitating Freedom of Religion or Belief*, edited by Tore Lindholm, W. Cole Durham Jr., and Bahia Tahzib-Lie (Leyden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2004).

²³ Karel Dobbelaere and Lillian Voyé, “From Pillar to Postmodernity: The Changing Situation in Belgium,” *Sociology of Religion* (formerly *Sociological Analysis*) 51 (Supplement 1990): S-1–13; Walter Van Beek, “Ethnization and Accommodation,” 121-24, and “Mormon Europeans or European Mormons,” 27.

d'être and their power to provide meaning in life.²⁴ Recognizing that “believing without belonging” leaves the actual functions of traditional Churches somewhat ambiguous, Professor Grace Davie has more recently suggested the term “vicarious religion” to refer to religious institutions in which few citizens seek either social or worship services, but still hold to certain supernatural beliefs and still feel loyal to their religious traditions. In this conceptualization, the traditional Churches continue to *represent* even the large number of *non-participants*; for the latter still expect the Church to be available for occasions of celebration, bereavement, or crisis, and to be supported by public funds, but on Sundays they prefer only to have their interests “represented” vicariously by the more devout few.²⁵

Yet the basic two-tiered structure among religious communities still remains, such that the newer religions are marginalized, stigmatized (*de facto* if not *de jure*), and subject in many places to special surveillance and restrictions. Mormons share a place on this lower tier of religious respectability, along with Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostals, and even some of the more “scary” new sects (or “cults” as they are usually called in the U. S.), such as Scientology, Unification Church (or “Moonies”), The Family (formerly “Children of God”), and followers of various eastern gurus.²⁶ All such “cults” (including the LDS) remain at varying degrees of disadvantage whenever they are involved in any transactions requiring government approval, ranging from access to desirable parcels of land for Church buildings all the way to child custody disputes. Indeed, there remains in many countries an official wariness about all “sects”, a pejorative term commonly used in Europe to refer to any and all religious communities not part of the immediate post-Reformation world.²⁷ The rising Muslim tide in Europe might be seen as even more

²⁴ Van Beek, “Mormon Europeans or European Mormons,” 27-31.

²⁵ Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁶ Van Beek, “Ethnization and Accommodation,” 124-28.

²⁷ A knowledgeable Church spokesman in the Europe Central Area office finds my characterization of the LDS plight here to be somewhat exaggerated or outdated, at least in the northwest part of the Continent.

ominous than the “sects,” but the latter have apparently gained no comparative legitimacy in the process.

In general, sociologists in the U. S., the U. K., and most of Europe, have found no scientific basis on which to privilege the beliefs of conventional Christians over those of so-called “sects” or “cults.” Accordingly, most social scientists have long abandoned this pejorative, preferring instead the more neutral term “new religious movements” (or NRMs).²⁸ Certain *psychologists*, however, with their more therapeutic proclivities, have been unwilling to abandon altogether the suspicion that some religious beliefs must be considered *ipso facto* symptoms of dubious mental health. Governments in France, Belgium, and francophone Switzerland, for example, have all sought the assistance of psychologists to help them identify “potentially harmful sects,” of which well over a hundred have been compiled into official lists, often including the LDS.²⁹ In France, the “Interministerial Monitoring Mission Against Sectarian Abuses” (French acronym MIVILUDES), established in 2002, and largely financed by the French government, has been somewhat influential as a “watchdog” organization regularly advocating various kinds of regulations against “sect” activities, not only in France but elsewhere.³⁰ More recently, a team of Belgian psychologists reviewed the applicable literature of psychology on “contested religious movements,” and basically found no reliable evidence that such movements cause any harm.³¹ Nevertheless, through a complicated rationale, they

²⁸ Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements: A Perspective for Understanding Society* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982; and *Sects, Cults, and New Religions* (Oxford, UK: Routledge, 2007).

²⁹ Willy Fautré, Alain Garay, and Yves Nidegger, “The Sect Issue in the European Francophone Sphere,.” Chapter 26 (595-618) in Tore Lindholm et al., eds. *Facilitating Freedom of Religion or Belief*.

³⁰ This organization is successor to an earlier one (MILS = Interministerial Mission on Sects) established with a similar purpose. See information about both in *Wikipedia* : <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miviludes>

³¹ Note that in using the term “contested religious movements” (CRMs), these psychologists used a more neutral term than the usual government designation “sectes” (or “cults”), but not as neutral as the term “new religious movements” (NRMs) preferred by most sociologists, at least in the U. S. and Britain.

still concluded that it would be well for the Belgian government to consider “precautionary” policies to protect its citizens from potential “moral harassment” by CRMs.³²

The high cost of being Mormon, then, for LDS families and individuals, comes fundamentally from being relegated both constitutionally and culturally to this lower tier or margin of religious respectability.³³ Until this situation can be changed, which I believe is possible in future generations, membership in the LDS Church will continue to carry a cost, heavier in some countries than in others, but a cost nevertheless, with respect to marriage opportunities, family lives, friendships, careers, and many other life-chances. As I mentioned earlier, the number and impacts of these costs can scarcely be appreciated by Latter-day Saints in the United States, where membership and activity in a given religious community rarely have any implications for other aspects of a person’s life. For that reason, American Saints (unless they have served missions elsewhere) tend to hold the naïve idea that retaining one’s religious faith (or “testimony”) is simply a matter of keeping the divine commandments and maintaining Church activity. Brought up on pioneer stories about their European forebears, who sacrificed all for the sake of gathering to Zion, American Saints do not adequately

³² Vassilis Saroglou, Louis-Leon Christians, Coralie Buxant, and Stefania Casalfiore, *Mouvements Religieux Contestés: Psychologie, Droit et Politiques de Précaution* (Gent: Academia Press, 2005); see summary by the same authors : “Contested Religious Movements: Psychology, Law, and Policies of Precaution” (University of Louvain, Center for the Psychology of Religion and Faculty of Law, 2006). On the consequences of such marginalization for Belgian Mormons, in particular, even in quite recent years, see Wilfried Decoo, “Feeding the Fleeing Flock: Reflections on the Struggle to Retain Church Members in Europe,” *Dialogue* 29(1): 101-04 (Spring 1996).

³³ One German scholar considers this factor as one of the three most important reasons for the continuing difficulty in keeping a “typical” German ward going (the other two being emigration and internal dissension). See Jörg Dittberner, “One Hundred Eighteen Years of Attitude: The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Free and Hanseatic City of Bremen,” *Dialogue* 36(1):51-69 (Spring 2003).

appreciate the huge difference in the cost-benefit ratios faced by today's European Saints compared to those of the 19th century.

Precisely because they came out of humble origins and from countries with limited religious freedom, Mormon converts in Europe during most of that century could expect a net gain in life circumstances if they could emigrate to America - as thousands did, often with Church help.³⁴ This is not to gainsay any of the faithfulness or sacrifices of those early European Saints as they left loving friends and families for a new religion and a cruel and hazardous journey on sea and land. Yet they did have prospects, and their faith in those prospects was usually vindicated within a generation or two in the new land. LDS converts gathered, furthermore, to a new religious community in which their faith was regularly reinforced by a supportive network of friends and Church leaders. I am not unaware of cases in which immigrants to early Utah returned in disillusionment and bitterness to their homelands, but most of the transplanted Saints soon experienced a net improvement, materially and spiritually, over what they had left behind. For today's European converts, by contrast, though their situations would vary from one country to another, the cost of Church membership is likely to exceed the benefits, material and otherwise, for there is little to be gained by emigration, in most cases, even when it's possible; yet in the home country one's worldly prospects are more likely to be diminished than enhanced by membership in a stigmatized religion. Even in the spiritual part of the equation, while a convert might take

³⁴ As I read the consensus of historians about the social origins of 19th century Mormon converts from Europe, they would have been predominantly of the working class. The precise forms and degrees of religious freedom varied considerably in 19th-century Europe. Mormon missionaries had no trouble with public preaching and meetings when they arrived in the British Isles in 1837, but such was not permitted in Scandinavia until after 1850. For a useful summary of the changing relations between Church and state in 15 European countries across time, see "La Laïcité dans la Construction Européenne," published by La Ligue de l'Enseignement du Calvados at the University of Caen, in the year 2000. See www.fol14.asso.fr for access to the site for this organization. (Some expansion ["élargissement"] in religious rights apparently occurred in May, 2004, after this report was issued).

strength for awhile from a powerful personal conversion experience, there is usually not much spiritual support from family, friends, or large and thriving LDS congregations. Everything depends on one's own resources, insofar as these can be acquired through spiritual experiences and reinforced in the normally small LDS communities. Those European Saints who remain faithful and active today seem a tough breed indeed!

III. THE LDS RETENTION PROBLEM

There is recent evidence of some improvement in the retention of new converts in Europe, to which I will refer in the next section. First, however, it seems only realistic to acknowledge that European wards and branches are still struggling under the heavy burden of inactive members brought into the Church in recent decades - usually amounting to a majority of those on the membership rolls. I shall never forget the startling experience I had at a priesthood meeting in the Nottingham area in 1995, at which the entire business of the meeting was devoted to discussing which of the many inactive elders and high priests should be invited to apply for a cancellation of their Church membership! The dead weight of unconverted and disaffected members on Church rolls is another heavy cost to be borne by those who are still active - the more so in Europe than in America, for in Europe the member who drops out can seldom be brought back but is gone permanently, whereas inactive members in the U. S. more often circulate in and out of Church activity and can more often be reclaimed later in life.³⁵ No matter how it's measured, the attrition in both Europe and elsewhere has been discouraging: The national census data in some countries (in Europe and elsewhere) show that only *from a fourth to a half* as many citizens claim an LDS identification as appear on official LDS records. "Active" Church status, usually defined simply as attend-

³⁵ This observation about European Saints might be an overstatement, but most of my European informants concur with it as a generalization. For the more fluid situation in the U. S., see Tim B. Heaton, "Vital Statistics" in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1992), Volume 4, 1525-27.

ing at least one Church meeting a month, remains at around a *fourth* of the members of record in most countries outside North America.³⁶

This situation can be understood as the *cumulative* consequence of thousands of unfavorable “cost-benefit analyses” by disaffected individuals, whose Church experiences have proved more stressful than gratifying. Of course, all new converts in all societies are likely to encounter stress as they transition into an LDS way of life. Some of the consequences of conversion, however, just in the normal daily experiences of the members, seem to exact a higher cost for European Saints than for their brothers and sisters in North America.³⁷ Here are just a few examples:

1) Much larger investments of time and energy are required simply for attendance at regular Sunday meetings, usually with travel over much longer distances, a burden greatly magnified with the additional meetings required for local ward and stake leaders (and, one might add, for seminary youth and teachers during the week).³⁸

2) Partly because of the time-consuming nature of LDS Church life, and partly because of a conservative LDS understanding of proper Sabbath observance, an active member in Europe is regularly forced to choose between Church activities and participation in recreational activities with his or her family, given that Sundays are the preferred and

³⁶ See reports from census data in Austria, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Chile, and Mexico: Rick Phillips, “Rethinking the International Expansion of Mormonism,” *Nova Religio* 10(1):52-68 (2006); and David C. Knowlton, “How Many Members Are There Really? Two Censuses and the Meaning of LDS Membership in Chile and Mexico,” *Dialogue* 38(2):53-78 (Summer 2005).

