

Poverty and Polygyny as Political Protest: The Waldensians and Mormons.

REBECCA JEAN EMIGH

Abstract This paper examines Waldensianism and Mormonism, two very different religious movements, separated by time, space, cultural, and economic conditions. The sources are a mixture of secondary and published primary sources, including church documents both in translation and the original language, and personal writings, such as diaries and letters. The treatment of these sources is not unusual, rather the contribution of this paper is a synthetic theoretical analysis of these movements in terms of the practical consequences of action.

Both movements were coherent attempts to address contemporary social issues; neither was principally illogical nor irrational, nor comprised primarily of socially disconnected individuals. These movements were neither apolitical nor solely comprised of pure political action. Instead, both became political protest movements, in addition to being religious movements, because the symbolic content of the movement was interwoven with contemporary politics: the movements' ideological critiques implicated the larger political structure which attempted to prevent ideological change. These religious struggles were processes, becoming political movements because ideological change implied political action.

Introduction

Much political protest is easy to recognize because the participants clearly state that their goals are a redistribution of power; yet movements with different stated goals, such as religious ones, often have the same effect or intention (Comaroff 1985; Fields 1985; Isaacman and Isaacman 1977:54-55; Ranger 1986; Scott 1985). This paper analyzes two religious movements, Waldensianism, a medieval heresy, and Mormonism (officially The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints), founded in the nineteenth century United States, and locates the defiant political acts of each in specific actions of the participants practicing their religious beliefs.

Questions concerning the place of political goals in religious movements have arisen in the literatures of history, sociology, and anthropology. The academic debates have often followed three stages: 1) Marxist or class analyses of religious movements, 2) rejection of any political overtones, and 3) new efforts to reintegrate political and religious analyses. This evolution can be traced for studies of medieval heresy (Russell 1963; Grundmann 1961; Erbstösser 1984; Herlihy 1975) and sub-Saharan religious movements (Ranger 1986). The recent debate in sociology has focused on the distinction between 'strain' or 'crisis' theory (Le Bon 1960; Smelser 1962) and 'resource

mobilization' (Jenkins 1983; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Morris 1984; McAdam 1982; Tilly 1978). Fields (1985) critiques a similar distinction between 'cultural' and 'political' approaches. Both heretical and nineteenth century utopian movements have 'strain theory' adherents: towns and cities were susceptible to heresy because urbanites were lacking traditional social ties, or at least feudal ones (Moore 1977), and the standard interpretation of nineteenth century American utopian movements is a protest against the expansion of the capitalist mode of production which permeated social institutions and corrupted morality by creating widespread social changes and dislocations (Foster 1981:131; Leone 1979; Kern 1981:4,9).

The problem remains in all of these fields: how to proceed with a synthetic analysis of these movements which attends to both ideal and material factors. One approach is illustrated in recent work showing that religious movements are often mobilized by tactics similar to those used by political movements – using existing social ties, family networks, and standard organizational and recruitment techniques (Lofland 1977; Lofland and Richardson 1984; Richardson, van der Lans, and Derks 1986; Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986; Snow, Zurcher, Eklund-Olson 1980). Research using the resource mobilization perspective suggests important similarities between political and religious movements, but it cannot show how religious ideologies are also political protest; that is, how a particular system of religious beliefs has consequences for the distribution of power and how this power is used in governance. The appeal of strain theory resides in its analysis and explanation of grievances, though it does not attend to organizational techniques or overstates social disorganization. Another possibility is to link beliefs to the transition to capitalism – but this transition had a different form depending on where and when it occurred, making it difficult to ascribe a unitary cause to a multiplicity of ideological movements with widely variant beliefs (Wuthnow 1989). This interconnection of ideal and material is the essential question concerning Weber and Marx as well, particularly in their analyses of the transition to capitalism. Both try to relate in a non-simplistic way how material life is penetrated by, jointly influenced by, and connected to, structures of human beliefs, especially as these relate to the rise of modernity and industrialization. Fields' approach provides a useful departure – she, and others as Ranger notes (1986:14), asks, 'What did the converts do and with what consequences (Fields 1985:19)?'

