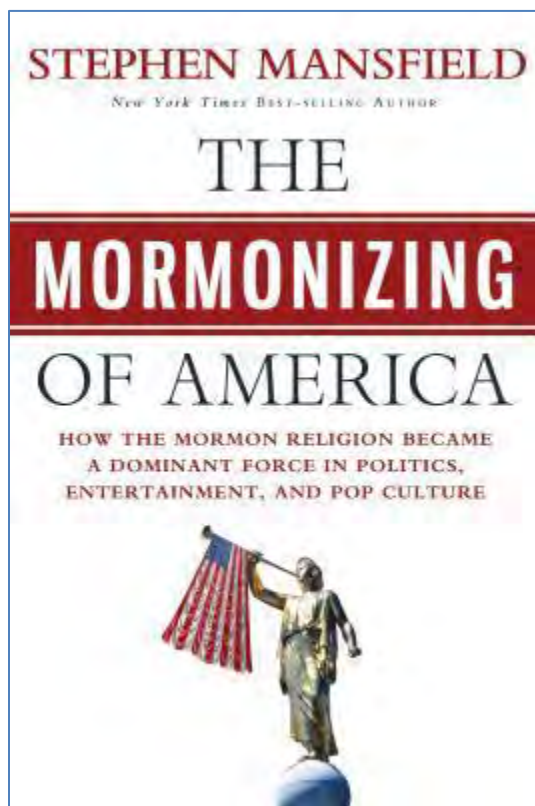


What the Unification Church can learn from the Mormons

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The cover of the book, *'The Mormonizing of America: How the Mormon Religion Became a Dominant Force in Politics, Entertainment, and Pop Culture'* (2012)

How did the Mormons do it? The best known new religious movement to have sprung from American soil had one million members in 1950, whereas today the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) has reached seven million. Not only Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney, but prominent politicians, athletes, authors, actors, newscasters, radio hosts, and performing artists are visible and influential. What are the lessons learned for the activists of Lovin' Life Ministries (LLM) who have a heart to grow the church?

Evangelical Christian Stephen Mansfield in *The Mormonizing of America: How the Mormon Religion Became a Dominant Force in Politics, Entertainment, and Pop Culture* (2012), claims he's figured out why the Mormon Church came to occupy a position of prominence in America Society. Mansfield is known to many as the author of the New York Times best seller *The Faith of George W. Bush* (2003) and the international best seller *The Faith of Barack Obama* (2008).



Stephen Mansfield, the author of the book, *'The Mormonizing of America: How the Mormon Religion Became a Dominant Force in Politics, Entertainment, and Pop Culture'* (2012)

Mansfield attributes the rise to prominence of the Mormon Church in America to what he calls the Mormon machine: “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ha[s] risen to unexpected heights in American society because the Mormon religion creates the ‘Mormon Machine’—a system of individual empowerment, family investment, local church (ward and stake level) leadership, priesthood government, prophetic endowment (baptism of the Holy Ghost), Temple sacraments, and sacrificial financial endowment of the holy Mormon cause.”



Photo: Reuters. Presidential candidate Mitt Romney

Although persecuted and marginalized for more than one hundred years, the Mormon religion began with a unique advantage not experienced by the early pioneers of the American Unification Church: The Mormon religion, from the start, was uniquely shaped by the American cultural experience. While Mormonism was not the founding religion of America, it is a religion founded in America that evolved over time into a spiritualized version of “all that ennobled the United States of Joseph Smith’s day,” Mansfield writes.



Photo: Chris Pizzello / Reuters. Comedienne Roseanne Barr.

By his lights, the Mormon religion speaks directly to the underpinnings of the American dream: “Mormonism is, at heart, about progress, about ruling pristine territory, about the spiritual matrix of family, about the democratization of spiritual experience, about sacred ritual, about the elevating power of community, about a people escaping a corrupt world in the east (New York) to establish a holy community in the west (Utah), about a ‘land of liberty’ ...and about truths long lost and newly revealed.”

Success, prosperity, and visibility flow from this machine, claims Mansfield, because converts are attracted to a lifestyle which is at once empowering, inviting, and encouraging.



Photo: Nicky Loh / Reuters. Actor Paul Walker.

Here are the “four engine parts” Mansfield identifies that he says keeps this amazing Mormon Machine running (summarized):

1. **Progress: To Pass the Tests of Life:** One must master the tests of this life to qualify for what is available in eternity. (If you don’t qualify ... you don’t get the promised rewards in eternity.)
2. **Family: For Time and All Eternity:** Family is not only sacred but an eternal institution. If qualified, families will exist together throughout all eternity. Large families are built upon a passionate commitment to earthly success and anticipated eternal blessings.

3. **Education: Training the Saints to Lead:** The Mormon Church operates “The Church Educational System,” (CES). This consists of a program called “primary” for youngsters, a “seminary” for high-school students (providing the “eternal Mormon perspective”), and culminates at Brigham Young University (where one learns how to fine tune his/her skills to lead in the world).

4. **Patriotism: The Calling of the United States and the Free Market:** Mormons hold a “fiery patriotism” for the United States drawn from the Book of Mormon: Jesus appeared in America after his resurrection; the Book of Mormon was revealed in New York State, and headquarters of the true Church (Mormon) is in the United States. In addition, Mormons aspire to a gospel of “unfettered progress,” including financial prosperity, i.e., righteous living must beget financial success.