³⁷ Many examples have been recounted in the work of other scholars who have written on the LDS in Europe. See, e. g., articles by Decoo, Dittberner, and Van Beek cited earlier. I should concede that these generalizations are nevertheless being offered in the absence of systematic comparative data for European vs. North American members, which (if available) might show that I have exaggerated some of the differences, despite the reports cited here from European scholars.

³⁸ A similar situation obtains, of course, in some of the more remote regions of the U. S. and Canada, but not for the great majority of Church members in these countries.

usual days for family gatherings.³⁹ The families typically cannot understand the preoccupation of the convert with religion, and family relationships are often ruptured beyond repair, especially when the convert is young – for the youth in Europe are expected to remain longer under parental and family guidance than is common in the U. S. This strain in family relationships contributes to a common perception in Europe that Mormonism is just another “cult” stealing away the youth.

3) Like others in the “lower tier” of European religious legitimacy, the Latter-day Saints sometimes face legal discrimination (*de facto* if not *de jure*) in cases of divorce (where the religious “cult” participation of a spouse might even be cited as cause), in child custody cases, adoption applications, and sometimes even in access to employment. So far the Church itself has not been inclined to intervene in such cases on behalf of the aggrieved member, adding a touch of irony to this special cost of membership.

4) Tithes and offerings turn out to be a much larger proportion of disposable income for most European members than for Americans. Given the welfare state features of many European nations, the tax rates are already comparatively high, and contributions to the LDS Church are often not deductible as they are in the U. S.

5) Expectations for LDS members to participate in missionary work in various ways, though routine (if somewhat desultory) among U. S. members, are experienced as much more intrusive and objectionable invasions of privacy in most European societies. The pressure applied

³⁹ Since Sunday is also the preferred day in Europe for most activities of clubs, sports teams, and even volunteer civic organizations, an active LDS member is likely to be isolated as much from the local community as from the family itself. For an engaging and comprehensive historical review of the cultural varieties in Sunday Sabbatarian observances, see *Sunday: A History of the First Day from Babylonia to the Super Bowl* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), by BYU Professor Craig Harline, and the subsequent review and commentary of this book by Wilfried Decoo and others on the *Times and Seasons* blogsite. (www.timesandseasons.org/?p=3854). The influence of Puritanism on LDS conceptions of Sabbath uses is readily apparent from this study.

by succeeding waves of well-meaning American missionaries for local Saints to arrange visits and meetings with their friends simply increases the stress associated with their Church membership.

These conditions are not, of course, unique to LDS members in Europe, though they are almost certainly much greater *in degree* than for Church members in America. As members who are unable to endure unfavorable cost-benefit ratios drop out of activity, they produce also an *additional cost of membership for those who stay* and must therefore pick up the slack at the increased jeopardy of their own respective cost-benefit assessments. A vicious circle is thus set in motion. Especially in places where the men cannot be retained long enough to obtain the Melchizedek Priesthood, the Church cannot form new wards and stakes (or is forced to collapse and combine them).⁴⁰

Great as these costs to individual members might be, today’s poor retention rates are attributable *less* to the struggles of *converted* members than decades of a proselyting methodology that emphasized numerical increases *in baptisms* over *enduring conversions* of new members who could add to the human and religious capital of the branches, wards, and stakes of the Church.⁴¹ Baptisms in the recent past have occurred disproportionately from among those with the least to lose, who are therefore the most readily “available” in a social sense – the young, the single, the modestly educated, non-European immigrants, and the lonely.⁴² The high costs of these earlier decades of inadequate convert

⁴⁰ Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd, “Membership Growth, Church Activity, and Missionary Recruitment,” *Dialogue* 29 (1): 33-57 (Spring 1996), especially 45-52.

⁴¹ Departures still occur also from a continuing urge on the parts of faithful LDS Europeans to emigrate to locations where the Church is stronger. Though European emigration in total is not large, it can severely weaken an already struggling European ward or branch. See Dittberner, “One Hundred Eighteen Years,” 63-65, and Van Beek, “Mormon Europeans or European Mormons,” 19.

⁴² See Gary C. Lobb, “Mormon Membership in Europe among People of Color,” cited earlier. In the Europe Central Area, at least, according to a spokesman there, two-thirds of those joining the Church during 2006 had been baptized in the country of their birth, so a third had not been. There is

preparation and premature baptisms are evident not only from the low retention rates mentioned above, but also from the well-informed accounts by devout and active LDS scholars in England, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, among other countries.⁴³ Their work describes some of the serious – and often tragic – setbacks to Church growth and retention that have followed from large-scale baptisms of essentially unconverted new members in previous years. Even the latest program outlined in the new missionary manual envisions setting a date for the baptism of an investigator as early as a month or less after the first missionary contact.⁴⁴ To be sure, the manual emphasizes the need for investigators to understand at least the four basic lessons before they are baptized, but there is no requirement that they demonstrate an *enduring change*, *prior* to baptism, either in behavior or in commitment to Church activity.⁴⁵ Large wards, with plenty of

no separate record of converts from the second generation of immigrant families, which could constitute many of those in the first proportion. Immigrant converts have tended to come from southern Europe and from Africa, and have proved both highly mobile and difficult to assimilate. They are also stigmatized by the local Europeans, so their conversions do not help to make LDS congregations seem any more “normal” by local standards.

⁴³ See, e. g., the following articles in *Dialogue* 29:1 (Spring 1996), some already cited: Decoo, “Feeding the Fleeing Flock;” Van Beek, “Ethnization and Accommodation;” Marjorie Newton, “Towards 2000: Mormonism in Australia,” 193-206; Ian G. Barber and David Gilgen, “Between Covenant and Treaty: The LDS Future in New Zealand, 207-222; and Jiro Numano, “Mormonism in Modern Japan”, 223-235. See also more recent articles by some of the same authors: Van Beek, “European Mormons or Mormon Europeans;” and Jiro Numano, “Perseverance Amid Paradox: The Struggle of the LDS Church in Japan Today,” *Dialogue* 39(4):138-55 (Winter 2006); plus Lobb, “Mormon Membership Trends in Europe.”

⁴⁴ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Preach My Gospel* (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 2004).

⁴⁵ David G. Stewart, Jr., *Law of the Harvest: Practical Principles of Effective Missionary Work* See also this author’s extensive website, www.cumorah.com, where he has compiled an enormous collection of data on LDS Church growth, retention, and many other matters. Wilfried Decoo (personal communication, Dec. 2, 2007) has come to believe that readiness for baptism is not a function merely of the length of time since the first contact with mis-

leaders, home teachers, and visiting teachers, can encircle, sustain, and fellowship new converts, but especially in the struggling smaller wards and branches of Europe, the unconverted disproportionately tax the time and resources of the local members and leaders. For this reason, bishops and other local leaders will sometimes resist certain missionary baptisms (understandably so).⁴⁶

IV. BRIGHTER PROSPECTS ON THE EUROPEAN HORIZON

More recent data suggest that future attrition will no longer come so much from poor retention of new converts as from other factors over which the Church has but little control, such as 1) a reduced birth-rate among LDS parents (as among other Europeans); 2) continued emigration to the western hemisphere; and 3) a reduction in the U. S. military presence (especially in Germany), which has recently thinned out the numbers of both American and local Saints employed on military bases. There is some evidence, however, of improved retention of converts: In the Europe Central Area during 2006, the proportion of new converts who had attended Church meetings at least once in the previous month was 69% ~ higher than in many American wards.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the proportion of 20-year-old men holding the Melchizedek Priesthood rose from 31% in 2001 to 38% in 2006. Even more encouraging is the evidence of retention among the European youth in particular: From 2001 to 2006, the proportion of 20-year-old men who had served (or were then serving) missions increased from 13% to

sionaries but rather varies from one investigator to another. It seems important to Decoo that the individual investigator should be *self-motivated enough to ask* for baptism, rather than responding mainly to prodding from the missionaries.

⁴⁶ Interestingly enough, some knowledgeable critics who have read this paper have found my assessment here unduly pessimistic and somewhat outdated, while others have found it quite appropriate.

⁴⁷ Similar activity figures for LDS converts in Romania were reported to me by George K. Jarvis, who was mission president there during 1999-2002 (personal communication, January 14, 2008).

20%.⁴⁸ This increased success among youth and young single adults bodes well for producing a multi-generational membership in Europe.

Yet growth remains slow among the European LDS membership. The marginal status and image of the Church, and the pervasive secularized culture, still contribute to the high and varied costs of being an active LDS member in Europe today. Readers can perhaps recognize how such conditions can be costly in certain ways for the Church *as an institution* without appreciating how those costs are also translated to the level of the *individual* member. Institutional attrition, slow growth, and marginal status in a secularized society all bespeak a greater or lesser degree of *stigmatization* of the Church in European society, at least as *symptoms*, if not as causes. By extension, individual members share in this stigmatization, just as children do in stigmatized families.⁴⁹ Of course, many costs specific to the individual member also occur, as indicated above. Ultimately, individual costs cannot easily be distinguished from institutional costs, since the latter so often amplify the former.

What is occurring in Europe that might enhance the appeal, and/or help to reduce the costs of LDS membership, so that more members can be attracted and retained? Where can we see indications of the future “great days of gathering” envisioned by Elder Holland and others? I will offer three considerations that might justify such optimistic predictions. The *first* draws on contemporary sociological theory to identify some cultural and political changes in Europe that have the potential to increase the appeal of the LDS religion among some segments of the population. *Next* will be a glimpse at the promising international efforts so far by LDS professionals and public affairs mis-

⁴⁸ These data from the Europe Central Area were graciously provided me by an Area office spokesman.

⁴⁹ Any doubt about this extension of *institutional* stigmatization to the *individual* should be resolved by a study of the 2007-08 presidential campaign of Mitt Romney in the United States, which was constantly on the defensive from the flurry of misperceptions and canards about the LDS Church, stirred up by Romney’s detractors in this campaign (thereby giving LDS Americans a taste of what European members encounter with regularity!).

sionaries to improve the legal climate in each country for the operation of the Church and the enhancement of its public image. Then *finally*, in a separate section, I will consider some prospects and processes that might make the LDS Church and religion seem a little less “American” and a little more universal.⁵⁰

NEW THEORETICAL OUTLOOKS ON SECULARIZATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

As indicated earlier in this paper, many scholars, both LDS and others, have discussed the secularization process that has occurred in Europe and the implications of that process for the future of religion and religious belief. The process has been sufficiently complicated, and so variable from one European society to another that many different implications can be pointed out with some evidence for each – and some of them mutually contradictory. Indeed, the very definition of secularization, and the identification of its key indicators, remain matters of scholarly debate.⁵¹ At least one component generally considered part of the secularization process, however, is “detraditionalization” – the decline in the power of traditional norms and institutions to inform personal identity, choices, and behavior.⁵² As individuals are thus thrown back on their own intellectual and emotional resources, they will not all respond in the same way. Accordingly, despite what conven-

⁵⁰ In working on the second and third of these topics, I benefitted greatly from consultations with Elder Bruce C. Hafen, President of the Europe Central Area, and with Elder Marlin K. Jensen, formerly president of the same area and currently Church Historian, both of whom generously entertained a number of probing questions from me during the summer of 2007 and responded expansively. However, I alone am responsible, of course, for the accuracy of my understanding and interpretation of the information they provided.