I will examine Waldensianism and Mormonism, two very different religious movements, separated by time, space, cultural, and economic conditions. The sources are a mixture of secondary and published primary sources, including church documents both in translation and the original language, and personal writings, such as diaries and

letters. My treatment of these sources is not unusual, rather my contribution lies in a synthetic theoretical analysis of these movements in terms of the practical consequences of action. This juxtaposition is striking because they are, in a sense, the inverse of each other: the Waldensians set the stage for the Protestant Reformation where the choice of a 'Christianity' became possible, whereas the Mormons constructed a theocracy to try to solve the logical outcome of American Protestantism, denominationalism, but paradoxically became a denomination 'themselves'.

I will show how both movements were coherent attempts to address contemporary social issues; neither was principally illogical or irrational, or comprised primarily of socially disconnected individuals. I will refute the notion that these movements were apolitical, at the same time arguing that they cannot be reduced to pure political action. Both movements became political protest movements, in addition to being religious movements, because the symbolic content of the movement was interwoven with contemporary politics: the movements' ideological critiques implicated the larger political structure which attempted to prevent ideological change. These religious struggles were processes, becoming political movements because religious change implied political action. Though I retain the terms 'religious' and 'political', my analyses demonstrate that this distinction should not be overdrawn; instead I argue that both the content of these spheres and the connections between them should be a matter of empirical investigation.

Waldensianism

Waldensianism began in Lyons in the 1170's with the conversion to apostolic poverty of a wealthy merchant, Waldes. Between 1173 and 1177, he gathered followers dedicated to complete poverty, celibacy, and a life of begging and preaching (Wakefield and Evans 1969:200-3; text is *Chronicon universale anonymi Laudunensis*). Before they were declared to be heretics by Pope Lucius III in 1184, Waldes and his followers asked for papal permission for activities, including poverty and preaching (Erbstösser 1984:99-100). At the Lateran Council of 1179, their vows of poverty were approved, but they were not given permission to preach (Wakefield and Evans 1969:203, text is *Chronicon universale anonymi Laudunensis*). Still, there was enough tolerance to allow a debate between them and the Catholics at Narbonne around 1190 (Wakefield and Evans 1969:211). In 1181, Humbert, the bishop of Lyons, died and was succeeded by Jean de Bellesmains, who was 'far too jealous of sacerdotal authority to tolerate in his fold those whose orthodoxy was open to suspicion' (Davison 1927:251), and he expelled them from the city in 1182/3.

This, and similar expulsions from other cities, facilitated the Waldensians' spread to Italy and Germany, and eventually to the March of Brandenburg, Pomerania, Austria, and Bohemia (Erbstösser 1984:194-6; Kurze 1975; Lambert 1976:152; Werner 1963). A distinction between Italian and French Waldensians, each having slightly different beliefs, appeared in 1218 (Merlo 1984:9-42) and as they spread eastward, this trend toward local variations in beliefs continued.

Waldensian leaders, called 'barbes', 'perfects', or 'brothers', practiced poverty and celibacy, while their supporters, the 'believers', continued with secular occupations and supported the perfects. The content of their religious beliefs differed little from orthodox Catholic ones, although the Waldensians discounted the importance of the orthodox Church's formal rites and beliefs in liturgical services, saints, and purgatory and emphasized the importance of a holy life, as opposed to holy orders, which validated the transubstantiation of the Eucharist (Lambert 1976:76-81, 154-6). Much debate has centered on whether the Waldensians formed an alternative church to the Catholic one (Kieckhefer 1979:57; Lambert 1976:163-4; Leff 1967:463). The writings of orthodox clerics and inquisition records form a vast source of information which often exaggerated the organizational strength of the movement, because clerics viewed the movement as a threat (Merlo 1984; for examples of translations, see Wakefield and Evans 1969 and Peters 1980). Although the movement displayed elements of formal organization - priestly offices resembling the Catholic Church, schools, rites of initiation, books - it always exhibited local variations in belief and practice and never approached the organizational strength of the Catholic Church (Biller 1985; Cameron 1984; Lambert 1976:77-81). Moreover, organizational changes resulted from the 'routinization of charisma', the process by which the ideal and material interests of a charismatic leader became incorporated in an institutionalized structure. As Weber noted, movements assumed characteristics of formal authority to survive which necessarily transformed the founder's intentions (Weber 1978:241-254, 1121-57).