Photo: Tim Shaffer / Reuters. Eagles coach Andy Reid.

Mansfield argues out that Mormonism is not primarily about doctrines but about “the experience of a restored supernatural power, the all-important matter of ‘priesthood authority.’” (Mormon priestly authority is about bestowing upon one who is qualified the power and authority to act in the name of God for the salvation of humankind.) He writes that church founder Joseph Smith was more focused on what a man does than what a man believes; in spiritual experiences and not theories.

Somewhat incongruously, Mansfield then makes it his project to deconstruct Mormon Church doctrine and theology, and then casts aspersions on the character of the Prophet, Joseph Smith. Although Mansfield reports there is no Mormon systematic theology or final theological voice, he dedicates most of the book to debunk Mormon beliefs.



Photo: Phil McCarten / Reuters. Jon Heder, Actor.

Toward book’s end readers will encounter this condescending passage: “If we do not believe Smith was led by a Heavenly Father making his will known through the angel Moroni, and if we do not believe—as some do—that he was moved by evil spirits, then there is another view that might explain the rise of the Saints... This [explanation] assumes an entirely non-supernatural view of the Mormon faith. It understands Joseph Smith as an ingenious man who completely imagined the religion he said he received by revelation. It also understands Smith as a manipulative deceiver who led his unsuspecting followers by constant revelations and by unceasing demands for sacrifice. It interprets the heartiness of the Latter-day Saints as a product of invented religious doctrines that have nevertheless fashioned a capable, ambitious people over time.”

Other sections that imply that the Mormon religion could be man-made hoax include Appendix A, devoted to showing the 1842 “Articles of Faith” penned by Joseph Smith, and then an Appendix B, devoted to showing us “Surprising Quotes from the Mormon Leaders,” dating back from 1832. Here’s one such quote: “I will be to this generation a second Muhammad, whose motto in treating for peace was ‘the Alcoran [Qur’an] or the sword.’ So shall it eventually be with us, ‘Joseph Smith or the sword.’”—Joseph Smith.



Photo: Phil McCarten / Reuters. David Archuleta, American Idol Season 7.

Possibilities for a “Unification Moment” in America

Putting the flaws of this book aside, it may nonetheless be worth asking what can be learned from the stunning success of Mormon leaders and followers to build their church and their cultural institutions.



Photo: Phil McCarten / Reuters. Aaron Eckhart, Actor.

Since 1959 recruiting efforts to win souls to the Unification Church blueprint for salvation on American soil have been in operation. By the late 1970s the number of converts stood at around three to five thousand. In 1990 the number stood at around five to seven thousand. In 2007 the Family Federation for World Peace (the church’s name at that time) had around 10,000 members (including babies, children, grandchildren, and newly married couples whose parents had been married by Rev. and Mrs. Moon.)

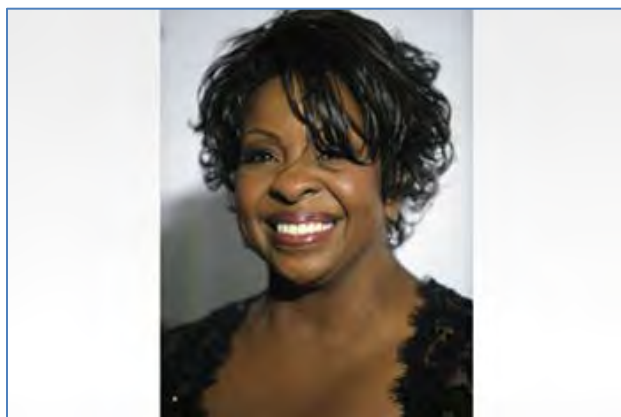


Photo: Phil McCarten / Reuters. Gladys Knight, R&B Singer.

By 2009 the newly installed leadership team of LLM headed up by Senior Pastor Rev. In jin Moon was calling for a rebranding of the Unification Church (UC) and for the need to experience a new period of growth and expansion. The national membership was now being encouraged and supported to look for innovative and creative ways to alter the “best kept secret” status of the American UC to that of being the group “everybody wants to be a part of.”

To reach the goals of expanded growth, more prominence, visibility, and influence in the American culture, LLM must identify the dynamics for accelerated church growth and the formula needed to successfully implement such dynamics nationwide. LLM would do well to look hard at the hallmark American values and behaviors that promote community and a lifestyle that encourages empowerment in every sense; such hallmarks that are being expertly used by the Mormons.

Increasing visibility, influence, and prominence of the UC in America surely will attract fresh

scrutiny. Careful observation will be thrust upon the membership via the Internet and the personalized media of our age. Such scrutiny might possibly force an openness that could change the American UC forever. Would some traditional doctrines be abandoned? What new doctrines might be added? Questions about how power and leadership are exercised will be of particular interest to Americans.



Photo: Mario Anzuoni / Reuters. Katherine Heigl, Actress.

One may argue that as the Unification Church obtains greater influence and visibility in America, the UC will be obliged to make a better-reasoned case for its presence on the American stage. It took the Mormons a little less than two hundred years to achieve such influence and prominence.

In order for the Unification moment to appear on North America's near horizon, the so-called "breaking news" message must appeal in as effective and powerful a way as the Mormon "message of salvation."