⁵¹ See, for example, O. Tschannen, “The Secularization Paradigm: A Systematization,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30(4): 395-415 (Winter 1991).

⁵² P. Heelas, L. Woodhead, B. Seel, B. Szerszynski, and K. Tusting, eds., *Detraditionalization: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995). I see “detraditionalization” as the equivalent, on the individual level, of “desacralization” on the institutional level, as defined by Stark and Finke (*Acts of Faith*, 200-201).

tional “secularization” theories have been predicting, not all “detraditionalized” individuals will necessarily turn to strictly rational, pragmatic, and materialistic epistemologies in their search for meaning. Some will remain open to spiritual understandings and interpretations of their existence and destinies. To be sure, terms like “spiritual” also can have many different meanings. Dutch sociologists Houtman and Aupers propose that in the “detraditionalized” context of modern Europe, we are seeing the rise of a “post-Christian spirituality,” based on a quest to “re-establish . . . contact with the divine self . . . to reconnect to a sacred realm that holistically connects ‘everything’ and thus to overcome one’s state of alienation” (307).⁵³

This is, they acknowledge, a kind of “romanticist conception of the self,” which “lays central stress on unseen, even sacred forces that dwell within the person, forces that give life and relationships their significance.”⁵⁴ Unlike traditional Christianity, which sees the divine as primarily transcendent, post-Christian spirituality sees the divine as essentially immanent; and it also rejects the premise of secular rationalism that if “truth” exists it can be discovered only by rational human faculties. Thus post-Christian spirituality is epistemologically a “third way” of *gnosis* – “rejecting both [traditional] religious faith and scientific reason as vehicles of truth”.⁵⁵ Importance is placed on trust in one’s “inner voice” or intuition. Or, in the words of Hanegraff, “truth can only be found by personal, inner revelation, insight, or ‘enlightenment’ . . . in contrast with . . . *reason* or *faith*. . . . This ‘inner knowing’ cannot be transmitted by discursive language [as is rational knowledge] . . . (n)or

⁵³ Dick Houtman and Stef Aupers, “The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981–2000.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46(3): 305-320 (September 2007).

⁵⁴ K. J. Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 19, as quoted by Houtman and Aupers.

⁵⁵ Much of this paragraph is either directly quoted or slightly rephrased from Houtman and Aupers, “The Spiritual Turn . . .,” 307. These paragraphs only sample the Houtman and Aupers explication of Post-Christian spirituality. Readers should consult the entire theoretical description which they offer (306-09) to appreciate their argument fully.

can it be the subject of *faith* . . . (for) there is, in the last resort, no other authority than personal, inner experience."⁵⁶ This description of the "post-Christian" mindset raises at least two derivative questions: (1) In the modern world, is there really a sizeable population embracing such a Gnostic epistemology? (2) Is the LDS gospel likely to appeal to such people?

In response to the first question, Houtman and Aupers draw upon the World Values Survey for 14 Western countries (1981-2000) with a careful sample of more than 60,000 cases. By a complicated statistical process of cross-classifying survey respondents according to their answers on five questions, the authors identified a sub-sample that could be considered neither traditionally Christian nor rationally secularist in orientation. Between 15% and 40% of this sub sample believes in life after death and in a life force or spirit, rejects atheism, and yet has but little confidence in traditional Churches and denominations to meet people's spiritual needs.⁵⁷ It is this population, neither traditionally religious nor secular, that the authors consider "detraditionalized" and "post-Christian." These people have not rejected religion *per se* but have relocated the sacred from religious institutions to an immanent spiritual force residing deep within oneself. The authors find, furthermore, that this spiritual orientation has actually been spreading in recent decades, particularly among the younger and better educated, and most notably among the inhabitants of France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Sweden.⁵⁸

At first glance, this post-Christian segment of the population in Europe might not seem a very promising "market niche" in which Mormonism would have any appeal. The LDS Church, after all, makes

⁵⁶ W. J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden, Brill: 1995, 519), as quoted in Houtman and Aupers (italics in the original).

⁵⁷ Houtman and Aupers, "Spiritual Turn," 310-313.

⁵⁸ *ibid.* 313-316. Though this "post-Christian" orientation is sometimes subsumed under "New Age" spirituality, the authors also point out that the former has a more coherent, socialized, and less atomized quality than the fragmented variety of New Age thinking in general (306-07, 316-17).

claims about objective, transcendent truths which are outside the individual and available for individuals to discover for themselves through the promptings of the Holy Spirit. That does not seem quite like relying on the immanent divinity within oneself for discovering one's own path to truth and meaning. On the other hand, Mormonism has always encouraged a certain dependence on "personal revelation" in seeking the divine will, and this ideal has co-existed in some tension with a methodology of linear, deductive apologetics in quest of universal truths.⁵⁹ In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, LDS preaching, proselyting, and pulpit discourse relied heavily on rationalistic Biblical arguments. Missionaries not only used such an approach in open public meetings and in the private homes of potential converts, but they distributed thousands of pamphlets or "tracts" based on such propositional arguments. In more recent decades, however, LDS preaching and proselyting have increasingly emphasized feelings over reason as the means of validating the truth-claims of the Church.⁶⁰ Moroni 10:4-5 in the Book of Mormon is understood primarily as a call for members and investigators to rely on the spiritual promptings that they feel when they pray for confirmation of the authenticity of LDS teachings and of the Book of Mormon in particular.

Mormons, of course, understand the promptings of the Holy Spirit to come from outside the individual, but there is no obvious distinction between internal and external origins of feelings in such matters. Both missionaries and their investigators are taught that "(i)n answer to our prayers, the Holy Ghost will teach us truth through our

⁵⁹ This is one of the themes prominent in Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), articulated especially in Chapter 2.

⁶⁰ Elsewhere I have pointed to evidence that the LDS membership in recent decades has found greater salience in subjective, affective evidence (feelings), with less reliance on rationalistic discourse. See my *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (University of Illinois Press, 1994), 146; and my "Feelings, Faith, and Folkways: A Personal Essay on Mormon Popular Culture," 23-38 in Robert A. Rees, ed., *"Proving Contraries": A Collection of Writings in Honor of Eugene England* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005).

feelings and thoughts. (These feelings) are powerful, but they are also usually gentle and quiet.”⁶¹ Yet Mormonism does not hold that *all* spiritual experiences come externally from the Holy Spirit: Some originate from a person’s *own inner promptings* called the “light of Christ.” This is an impersonal force that “giveth light to every man that cometh into the world” (D & C 84:46), “which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space . . .” (D & C 88:12). As Elder Packer explains, “A teacher of gospel truths is not planting something foreign or even new . . . Rather, the missionary or teacher is making contact with the Spirit of Christ *already there*. The gospel will have a familiar ‘ring’ to [an open-minded investigator].”⁶²

So we have the discovery of a “detraditionalized” population in modern secular Europe, dubbed “post-Christian” by Houtman and Aupers, because of its belief in an immanent divine power deep within each individual; and then we have a description in LDS scriptures of a divine light given at birth to every individual. Are these essentially the same powers or attributes? Such is, of course, a theological question, not an empirical one. What is important for purposes of the present discussion, however, is *not* whether either or both of these immanent qualities can be *empirically* demonstrated, but rather whether there is a segment of the modern post-Christian population that believes in such attributes *and might be attracted* precisely by the *non-traditional* nature of Mormonism. If so, such people will seek to authenticate LDS claims by resort to their own internal promptings, whatever these are called, and they will find increasing validation for their efforts as they associate with members of the LDS religious community, who are taught to recognize the “light of Christ” and the Holy Spirit in personal revelation. Such personal, subjective conversions, however, will not prove durable without some eventual support from the more rationalistic tradition in LDS discourse and teaching.

Houtman and Aupers reject the claim by such scholars as Steve Bruce that the radical individualism, fragmentation, and diffuseness of

⁶¹ Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service (cited earlier), 39.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 90. Italics added.

“New Age” spiritual believers militates against their socialization into any kind of community. At the very least, such participants in new spiritual *milieus* will socialize each other in the quest for personal authenticity.⁶³ In other words, post-Christian spiritual experiences can be “socially constructed because people are socialized into a spiritual discourse about the self” – which, in Mormon parlance, might be rephrased as discourse about “gaining a personal testimony.”⁶⁴ Ultimately, only time will tell whether there is a segment of post-Christian believers that will constitute a promising niche for Mormon proselyting in the emerging religious market of modern Europe. It need not be a very large niche to be important. After all, the 19th-century niche where Mormonism took root in England, Scandinavia, and Germany was not large in absolute terms, but it produced half of the entire LDS membership by 1880.

CHANGING PROSPECTS FOR THE LDS POSITION IN EUROPE

Even if the secularization of Europe has produced a “detraditionalized,” post-Christian niche holding some promise for the “marketing” of the LDS faith, there remains the serious question of whether the Church as a *corporate institution* is in a position to appeal to that niche. It is apparent from the political and cultural conditions described earlier in this essay that the LDS Church retains a public image which places it at a serious disadvantage in the European religious marketplace. There is, of course, more than one way to portray the position of the LDS Church in the world. However, the context I find most useful and revealing is one that I have borrowed from contemporary American sociologists and economists who study religion.⁶⁵ As it has evolved over the past two decades, it has come to be called the “reli-

⁶³ Houtman and Aupers, “Spiritual Turn,” 316-17.

⁶⁴ I recognize the conjectural nature of the parallel that I am drawing here between LDS and “post-Christian” spiritual orientations. Ultimately there is no way to determine the validity of such a parallel. I can only leave it to the reader to judge whether or not I have reached too far.

⁶⁵ See the earlier application in my “Mormonism in the Twenty-First Century: Marketing for Miracles,” *Dialogue* 29(1):236-49 (Spring 1996).

gious economy model.”⁶⁶ This model postulates that the *potential* for a “religious market” is universal, since every society, implicitly or explicitly, holds out to its members the promise of happiness or fulfillment or success (however defined), contingent upon conformity to that society’s basic values and norms. Yet, it is inherent in the nature of human experience that no society “delivers” adequately on its promises to all or even most of its members.

It is from this gap between the ideal and the real that the market arises for the *other-worldly* products of religion (and a number of other markets, as well). The *main* products of the religion market are *supernatural*; the “goods” in this market are covenants or promises – certificates, as it were – available in this world but *redeemable* only in the *next* world. Because this redemption of “certificates” takes place at some future time, it must be accepted on faith in claims that are “unfalsifiable” – cannot be either proven or disproven – in the here and now. This means that each individual must make periodic cost-benefit assessments, the outcome of which will determine whether s/he continues to prefer products from the same religious firm or not.⁶⁷ Because this process for each individual is rationalistic, this theory is akin to so-called “rational choice” theories in contemporary economics, sociology, and political science.

In this religious economy model, the LDS Church is likened to an industrial and commercial corporation, with the corporate headquarters in Salt Lake City.⁶⁸ Like other corporations, the Church not only designs and produces certain products but also directs a worldwide marketing program intended to recruit a clientele of long-term custom-

⁶⁶ The fullest and most recent presentation of this model will be found in Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith*, cited earlier, Chapters 2, 4, and 5.

⁶⁷ This not so different from what people do in life more generally. We all put our faith in some unfalsifiable promises about future happiness or prosperity even in this world.