An ambivalent attitude toward Catholic authority complemented the adaptable organizational structure of the Waldensian movement. Waldes and his followers were not protesting against the organized Church as such; only against specific 'immoral' actions by Catholic clerics. They remained ambivalent toward the Church hierarchy, never renouncing the Catholic clergy outright and using their sacerdotal services as necessary, while teaching it was better to follow God than men (Erbstösser 1984:198; Lambert 1976:78; Wakefield and Evans 1969:210, text is *Stephani de Borbone tractatus de diversis materiis praedicabilis* 1969:213, text is *Bernardi abbatis*

Fontis callidi, ordinis praemonstratensis, Adversus Waldensium sectam liber). This was consistent with the belief that the moral quality of the priest determined the efficacy of the sacraments – there was no need to avoid 'good' Catholic priests. Consequently, Marthaler (1977) and Davison (1927) consider the difference between the Waldensians and the Franciscans to revolve around the issue of obedience to church authority.

The tension between the Waldensians and the Catholics increased over time. Even though the Catholic Church was slow to denounce the Waldensians as heretics and never hunted them with the tenacity they reserved for the Cathars, as the Church developed routinized ways of discovering and punishing heretics, the Waldensians went underground and were marginalized (Lambert 1976:151-4). Pope Alexander III (1159-81) entrusted the existing local clergy, archbishops, bishops, or their representatives with annual or biannual investigations of heresy and Innocent III (1198-1216) appointed papal legates for this purpose. Finally, the machinery of the inquisition was established by Gregory IX (1227-41) who created a permanent body of inquisitors from the Dominican and Franciscan orders (Leff 1967:34-47). Still, some Waldensian communities survived at the time of the Reformation, usually hidden in mountain communities (Hamilton 1981; Kieckhefer 1979). Waldensian churches can be found in Europe today.

How can the ideological development of this movement be explained, how did it arise, and how did it come to be defined as heretical? The Catholic Church reformed in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, giving institutional form to popular sentiments for change (Leff 1967:14). The content of these reforms usually centered on the involvement of the church in 'worldly' affairs. The church and aristocratic families had become increasingly intertwined, obscuring the differences between family and church property (Herlihy 1985:86-7; Holt 1983:201). Likewise, secular and ecclesiastical power had become connected. Reformers wished to separate these spheres, freeing the church from secular domination, while detaching it from political affairs (Erbstösser 1984:75-86; Herlihy 1985:87; Leff 1967:14-16; Southern 1970:34-52). For religious and lay alike, the idea of holiness became dissociated with secular power (Moore 1975, 1979:56).

Many heresies, such as Waldensianism, expressed similar reform sentiments. Several authors viewed the movement as an essentially orthodox one, which was pushed towards heresy by an unresponsive ecclesiastical hierarchy which found it difficult to incorporate reform sentiments into the church after 1250 and instead declared them to be heretical (Lambert 1976:67-73; Leff 1967:14,21). Similarly, the role of the perfects was also defined through their interaction with the

Catholics; if members of the Waldensian sect did not wish to use the services of Catholic priests, then the activities of the perfects had to expand. Beliefs were not predetermined, but flowed from opposition, reaction, and accommodation to the Catholic Church and from the consolidation of organizational details surrounding their central symbol, 'apostolic poverty'. Religious ideologies were formed in the consciousness of participants by daily experiences and interactions (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:31). In the end, this religious ideology differed little from the context of orthodox Catholic beliefs, but was institutionalized separately.