⁶⁸ Whether one takes this conceptualization literally or only analogically will probably depend on one’s appreciation, or lack of it, for the world of commerce!

ers who will continue to prefer its products over those of its competitors. Such a conceptualization encourages us to analyze the nature and appeal of the Church's products in various *niches* of the world market, and to see how the "packaging" of its products might need to be different for these different niches. Our attention is drawn also to the nature of the competition: In the U. S., we are used to seeing competition from other religious "firms" or organizations that are also in the business of marketing other-worldly products. Europe is different, however, according to the conventional wisdom, for the religious market is limited to that marginal fringe or lower tier of so-called "sects." Otherwise, there is no real competition in a highly secularized culture of moribund religious traditions sustained by the state.

This situation in Europe presents a challenge not only to the LDS Church but also to the religious economy paradigm that has emerged recently in the American sociology of religion.⁶⁹ According to this new paradigm, secularization is inherently a *self-limiting* process, for no matter how much comfort and security societies can deliver in this world, *fulfillment and contentment* must ultimately come from an *other-worldly* system of meaning that is not susceptible to the periodic setbacks, disappointments, and disasters that have always punctuated human experience. Theoretically, the more secular a society becomes, and the longer it has been undergoing secularization, the greater the proportion of its population that should be in the market for other-worldly meaning systems.⁷⁰ Of course, these other-worldly products *need* not, and often *do* not, come only from organized religion, which is in competition also with astrology, magic, and many other claimants to an ultimate reality.

⁶⁹ Defined as a "new paradigm" by R. Stephen Warner, "Work in Progress toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States," *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (1993): 1044-93.

⁷⁰ To the extent that this theory implies the rise and fall of secularized cultures, it parallels, interestingly enough, the cyclical theory underlying the historiography of the Bible and of the Book of Mormon.

The proponents of this new paradigm have long recognized that for the religious market to operate in this idealized way, it must be mostly free of constitutional constraints. *Regulation* of the religious market by state agencies or public interest groups can be expected to have the same effect as regulation has in other markets. Constraining market access for certain religious communities, or relegating them to a marginal niche, will not only place artificial barriers on their growth and development, but it will also tend to undermine the integrity even of the favored religious traditions, leaving them lazy and flabby and unable to compete if and when regulations of the market eventually erode in favor of real competition. Furthermore, when market constraints are finally removed, brand new religious firms can be expected to spring up, especially those of an unconventional or "fringe" kind. The general effect will be to increase the *total volume* of "customers" in the religious market as a whole, just as in any other market, according to "supply-side" economists. Certainly this has been the case in the recent history of religion in Latin America. The short-term and long-term consequences of market regulation, then, can be summed up in the following five propositions:⁷¹

1. If government regulation of religious markets suppresses competition, the authorized religious groups will make little effort to attract rank-and-file support or to meet religious "demand."
2. Moreover, the authorized Churches will tend to be controlled and staffed by careerists, who are often quite lacking in religious motivation.
3. The net result will be widespread public religious alienation and apathy.
4. In addition, lacking effective religious socialization and congregational support, religious beliefs will become tentative, vague, and somewhat eclectic.

⁷¹ Quoted directly from Introvigne and Stark, "Religious Competition and Revival in Italy," 2 (cited at the beginning of this paper).

5. However, deregulation will (at least eventually) produce a religious revival. As religious organizations begin to compete for public support, participation in organized faiths will rise, and religious beliefs will become more clearly defined and widely held.

One implication of that fifth proposition is that if and when conventional religious organizations revive and become more aggressive in the market, the newer, unconventional religions will be harder to sustain.⁷² Because the religious market in the U.S. has always had plenty of active conventional religions, the unconventional ones, such as the Mormons, have found it difficult to compete without becoming more “conventional,” as they did during the 20th century. In Europe, by contrast, since the conventional religions remain weak, the unconventional ones are actually more prevalent and noticeable than in the U. S. – or at least they seem so, given the amount of official animosity and “anti-cult” activity in Europe. In this difficult market, Mormonism will have to compete with many other unconventional or marginal religions, but its prospects for an increased market share against other religions will be directly tied the success of lawyers, public affairs experts, and scholars in combating the defamation and fear-mongering generated by the political establishments in much of Europe.

To be sure, this new paradigm has had its adherents and its critics, both in the U.S. and in Europe.⁷³ Its European critics, in particular, have pointed out that it has been derived mainly from the American historical experience and ideologies, with reference particularly to the market metaphor and to the notion of secularization as inherently self-limiting. Furthermore, although unconventional or “fringy” new religions in Europe might be numerous, their combined

⁷² Introvigne and Stark, “Religious Competition,” 8.

⁷³ Critics have most notably included Steve Bruce from the UK, Karel Dobelaere from Belgium, and Frank Lechner, writing on the Netherlands. Stark offered a rather stern rebuttal to these critics in his “Secularization, R. I. P.,” *Sociology of Religion* 60:249-73 (1999), updated as Chapter Three in Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, cited earlier.

membership remains very small. Much of the argument between American proponents and European opponents of this theory has to do with what counts as data or evidence, and with how “secular” Europeans really are as *individuals*. Given the general social, political, and ideological climate prevailing in most of Europe today, it might be difficult to see a large potential market for the products offered by the LDS “firm,” or by any other religion that demands costly investments of time, energy, wealth, and self-discipline in exchange for covenants and promises to be redeemed in the next world. Of course, only time can tell about the long-term efficacy of *any* investments and commitments – whether made for rewards in this world or for rewards in the next. The various supposed “guarantees” of ultimate security and happiness in *this* world are scarcely more reliable than the promises of ultimate salvation in the next. Both kinds of rewards are “products” that must be “sold” to more or less willing consumers, who accept them on faith in the future.

So what evidence have we that government regulation of religion is holding back a demand for other-worldly products that might be building up in Europe, either despite or because of the prevailing secular environment? One indication comes from a 2007 article in the *Wall Street Journal* by a Stockholm-based journalist, who finds various unexpected outbreaks of religious sentiment and “upstart Churches” in Sweden and other supposedly “secular” countries, precisely for the reasons postulated in the new paradigm outlined above.⁷⁴ Introvigne and Stark too offer a variety of evidence from various European countries to claim an inverse relation between religious participation and government regulation in any given society. Their showcase example, though, is Italy.⁷⁵ After 1947, all religions in Italy were supposedly equal before

⁷⁴ Andrew Higgins, “In Europe, God Is (not) Dead.” *Wall Street Journal*, July 14, 2007, A-1. Indeed, Higgins explicitly quotes Stark and others. This article appeared just after I had finished the original draft of the present paper. I am grateful to Dr. Hafen for bringing it to my attention.

⁷⁵ Introvigne and Stark, “Religious Competition and Revival in Italy . . .,” cited earlier. Stark has previously offered various recent examples, from his own work and from that of other scholars, to argue that the total religious activity in a given society is inversely related to the extent and severity of gov-

the law, but a series of Christian Democrat governments had always shown favoritism to the dominant Catholic religion. After Vatican Council II, however, and especially after the erosion of Christian Democrat political dominance in the 1980s and 1990s, the government entered into a series of new *concordats* with various religious communities, starting with the Vatican in 1984. Since then, Catholic priests have no longer drawn their salaries from the state.

However, the public still pays an amount of 0.8% of their total tax for purposes designated by law as “humanitarian or religious.” Taxpayers may direct their respective portions to the religious communities of their choice, which *need not be their own* religious communities; or they may opt to leave the allocation to the discretion of the government for a “general humanitarian” purpose. Baptists, among others, have declined to accept their designated portion of the allocation. What’s most interesting about this process is that it sets up an *annual competition* among the several religious communities, complete with professional ad campaigns, to attract these designated taxes from any and all of the tax payers without regard to what their actual Church memberships might be. Given that 89% of the Italian population claims to be “religious” (though only 40% are involved Church members), the designated Church tax has been going disproportionately to *non-Catholic* denominations.⁷⁶

This semi-deregulation process in Italy has opened up much more space for new Evangelical and Pentecostal groups, as well as for a growing number of so-called “para-Churches” (e. g. Campus Crusade) and for totally new religious movements (NRMs), which in Italy do not face a significant “anti-cult” campaign as in France or Belgium. So far, these non-Catholic bodies remain small, though by 2001 there were 120 independent Evangelical or Pentecostal groups and some 350 unconventional new religious movements. A major reason that the

ernment regulation. See Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith* (cited above), Chapter 9. Some of those examples are cited again in this essay on Italy.

⁷⁶ Introvigne and Stark, “Religious Competition,” 5-10. The figures on religious commitment come from the 1999 European Values Survey.

Protestants and NRMs are not growing faster is because of increased competition from a resurgent Catholicism, which itself is undergoing a certain amount of *internal* competition from segments such as *Opus Dei* and the Catholic Charismatic movement. Those claiming to be “active” Catholics rose from 33% in 1981 to 38% in 1999. In other words, deregulation has not only encouraged the rise and development of various competing religions, but Italy has actually become *even more Catholic* as a result, supporting the claim of Stark and others that deregulation brings an increase in the *total* amount of religious activity, not just in the number of new religions.⁷⁷

Finally, survey data show a general increase among Italians, across roughly two decades (1981 – 1999), in religious belief and participation: Those believing in life after death increased from 44% of the population to 59%; those believing in hell rose from 33% to 49%; those claiming to pray with some regularity went from 71% to 79%; and weekly Church attendance from 32% to 40%. Interestingly enough, these figures for the general population were replicated, for the most part, among those between 18 and 29 years of age (though with somewhat smaller figures). The authors go on to cite several other recent studies by scholars in Italy which have also shown a generally upward thrust in religiosity among Italians.⁷⁸ Nor is Italy unique in such trends. The Bertelsmann Foundation, a non-profit research firm doing periodic surveys in Europe, recently found that most Germans and Swiss, for example, claim to be “religious,” and that more than a fifth of respondents in each of those countries actually claimed “deep religious convictions.” These generalizations are qualified importantly by noting that such claims come disproportionately from women, youth, and Roman Catholics, and that “religious convictions” don’t necessarily mean regular Church attendance or *traditional* convictions. Yet, neither do such findings bespeak a shrinking religious market in Europe.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Introvigne and Stark, “Religious Competition,” 10-13.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* page 13.

⁷⁹ See www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de, especially the *Religion and Society* link. Some results from this foundation’s 2007 *Religion Monitor* survey of some

Let me be clear about the contentions of this essay so far: I am not claiming to have demonstrated (1) that secularization (however defined) has reached its limits in Europe and is now in decline; or (2) that deregulation of the religious market in Europe has been rolled back enough to permit a major religious resurgence there; or (3) that a new and extensive “post-Christian” religious consciousness has arisen in Europe that will provide a fertile niche for rapid LDS growth. These three propositions would all require far more empirical evidence than I can adduce here. They are also developments that could occur independently of each other without any necessary causal relationships among them. Furthermore, even to the extent that they are occurring, they might be *necessary* conditions, but would not be *sufficient* conditions, for a new “second harvest” of the Church in Europe. Nevertheless, if they are considered in light of the general theoretical framework proposed here, they do seem to offer at least the prospects for a brighter Mormon future in Europe. But much remains yet to be done.

LDS EFFORTS TO REDUCE MARKET REGULATIONS IN EUROPE

It is not well known among the American Saints, though it might be better known elsewhere, that the LDS Church itself has been actively involved in political, legal, and diplomatic efforts to reduce restraints on the religious market all over Europe. This is not a new development, for the Church has had an effective international diplomatic program for decades. One need only recall the work of David M. Kennedy, of the international research center at BYU that bears his name, who was appointed by President Kimball in 1974 as a special envoy from the First Presidency to various governments, a post that he occupied until 1990.⁸⁰ Among his many accomplishments was gaining

21,000 European respondents are reported in WorldWide Religions News (WWRN) for 17 December 2007. See <http://wwrn.org/article.php?idd=27206>. I am grateful to Dr. O. James Stevens for calling these sources to my attention.

⁸⁰ See Kennedy's biography by Martin B. Hickman, *David Matthew Kennedy: Banker, Statesman, Churchman* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), especially

access for the Church and its members in Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe to certain new opportunities, including the building of the temple in Freiberg, then East Germany (GDR), in 1985.⁸¹

More recently, the International Center for Law and Religion Studies (ICLRS) has been established at the J. Reuben Clark School of Law at BYU, directed by Dr. W. Cole Durham Jr. This Center describes its mission as working “with scholars, government leaders, nongovernmental groups, and religious organizations from a variety of countries and faith traditions, to promote religious liberty and study the relations between governments and religious organizations.”⁸² The work of this center is supplemented by a few skilled senior couples serving special missions and based in certain strategic locations such as Brussels and Geneva. Led by the globe-trotting Dr. Durham, this entire effort is devoted to reducing formal restrictions on religious activity and associations of all kinds, not just on the LDS, and improving the image of the Church and its members among the general public in every country. To use the language of the religious economy model again, all such efforts are aimed at *reducing the costs of membership* by improving the public image and legal status of the Church in the various countries.

Although based at BYU, the work of this International Center is multi-faceted and worldwide. It includes active participation in numerous conferences on religious regulation and freedom; cooperative projects with other centers having similar missions, such as CESNUR (Center for the Study of New Religions) based in Turin, and the Center for Human Rights at the University of Oslo; communications and ne-

Chapter 19. Kennedy had been U. S. Secretary of the Treasury and Ambassador at Large under President Nixon.

⁸¹ It must be emphasized that both President Henry J. Burkhardt of the Dresden Mission, and President Thomas S. Monson of the First Presidency, were also important players in the drama that eventuated in the construction of this temple. See articles by Raymond M. Kuehne, “The Freiberg Temple: An Unexpected Legacy of a Communist State and a Faithful People,” *Dialogue* 37(2):95-131 (Summer 2004); and “How Missionaries Entered East Germany: The 1988 Monson-Honecker Meeting,” *Dialogue* 39(4):107-37 (Winter 2006).

⁸² See statement on this Center’s website at www.iclrs.org.

gotiations with various governments, including occasional filings of *amicus* briefs, over issues such as legal status and privileges for various religious communities; and teaching courses in various universities and law schools on all such matters. For example, in 2007 Dr. Durham worked jointly with a colleague at the University of Oslo to prepare academic materials for a graduate course in religious freedom and comparative constitutional law – to be taught in Indonesia! Durham also spent a month teaching a course on similar topics at the Central European University in Budapest. At BYU itself, there is an ongoing program of summer fellowships to provide students with expertise in these legal and constitutional issues, after which they are stationed as “interns” at various locations to gain practical experience along with their academic training.

The periodic ICLRS symposia at BYU for the past dozen years have been especially impressive, for they have cumulatively involved hundreds of scholars and government ministers of religious affairs, among others, out of nearly every country imaginable from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe (to speak alphabetically, not geographically)! China, Russia, and Eastern Europe have been especially strongly represented; no doubt a deliberate strategy in the Center’s selection process. Among the participants in these symposia have been the Austrian justice of the European Court on Human Rights; the head of Belgium’s “Advisory Centre on Harmful Sectarian Organizations;” the chief justice of the Norwegian Supreme Court; various law professors; and several sociologists, including some well known to me, such as James Richardson at the University of Nevada and Eileen Barker at the London School of Economics. In looking over the entire list of past participants, one is struck by the obvious effort to establish relationships with government ministers and advisors likely to come bearing considerable prejudice. One hopes and assumes that they return home from these symposia

somewhat less prejudiced against the cause of religious freedom generally and the LDS religion in particular.⁸³

Yet, as effective as this Center at BYU clearly is, its efforts must be limited to the “softening up” process – to building friendships, to persuasion, remonstrance, advice, teaching, and setting good examples. It has no formal power, and it is not a political pressure group. For more direct and strenuous efforts, the Church must find its support from local Saints and friends with expertise in law, in public relations, and in lobbying. Some such experts are found in Area offices and in the various European stakes. Most of them are local Europeans, though some are special missionaries. Along with the constitutional changes promoted by the European Convention (and Court) on Human Rights in recent decades, discussed earlier, these efforts by hard-working European Latter-day Saints have helped greatly to create enough political space that the Church in most of Western Europe enjoys a level of legal recognition that is adequate for most purposes, though still not ideal. Its legal status still needs to be consolidated so that it will truly enjoy the rights and privileges accorded to the “recognized” religious organizations. Even though the Church can operate as a legal entity and carry on its program openly in most countries, to the general public, and to much of the officialdom, it is still treated as an obscure sect or “cult.”⁸⁴

In Eastern Europe, the situation is even less favorable : Certain restrictions remain against the LDS Church and the other newer religions, despite the provisions of the ECHR and the OSCE, which most countries of Eastern Europe have ostensibly either joined or aspired to

⁸³ This brief overview of the activities, past and current, of the BYU Center for International Law and Religion Studies has been taken from its website and recent Newsletters, q. v.

⁸⁴ Kim B. Östman has provided a fascinating review of the struggle of the LDS media in Finland with different segments of the print media there to define the image of the Church during the weeks prior to the dedication of the Helsinki Temple in 2006. See his “‘The Other’ in the Limelight: One Perspective on the Publicity Surrounding the New LDS Temple in Finland,” *Dialogue* 49(4):71-106 (Winter 2007).

join.⁸⁵ Some of these restrictions derive simply from the traditional Catholic and Orthodox outlooks on religion common to central and Eastern Europe, which have been embodied in the so-called “Austrian model” for implementing the ECHR. Serbia and Romania, for example, have recently adopted that model, which *permits* state discrimination in favor of the traditional religions, as well as restrictions upon unconventional and “foreign” religions.⁸⁶ Of course, whatever the laws of the various countries might provide, many restrictions also take the form of deliberate administrative delays, evasions, and even extra-legal intimidations.⁸⁷ Even in those cases, however, the Church’s efforts have sometimes prevailed through the work of Dr. Durham, of friendly local scholars and officials he has cultivated, of skilled legal counsel based in the Area Office, and of local LDS public affairs people. For example, after years of groundwork, in October, 2006, the Church finally got legal recognition for the first time in Slovakia. It wasn’t easy. Slovakian law required supportive petitions containing at least 20,000 valid signatures to be collected and submitted to the government within a ten-day period. This feat was accomplished with the help of the 70 LDS missionaries from the neighboring Czech Republic.

In another emerging eastern nation, Moldova, gaining legal status also required some political pressure from LDS legal counsel in Europe. For a while LDS missionaries had been permitted there unofficially, but a change of government brought a crack-down with some harassment, and the missionaries were soon ordered to leave. The Church filed for legal recognition more than once according to the pre-

⁸⁵ See Durham, “Re-Evaluating Foreign Evaluations,” cited above, which deals mainly with the situation in Russia and Eastern Europe.

⁸⁶ See various reports on Eastern Europe in the archives, www.forum18.org, during the first half of 2006. Forum 18, based in Oslo, promotes religious freedom throughout the world. Its regular news reports provide an ongoing record of gains and losses for religious freedom in various countries.

⁸⁷ A number of such instances were provided me in a personal communication of January 14, 2008, from George K. Jarvis, who was LDS mission president over Romania and Moldova during 1999-2002, and since then has been stationed with his wife in Geneva under auspices of the BYU Kennedy Center, the BYU CLRS, and the LDS General Counsel.

scribed procedure, but the government remained unresponsive. Then the Church filed suit and won favorable verdicts at successive levels of the Moldovan court system, but the government still failed to comply. Finally, five LDS members of the U. S. Senate sent a letter to the Moldovan President reminding him of the commitments his country had made under the new European legal framework for religious freedom, and he finally complied. And so it has been going, and will continue to go for some time, as the Church continues its struggle to increase its public presence and respectability in Europe and to reduce the costs of membership among its faithful adherents.⁸⁸

However, both the Moldovan example and the Italian situation (discussed earlier) present a public relations dilemma for the Church. In Moldova, the good news is that the Church was able to get five U. S. Senators to intervene to achieve the desired effect. But that is also the bad news, for it strengthens the perception that the Church in that country (and perhaps neighboring countries as well) is essentially an American Church, backed by the U. S. government, which is not likely to facilitate its acceptance as an authentic part of the Moldovan religious landscape. Meanwhile, in Italy, the LDS Church has applied for legal recognition under the new Italian system, but the Parliament has not yet approved this *intese*, as it is called.⁸⁹ LDS opinion in Italy is mixed as to how long the approval might take, but whenever it comes, the Church will be faced with the question of whether or not to accept its fair share of the *otto mille* tax. On the one hand, if the Church accepts the tax money, it will be violating its usual policy of remaining entirely independent of government funding. On the other hand, if it rejects the tax money, it is likely to be seen as deliberately opting out of "legitimate" Italian religious life, as though it is just another big, rich American outfit whose members don't need their share of community funds, given their connection to this "foreign" institution. Such are the

⁸⁸ Both the Slovakian and the Moldovan situations were described to me in communications from a spokesman in the Europe Central Area office.

⁸⁹ See Peggy Fletcher Stack, "LDS Church Wants to be Official in Italy." *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 9, 2000.

dilemmas encountered even when the Church gains some success in trying to reduce the costs of membership for its European Saints!⁹⁰

V. ADAPTING THE CHURCH TO THE EUROPEAN SETTING

Some of the costs of membership borne by the Saints outside the United States, including those in Europe, are unintentionally imposed by the Church itself as an essentially American organization. In countless ways, some subtle and some not so subtle, the Church gives expression to American cultural preferences and even to American interpretations of certain traditional teachings. Unlike the European legal arena that I have just discussed, the Church arena is one over which the Saints and leaders themselves have the ultimate power, through the process of revelation, to decide how the Church program should be adapted to the culture and traditions of each society. In making these adaptations, the Church, both at headquarters and through its leaders in each country, will be able to reduce the cost and enhance the appeal of membership *only* to the extent that local members and investigators can visualize how the Church program can be implemented or adapted in their lives - and without unduly increasing the *cultural tension* between themselves and their local families, friends, employers, and familiar traditions. Or, to resort again to the language of economists, members and investigators need to be able to see how they can “buy into” the Church program with a minimal loss or expenditure of the “cultural capital” that they have already accumulated in their respective societies.⁹¹

This is by no means to advocate a *cost-free* religion, either in Europe or anywhere else. Contemporary social science theory would

⁹⁰ This information comes to me from Michael W. Homer, long an informed observer of LDS affairs in Italy and a close colleague of Massimo Introvigne of CESNUR (personal e-mail message, July 12, 2007). This is Mike’s interpretation of the LDS dilemma in the Italian situation. He has been advising LDS leaders there to accept the *otto mille* if and when it is offered. Apparently even the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the most apolitical of all new religions, have seen fit to do so.

⁹¹ This would include “*religious capital*.” See discussion in Stark & Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 120-25.

agree with President Hinckley that a religion commanding the loyalty and commitment of its adherents must "stand for something".⁹² Put another way, the Church must "protect its brand" – it must always strive to make sure that the world knows what it stands for, and how it is distinctive. Ever since Kanter's 1972 study of religious and other utopian societies, social scientists have understood that organizational demands for conformity and sacrifice function as "commitment mechanisms."⁹³ More recently, Lawrence Iannaccone and others associated with the "new paradigm" have argued similarly that truly strong and enduring religions are "strict" – that is, they make demands on their members.⁹⁴

Yet the nature and degree of strictness of those demands must be commensurate with the perceived benefits enjoyed by the adherents in a particular "market niche." If the demands are too strict, they will be counterproductive and will strain the bonds of customer loyalty. If they are not strict enough, they will invite "free riders," who, if they become too numerous, will demoralize the more committed and undermine the

⁹² "Standing for something" is a key concept in more than one of the president's sermons. For a book-length treatment, see Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing for Something: Ten Neglected Virtues That Will Heal Our Hearts and Homes* (New York: Random House/Three Rivers Press, 2000), with a Foreword by Mike Wallace. The ten virtues he discusses are not uniquely LDS virtues, of course, though in Part Two of the book he has a lot to say about LDS teachings and strictures about marriage and family.

⁹³ Rosabeth M. Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972. In somewhat different terminology, cognitive consistency theory makes the same claim; see Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957, the theoretical basis for which has been extensively critiqued and sustained for half a century.

⁹⁴ Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Why Strict Churches are Strong," *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (1994): 1180-1211. See also R. D. Perrin & A. L. Mauss, "Strictly Speaking . . . Kelley's Quandary and the Vineyard Christian Fellowship." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 32(2): 125-35 (1993).

long-term viability of a “firm” or organization.⁹⁵ Some demands arising from the standard policies and practices of the Church require much more sacrifice in Europe and elsewhere than in the United States and might require selective adaptations to make them feasible. Still other organizational demands (e. g., the Word of Wisdom for Latter-day Saints) mark important behavioral boundaries that can create some tension between the organization and its surrounding culture – which is actually functional as long as the tension is moderate or *optimal* for the niche in question: If the tension is too great, the religious organization will be stigmatized and persecuted. With minimal or no tension, however, the organization will lack distinctiveness, or a clear “brand” that can attract and hold adherents looking for something special.⁹⁶

From this theoretical viewpoint, then, the strategy of the LDS Church would be to advocate and enforce doctrines and practices that would represent not maximal but *optimal* strictness *within*, as well as *optimal cultural tension* with the *outside*. However, this is obviously not a matter in which “one size fits all;” for what is “optimal” in one market niche or cultural setting will not necessarily be optimal in another – a predicament that is difficult to manage in an organization guided by correlation, standardization, and centralized control. Elder Oaks, of the Twelve Apostles, has attempted to define a “gospel culture” that is separate and independent of any of the cultures of the world, because it derives from the LDS Plan of Salvation and informs the “values and expectations and practices common to all members of the Church”⁹⁷ Elder Richard P. Lindsay, while President of the Africa Area, was

⁹⁵ Laurence R. Iannaccone, “Sacrifice and Stigma: Reducing Free-Riding in Cults, Communes, and Other Collectives,” *Journal of Political Economy* 100(2):271-92 (1992).

⁹⁶ For a creative theoretical analysis of “strictness” in the American LDS Church, with special reference to “free riders,” see Michael McBride, “Club Mormon: Free-Riders, Monitoring, and Exclusion in the LDS Church,” *Rationality and Society* 19(4): 395-424 (2007).

⁹⁷ That Latter-day Saints should embrace a “gospel culture” in preference to national or worldly cultures is a recurrent theme in Elder Oaks’s sermons, whatever their main topics. See, e.g., his *Ensign* articles, “Give Thanks in All

quoted in a 1993 article with a somewhat more expansive definition of the gospel culture as “transcend(ing) all boundaries and barriers.” Yet, he adds: “Building a gospel culture doesn’t mean the denial of everything in our separate heritages, although we must keep the doctrine pure and be willing to change certain traditions that aren’t compatible with the gospel.”⁹⁸ A still more expansive view can be seen in an earlier article by Elder Charles Didier, who described the gospel culture as “a vast amalgam of all the positive aspects of our cultures, histories, customs, and languages. The building of the kingdom of God is such an amalgam, and is the only place where these different values may and can coexist” – that is, an “amalgam” rather than something “separate and independent” of all the world’s cultures.⁹⁹ This definition seems to leave more room for adaptations across cultures, but a precise and common definition of “gospel culture” has not yet been embraced by all Church leaders.

SELECTIVE ADAPTATION OF DOCTRINES

Obviously a major component in the gospel culture would be the official doctrines of the Church, a category that is not itself without some ambiguity. A recent “LDS Newsroom” release on the official Church website attempts a rather parsimonious definition of what constitutes official doctrine, including only what’s in the Standard Works, official declarations and proclamations, and the Articles of Faith.¹⁰⁰ The same Newsroom document contains the following *caveats*: 1) even from those official sources, isolated statements should not be taken out of

Things” (May 2003), and “Priesthood Authority in the Family and the Church” (November 2005). In the former, he describes the gospel culture as a culture of “commandments, covenants, ordinances, and blessings,” expressed, for example, by the principles in the Proclamation on the Family.

⁹⁸ R. Val Johnson, “South Africa: Land of Good Hope,” *Ensign*, February 1993, 33-34.

⁹⁹ Charles Didier, in response to “I Have a Question,” *Ensign*, June 1976, 62.

¹⁰⁰ See www.lds.org/ldsnewsroom, link to “Approaching Mormon Doctrine,” 4 May 2007. The same statement concedes that the Mormon vocabulary and terminology are different in some ways from those of other religions, sometimes creating misunderstandings.

context; 2) not every statement made by a Church leader, past or present, constitutes doctrine, but might be just a personal opinion; 3) some doctrines (such as the atonement of Christ) are core doctrines and are thus far more important than other doctrines (such as the precise location of the Garden of Eden); and 4) continuing revelation is intended to be relevant to the circumstances of a given age or period, so that teachings and practices of the Church are subject to modification across time. Back in 1994, in a somewhat less public setting, the First Presidency defined the following as “fundamental”: a faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the atonement and resurrection; the apostasy and restoration; the divine mission of Joseph Smith; continuous revelation; the plan of salvation; and the priesthood with its ordinances and covenants. Even this relatively short list, of course, leaves room for a certain amount of interpretation, but it probably corresponds pretty well to what the Newsroom release means by “core doctrines.”¹⁰¹

From these various official statements, and the observations of Elder Oaks and others, we can infer that his concept of a “gospel culture” is limited to a certain set of “commandments, covenants, ordinances, and blessings,” as noted above. Yet there will be an investment or cost in time, treasure, energy, and moral courage entailed for anyone in any culture who strives to act on even this limited definition of “gospel culture,” which itself will by no means seem to non-Christians – or even to many Christians – as culturally neutral. The gospel culture, then, will inevitably exact *some* cost for those who undertake to live the LDS way of life, the more so the more exotic that way of life seems in a given traditional culture. Can anything be done with the doctrines and policies of the Church that might mitigate this cost and thus improve member (customer) retention rate?

Probably not much can be done with the fundamental or “core” doctrines outlined above, if the LDS “brand” is to be protected, and it is doubtful that many of the Saints would welcome an erosion or

¹⁰¹ “Fundamental Principles,” a statement from the First Presidency at a meeting of the All-Church Coordinating Council, 26 April 1994. Copy on file among my papers in the archives of the Utah State Historical Society.

abandonment of any of those core doctrines. Douglas Davies has argued that a major appeal of the LDS Church is its program for “transcendence over death,” or (in more familiar LDS parlance) its “plan of salvation.”¹⁰² Seekers open to such supernatural explanations for the purpose of life, whether in traditionally Christian or other cultures, will continue to investigate the core LDS claims, so it would be a mistake to abandon or “water down” these major products of the LDS brand. Nor would such a strategy be likely to appeal to committed secularists, who tend to avoid the theological marketplace altogether. Since the “LDS Newsroom” statement about Mormon doctrine reminds members that not all doctrines are of equal importance, one strategy for reducing the costs of membership, it seems to me, would be to de-emphasize certain doctrines selectively, and emphasize others, when “marketing” the religion to peoples of different cultures.¹⁰³

I can well understand, for example, why many European Saints these days might prefer that visiting authorities and Church publications would leave in the background such traditional doctrines as the location of the Garden of Eden, the divine status of the U. S. Constitution, and the oft-repeated folk prophecy that someday the elders of the Church will have to save the Constitution. Such seeming “Americanisms” have nothing to do with “coming unto Christ” or with the covenants made as part of the proffered “plan of happiness” for all of God’s people. Even the designation of America as “a land choice above all other lands” in the Book of Mormon does not refer to the particular nation known as the United States of America. Not that there can be any doubt that historically (and perhaps even ontologically) the LDS Church is an American organization; but still, to the extent that any of these “Americanisms” are highlighted in LDS discourse, they imply invidious comparisons with European and other nations. This is bound

¹⁰² Douglas J. Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Co., Ltd, 2000). See especially Chapter 3.

¹⁰³ Elsewhere I have argued that LDS doctrines can quite easily be placed into four separate categories: canonical, official, authoritative, and folklore. See my “The Fading of the Pharaohs’ Curse,” *Dialogue* 14(3): 32-34 (Autumn 1981).

to exacerbate, not reduce, tension for European members, especially in an age when the foreign policy of the United States seems so troubling to Europeans and others.¹⁰⁴

Still more dubious are doctrines long taught by Utah leaders about the LDS people as uniquely “chosen,” not only for a special mission to the world in modern times, but also for a *special lineage assigned them in the pre-existence*, so that they could be born as literal Israelites, and particularly Ephraimites, in the 19th and 20th centuries.¹⁰⁵ Though lacking a canonical basis, these doctrines enjoyed widespread acceptance for a very long time, since they tended to favor the British and other north-western Europeans, from among whom most early Mormon converts had come. Such doctrines were also part of the same ideological framework that gave rise to restrictions on people of African ancestry and to the generally racist categorizations of humankind that have been common in both Europe and America for centuries. However valid it might have seemed to take such doctrines literally in the 19th century, contemporary LDS usage has been far more figurative or metaphorical, as were Paul’s original teachings to the Galatians. Yet, to the extent that contemporary American Saints and leaders insist on literal

¹⁰⁴ I am not in a position to estimate the frequency with which such Americanisms appear in European LDS literature or sermons. Anecdotally, several European Church members have mentioned this issue to me in conversations, but on the other hand, Elder Hafen, currently presiding in the Europe Central Area, told me that he had never encountered these Americanisms during many years of attendance at LDS sacrament meetings and conferences throughout Europe. George K. Jarvis (mentioned earlier) told me the same.

¹⁰⁵ This doctrine was advocated as recently as in the 1998 pamphlet by President Brewster cited in Note 2. According to Wilfried Decoo (personal communication, Dec. 2, 2007), the efforts by some local leaders (at least in the Netherlands) to effect a fulfillment of the prophecies about a “second harvest” among these modern European Israelites involved special pressures on the Saints to use certain proselyting tactics, along with specific promises of success with those tactics. When the promises were not fulfilled, a backlash of guilt and frustration occurred for a later mission president to deal with. Like so many other well intentioned but ill-advised proselyting tactics in 20th-century Church history, this one simply added an artificial and avoidable cost for faithful and compliant members.

understandings of invidious distinctions among peoples of different lineages, they will impose an unnecessary burden on the public image of the Church, thereby increasing the general costs of membership in Europe.¹⁰⁶

The recent modification of a certain phrase in an official Church document illustrates how easily a potentially troubling traditional doctrine might be set aside by minor textual changes. The document in question is the Introduction to the Book of Mormon bound with that book ever since 1981. Originally written by Elder Bruce R. McConkie, that Introduction contains a phrase describing the Lamanites in the Book of Mormon as “*the principal* ancestors of the American Indians;” but in a slightly revised version appearing for the first time in 2007, the corresponding passage now describes the Lamanites as “*among* the ancestors of the American Indians” (italics added).¹⁰⁷ Most Latter-day Saints, whether in Europe or anywhere else, probably paid little attention to this change in wording, but for the minority of members who have been paying attention to the scholarly literature on the Book of Mormon, the change is important.¹⁰⁸ Why? Because it relieves faithful scholars, apologists, and ordinary members of the need to defend the traditional belief that all the aboriginal peoples of the western hemisphere had descended from the small bands of

¹⁰⁶ This is, of course, a major theme in some of my earlier work, particularly in *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (University of Illinois Press, 2003).

¹⁰⁷ See www.lds.org >Newsroom link for 8 November 2007. See also two articles in the *Salt Lake Tribune* by Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Single Word Change in Book of Mormon Speaks Volumes” (8 November), and “The Book of Mormon: Minor Edit Stirs Major Ruckus” (9 November).

¹⁰⁸ Here I have reference to the controversies generated since 1980 by the work of FARMS, where scholars such as John L. Sorenson have advocated the “limited geography” argument that the entire Book of Mormon story probably took place within a radius of a few hundred miles in what is now southern Mexico; so that the overwhelming majority of aboriginal peoples in this hemisphere never were Lamanites. For an assessment of the implications of this controversy, see my *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (University of Illinois Press, 2003), Chapter 5.

Near Eastern Semites described in the Book of Mormon. A broader implication of the same change is that the Church now has no official doctrine describing *exactly* where the Book of Mormon story *did* take place, though some Western Hemisphere location is still the official understanding.

Many other examples of traditional teachings in the Church could also be cited in this connection, but perhaps these are enough to illustrate my main point that there are doctrinal issues outside the “core,” which the Church could review (and perhaps modify) to reduce some of the unnecessary costs of membership, especially in Europe.

LOCALIZING THE LDS PRESENCE

Aside from doctrinal issues, which, to be sure, can be quite sensitive, there are also many less sensitive issues that have implications for increasing or decreasing the costs of membership in the LDS Church. If the LDS religion is ever to become “normalized” in Europe – that is, to seem as though it really belongs, and is not just a foreign “cult,” it will have to be dressed as much as possible in the local garb of each nation – at least culturally and figuratively speaking. Actually, to some extent, this statement could even be taken literally, for the typical buttoned-down, dark suit, white shirt, and clean-shaven look, apparently *de rigueur* for priesthood leaders in every country, sends a mixed message about whether they are representatives of a local people or of an American corporate organization. In particular one wonders about the apparently official insistence on the clean-shaven look for stake presidents and other local priesthood leaders, especially in countries where beards are fairly common.¹⁰⁹ To be sure, though, there are far more important issues than dress and grooming in establishing an LDS presence, and in

¹⁰⁹ Choices and policies about dress and grooming tend to be guided by symbolic meanings that are culture-specific, and an exporting firm (in this case, an American Church) might not always be aware of the meanings conveyed to the local populace by the grooming standards of the Headquarters. On the other hand, such standards might carry a deliberately didactic function from Headquarters. The main thing is for all parties to understand the intended meanings.

many respects, Church leaders are already implementing changes that might help to “normalize” the LDS presence in European communities. Consider the following examples:

1) LDS leaders, male and female, are now typically local people, not only at the branch, ward, and stake levels, but also at the area level. Area Presidencies still tend to be sent mostly from Church Headquarters, on a rotating basis, but the time seems close that we will see Area Presidents themselves called from among the natives and permanent residents of European and other countries to serve indefinitely in such callings. As that occurs, these leaders will become the “faces” of the LDS Church in those countries, increasingly familiar to both members and non-members, somewhat like the resident prelates in the traditional Churches.¹¹⁰ The increasing proportions of non-Americans called to the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy seem to me to point in that direction. Of course, the paid employees of the Church in CES, Welfare, Translation, Facilities Management, and other roles have typically been locals for a long time. The same is true of those involved in Public Affairs for the Church at various levels.¹¹¹

2) Church leaders are striving to increase the “sense of ownership” that the Saints in various countries have toward Church publications. Of course, the translation of the Book of Mormon and other scriptures into various languages has been going on for a long time, and the same with hymnals to some extent. Yet the process of translation sometimes reflects competing interests between a Headquarters desire for staying as close as possible to literal renderings of the English originals and a local desire for a more colloquial and comfortable rendering – though even at the local level opinions will always be diverse.¹¹² The main Church magazine, *Ensign*, published in many lan-

¹¹⁰ A practice which can be a mixed blessing, of course, depending on the leadership skills and style of the long-term “resident prelate.”

¹¹¹ Of course, nothing bespeaks a permanent LDS presence as much as a temple, of which there are now ten in Europe, more than in the entire United States in 1950.

¹¹² See, for example, Van Beek’s account of his work on translation committees in the Netherlands, “Mormon Europeans or European Mormons” (cited

guages as *Liahona*, now contains a section of news about Church members in the various local countries. These inserted sections are produced, written, and edited by local members under the supervision of the Area Presidency. On the BCC “Blogsite” for June 9 of this year, both the UK edition and the Finland edition of the Church magazine received high marks from young LDS bloggers for such local coverage in their respective countries, hoping that they were seeing the beginning of a “decentralization” of Church supervision of such material “in favor of regional and local flavor” to help create “a Church identity less dependent on SLC.”¹¹³ General and Area authorities native to various local countries are already contributing to the official literature in those countries, as in the case of the article by President Patrick Kearon in the UK edition of the *Ensign* for June, 2007, but more might be done with articles that highlight the lives of faithful members and of key events in the LDS history of each country (in place of Utah’s Pioneer Day). Certainly the recently established LDS websites for the various languages and countries will also improve a feeling of connection to the Church for its far-flung members, though these sites are still in the early stages of development.

Beyond such official initiatives, translations of articles, or of collections of articles, from unofficial publications such as *BYU Studies*, *Dialogue* and the *Journal of Mormon History* also seem now in prospect. Bilingual LDS Church members with scholarly training and credentials

above), 20-22; and the account of the revisions of the Spanish hymnal in John-Charles Duffy and Hugo Olaiz, “Correlated Praise: The Development of the Spanish Hymnal,” *Dialogue* 35(2): 89-113 (Summer 2002). Interestingly enough, BYU Professor Roger R. Keller has raised the question of why LDS hymns even in non-Western countries should have to employ American LDS melodies, harmonies, and instruments. See his “India: A Synopsis of Cultural Challenges,” pages 87-90 in Douglas J. Davies, ed., *Mormon Identities in Transition* (London, UK: Cassell, 1996).

¹¹³ See www.bycommonconsent.com for June 9, 2007, followed by comments, some of which recognized the danger of “edgy theology” if there were too much “decentralization” but also pointed out that local “wackiness wardens” would not necessarily have to be in the headquarters of either the Church or the Area.

could assist greatly both in selecting material for translation into various European languages and in the translation process itself. Access to such publications in all the European languages would increase the sense of connection to the scholarly literature on Mormon culture, in addition to the official literature, among the European Saints of an intellectual bent.

Of course, literature from or about the Church for *internal* consumption, important as that is, will not help much to improve the LDS public image on the *outside*. There is a desperate need for reliable contemporary literature on the Church and the religion to be available to European journalists, scholars, and educators, preferably through their own local libraries. This need was brought starkly to my attention during 1999 when my wife and I visited a few local libraries in modest-sized cities and towns in the north of England. We were appalled at what the library patrons and local school children would have encountered in trying to study up on “the Mormons” in those towns. On returning to the United States, I reported on this situation to a friend in the leadership of the Seventy, who later notified me that “library kits” containing the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* and a number of standard “classics” by Talmage and others had recently been distributed to numerous libraries in all the English-speaking countries, as indeed they had been for years in the United States. I am reliably informed that a private group of members and returned missionaries, both in Utah and in Germany, are translating the *Encyclopedia* into German for posting on a private website. There are also a few, but very few, outlets from which the Saints in various countries can purchase Church-related books locally. One of these, serving German-speaking Saints, is *HLT Bücher* (LDS Books) located in Salzburg. These are promising developments, but bare beginnings.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ In January 2008, FAIR (Foundation for Apologetics Information and Research) began publishing its monthly e-journal in German. See <http://deutsch.fairlds.org/newsletter.php> and/or www.fairlds.org.

POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Every large, bureaucratic organization devises policies and practices which seem reasonable and efficient as applied to the organization in general but which produce unintended consequences and unexpected tensions up and down the various levels of the structure. I suspect that one of the constant sources of frustration for the American general authorities and officers of the LDS Church is trying to find adaptations of general policies and practices that will work in Europe, Asia, and everywhere else. If appropriate adaptations cannot be made, the demands of Church programs and policies often become too costly for the members to bear. Examples of individual cost-benefit dilemmas were mentioned early in this paper (e. g., Sabbath observance and semi-regular attendance). Any of the normal tensions over policies and practices in large organizations are simply exacerbated by cultural differences between the American headquarters and the local stakes. Again, a variety of instances might be cited in which expectations originating in Utah seem to clash with cultural preferences in Europe. Some of these have been discussed in the work of various scholars who are active members and leaders of the Church in Europe and in other countries.¹¹⁵ These clashes might arise from different political and economic traditions, or from differential cultural preferences in adapting the Church programs, or still others from the increasingly secularized and permissive local norms governing relationships between the sexes. For example, even though family law is very much in flux, both in Europe and in the U. S., the Church cannot be expected to accept homosexual relationships or even heterosexual cohabitation as normative.¹¹⁶ However, I can envision a policy that might recognize pre-conversion, long-term monogamous heterosexual relationships (i. e., “common law” marri-

¹¹⁵ See, for example, earlier citations to the work of Barber, Decoo, Newton, Numano, and Van Beek.

¹¹⁶ However, in some European countries, the Church’s legal status might well be jeopardized if it takes disciplinary action against members seeking homosexual marriages. This is a very “sticky wicket.”

es) for members who are otherwise living gospel standards and preparing for eventual temple marriages.¹¹⁷

One of the cultural differences that sometimes complicates relationships between American and European Latter-day Saints is the greater personal reserve and privacy expected in social interactions among Europeans. Thus traditional LDS practices such as home teaching and visiting teaching often come across as invasions of privacy or unwanted intrusions into the lives of members, especially those who are not very active in the Church.¹¹⁸ During the past few years, both the First Presidency and the European Area Presidencies have formally changed the home teaching policies in recognition *both* of this cultural sensitivity *and* of the practical difficulties in comprehensive home teaching where most of the membership is inactive in the Church, and most of the men fail to achieve the Melchizedek Priesthood. Accordingly, the latest policy calls for (1) limiting home teaching assignments to about five families or individuals for each pair of brethren willing to serve as home teachers; and then (2) assigning those home teachers in such a way as to give priority to (a) new members and (b) the most responsive among the less active, with (3) the use of missionaries to supplement the work of home teachers in both of those categories.¹¹⁹

This same basic cultural difference is greatly intensified when it is a non-member home being visited by uninvited Mormon missionaries doing their daily "tracting." This method of seeking investigators and potential converts has always rankled Europeans (and those in many other cultural settings as well), who are likely to resent being accosted by

¹¹⁷ The policy of requiring the lapse of a year between a civil and a temple marriage - a continuing irritant for non-Mormon relatives of American members - is not an issue in Europe, where all marriages must be "civil," and LDS temple marriages are not recognized.

¹¹⁸ Wilfried Decoo, "Feeding the Fleeing Flock," 115-16, is among those who have commented on this problem. Indeed, in this essay he offers a number of useful suggestions for adapting the Church program to the European cultural setting.

¹¹⁹ Such is the gist of the information provided me by the Europe Central Area office. These are not all new ideas, of course, but apparently they have been more widely implemented lately as formal policy.

strangers wishing to discuss something as private as religious beliefs, especially when they are disturbed in their own homes. Actually, tracting has for some years been given the lowest priority among proselyting methods, considered a last resort when missionaries can't find other ways to make promising contacts. While missionaries might always do some tracting from time to time, the Church has been seeking a variety of alternative methods for finding and teaching investigators in ways that do not require the "frontal assault" of knocking on their doors. Indeed, in some of the more affluent neighborhoods people live behind locked gates, making tracting impossible. In some European missions, the missionaries now depend mainly on a system of "unplanned finding," which consists of watching for unobtrusive opportunities to greet people and engage them in conversations in random locations, such as bus stops and buses, trains and train stations, stores, markets, street displays, sports events, and other random times and places. The missionaries are urged to seek at least ten such opportunities every day, and thus to remain in a "mode of constant finding." During each such conversation, the missionaries will hand out "pass-along cards" with engaging pictures, the phone number of the missionaries, the address of the nearest LDS chapel, and the Church website in the local language.¹²⁰

It has long been well known that the likelihood of an eventual baptism is greatly enhanced the more that local Church members themselves are involved in the teaching process, so the preferred missionary method has come to be teaching investigators in the presence of, and

¹²⁰ Opportunities for these kinds of contacts, and receptivity to a subsequent visit from missionaries are greatly enhanced whenever a new temple is dedicated in a country. My granddaughter, who returned in 2007 from a mission in Finland, continues to rave about the opportunities that were opened to her from the publicity surrounding the open-house and dedication of the Helsinki Temple in the fall of 2006 - about which Kim B. Östman has written cogently. See his "'The Other' in the Limelight: One Perspective on the Publicity Surrounding the New LDS Temple in Finland," cited earlier.

with the participation of, members of the Church whenever possible.¹²¹ Various procedures for involving the members are laid out in the new (2004) missionary publication, *Preach My Gospel* (cited earlier). In some of the newly opened countries, where the members are too few and too new to help much in this way, the missionaries fall back on another time-honored method, namely offering English classes to bring in potential investigators. At the beginning of each class, the missionaries explain their ultimate purpose in offering these classes, so that there are no false pretences. They indeed do a conscientious job of teaching English, but then invite those who might be interested in their religious message to remain after the class for further discussion.

Among the most recent and effective method for involving members in the missionary program is one that was “pilot-tested” in 2003, with the encouragement of two apostles, and finally implemented during the next two years in all of the stakes of the Europe Central Area, and perhaps in other areas as well. This method uses the CES classes with their Young Single Adults as “Institute Outreach Centers.” Under the ultimate direction of the local stake and mission presidents, these YSAs join with full-time missionaries to invite and bring young people of the same general age range (18 – 30) to local LDS Church buildings for Family Home Evenings, Institute classes, cultural and intellectual events, socials, and sports activities. Through these events, missionaries get many opportunities to teach young investigators in the chapels with YSA members present. So far the results of this program have been promising, not only in conversions but in retentions, for 80% of those converted through the Institute Outreach Centers are still active a year after baptism. Social scientists have long known that people in this transitional age range comprise the “demographic” most likely to be open to new ideas and experiences, including religious ones, so this

¹²¹ For a discussion of this matter by a well-known social scientists, see Rodney Stark, “Extracting Social Scientific Models from Mormon History,” *Journal of Mormon History* 25(1): 178-83 (Spring 1999), and Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge, “Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects,” *American Journal of Sociology* 85 (1980): 1376-95.

approach appears to be a very effective “marketing strategy” for reaching the most likely “customers.”

The same approach has had some derivative and secondary applications: It is now being used in an effort to reactivate some of the less active YSAs themselves, and it was introduced among teenage youth as well through “Especially for Youth” (EFY) programs in Sweden and Germany in 2006. There are signs that the youth of all ages who get involved in this kind of outreach to their peers not only give the missionary effort a big boost but also are themselves more likely to go on missions and remain active in the Church. Meanwhile, the YSAs who participate also provide role models that encourage the younger set in their stakes to aspire to enter missions, higher education, and temple marriages.¹²²

Every device attempted by the Church to reach non-members is likely to produce an ambiguous cost-benefit (or risk-benefit) assessment. Probably the most serious problem for the public image of the LDS Church is simply that so few people, especially outside the U. S., have ever even heard of the LDS Church, to say nothing of having been exposed to a reasonably competent and accurate explanation of what it stands for. Mere publicity, however massive in scale, is not a solution in the absence of quality control – as is apparent from the mixture of the sublime and the ridiculous stirred up about Mormonism by the Romney presidential campaign in the U. S. Yet the one-to-one approach through tracting, “unplanned finding,” or bringing young single adults to Institute gatherings, is a “slow and steady” method, which is unlikely to produce rapid Church growth. The involvement of faithful members in the proselyting process, whether in their homes or in YSA events, has the advantage of increasing their personal investment in that process, and in the Church program more generally, but it also carries the risk of an excessive cost for the members when leaders apply too much pressure to participate. For the LDS religion to come to seem somewhat more normal and natural as part of the European setting, and thus less

¹²² This information about the mobilization of YSAs comes from a spokesman in the Europe Central Area office.

stigmatizing for its members and investigators, will likely require another couple of generations of these kinds of slow and steady efforts.

VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have been concerned mainly with the *differential* cost of LDS membership in Europe compared to North America, with special reference to what the Church can do to reduce the costs of membership among the European Saints. I reviewed three conditions that seem to me especially important as sources of these membership costs: (1) the secularized and regulated cultural and political environment throughout Europe, in which the LDS Church must operate; (2) the special costs to European members, collectively and individually, from various cultural, legal, and even logistical burdens that American members rarely face; and (3) the energy and resources that European leaders and members have had to devote to the retention and recovery of inactive members - with poor prospects of reactivating the latter. I turned then to developments that hold out the prospect for significantly reducing membership costs in the years ahead, especially: (1) the creation of a market niche of well-educated young Europeans with a non-traditional spiritual orientation, as a side-effect of the secularization of the traditional European religions; (2) the extensive campaign being waged by the Church itself to reduce the regulation and stigmatization of the LDS and other newer religions in Europe; and (3) the potential for local adaptations of general Church doctrines, policies, and practices that will make Church activity less costly and more appealing for European members.

There are good reasons to be optimistic about the future of the Church in Europe. Old traditions and restrictions on new religions are breaking down. The religious market is stirring, and the LDS brand, with its innovative combination of the familiar and the novel, will find new "customers" in the younger generations. The Church now has experienced local leaders in place and enough organizational stability to maintain successful "franchises" in many wards and stakes. As an Area President put it to me, ". . . recent developments in Europe can give our . . . members an increased level of confidence about their own

membership in the Church here. One . . . challenge (for all of us) is that they deserve to have more confidence than some of them feel.” For my own part, I see a new cohort of general authorities emerging in their fifties and sixties (and younger) who have more experience than ever before in countries outside North America, are more often native to those countries, and are more sensitive than ever to the inappropriate intrusions of American culture into LDS Church life in other countries. I see them also as more open than in earlier generations to the counsel and advice of local Saints and leaders living in Europe and elsewhere, despite the strictures of “correlation.”

I see that openness extending also to the work of scholars in the field of Mormon Studies, especially during the past decade or so when President Hinckley has been at the head of the Church. As recently as November 2007, the official LDS news bureau issued a statement supporting academic Mormon Studies at secular universities and referencing President Hinckley himself for its authority. Citing recent academic conferences on Mormonism, this statement declares that “. . . the Church encourages a deeper and broader examination of its theology, history, and culture on an intellectual level . . . [and] open dialogue and conversation between the Latter-day Saints and various scholarly and religious communities . . . [in the belief that] Mormonism has a depth and breadth of substance that can hold up under academic scrutiny.”¹²³

Mormon Studies programs and courses are gaining traction at various locations in the United States, and the organization of the European Mormon Studies Association bodes well for similar academic developments in Europe. The intellectual ferment, which Islam and various new religions have brought to Europe in recent years, has generated a variety of regular scholarly conferences on religion there, most of them under very respectable auspices, such as CESNUR and INFORM.¹²⁴ If LDS scholars will present papers and join in the conver-

¹²³ See www.lds.org/ldsnewsroom for 2 November 2007.

¹²⁴ CESNUR = Center for Studies on New Religions, based in Torino. INFORM = Information Network Focus on Religious Movements, based at

sations at such conferences, "they can bring especially fresh perspectives rooted in their [own] LDS experience in Europe . . . [and the day] may come . . . when there will be courses in Mormon studies at universities across Europe"¹²⁵ That might seem a far-fetched prospect in 2007, but no more so than a similar projection about Mormon Studies in American academia would have been in 1957.

the London School of Economics. I consider these organizations "respectable" because they are run by scholars who reflect the modern consensus in the sociology of religion - namely, that new religious movements (or NRMs, pejoratively termed "cults" in the U. S.) cannot be distinguished from traditional religions on *scientific* grounds, but only on *political* grounds. That is, the NRMs are not considered legitimate by the political and religious establishments in a given society. Of course, CESNUR, INFORM, and cognate organizations are opposed by thriving "anti-cult" movements in Europe and in the U. S., which tend to include Mormons among the dangerous "cults" that they target. As an example of an anti-cult ministry, see the *Apologetics Index* (www.apologeticsindex.org), based in Amsterdam and operated by Anton and Janet Hein-Hudson and Ruud Hein. I am grateful to Wilfried Decoo for calling my attention to this website.

¹²⁵ Quoted from a personal communication received by the author June 5, 2007, from Dr. O. James Stevens, Brussels-based spokesman for LDS Public Affairs.