Even the most radical reformers, however, never wished to relinquish political power, only to shift its foundation from a secular to a sacred source. The extreme examples are hermits: a complete withdrawal from the world was not necessarily inconsistent with political power. Hermits – like the 'Desert Fathers' they copied – were famous, drawing visitors who came from afar for practical advice about worldly affairs (Moore 1977:50-1). Similarly, the Waldensian brothers gave practical advice both in formal confession and informally. They intervened in a range of everyday affairs and disputes, including loans, restoration of animals and property, marriages, inheritances, quarrels, and arbitrations (Biller 1985:225). The abandonment of a material base of power gave rise to local political roles based primarily on spiritual power.

Religious thought is always produced in a particular social context, individuals creatively select symbols and recombine them in new forms (e.g. Hebdige 1979, 1988). In comparison to most other authors (Cameron 1984; Lambert 1976; Leff 1967:484) who considered Waldensians to be poor, illiterate, and culturally impoverished laity, Biller viewed their use of poverty and simplicity as a part of a purposeful selection and juxtaposition of symbols from late medieval Catholicism and society. The brothers identified themselves with poverty, humility, and peace as opposed to the wealthy, powerful, and violent Church (Biller 1983:133). Some Waldensian brothers retreated from secular affairs altogether, even refusing manual labor (Davison 1927:267). Others practiced medicine, showing a holistic concern for their followers' physical and spiritual well-being (Biller 1982:66). The stark poverty of the Waldensian brothers resonated with that of most peasants; at the same time it contrasted sharply with the wealth of most higher clergy (Erbstösser 1984:197). The wealth of literary materials and Biblical translations (Biller 1985, 1986) demonstrated that the simplicity of their teachings and interpretations of the Bible were not 'simple-minded', but were part of a set of coherent religious beliefs, reflecting a purposeful critique of the Catholic Church. Some of the books emphasized pastoral and agricultural metaphors, appropriate for the rural communities for which they were intended

(Biller 1986:23). Beliefs of the populace were not simple 'reflections of a dominant ideology', nor were they the results of ignorance; individuals creatively reflected upon and interpreted experiences (see also Ginzburg 1980; Le Roy Ladurie 1980). Indeed, others have shown how 'bricolage' can make a powerful political statement and how seemingly unconnected and disorganized arrays of symbols have an internal consistency (Comaroff 1985; Lévi-Strauss 1966).

Women apparently had more roles in the Waldensian sect than in Catholicism, including preaching and the occasional celebration of the Eucharist. Some have suggested that heresy spread rapidly among women because of this (Koch 1962a, 1962b, 1964; Lambert 1976:76). At the debate between the Catholics and the Waldensians at (or near) Narbonne around 1190, the role of women in the sect was discussed (the text is Bernard of Fontcaude, (1855) [1190] *Liber adversus Waldensium sectam*, see partial translation in Comba 1889 and Wakefield and Evans 1969:211-213). This text is illuminating because it shows one instance where an ideological position was not formed in advance, but rather developed in confrontation with another group. During the debate, the Waldensians did not present well formed positions on women; nor did they offer a strong defense of women's activities when confronted by the Catholics, who had well developed ideas about the place of women in the church. While they defended themselves to some extent, they were not able to offer a powerful vindication of the rights of women from first principles. Instead, their defense suggested they permitted charismatic 'speaking', but they were uncertain of institutionalized preaching or teaching by women. One orthodox reply, concurring that a particular older woman was permitted to 'speak of Christ' in the Bible, indicated that Catholics also allowed occasional charismatic speaking by women. Preaching by Catholic women was not unknown; Hildegard of Bingen, for example, was reported to have made preaching journeys, addressed sermons to monks in their abbeys, bishops and clergy at their synods, and laity. She only performed these duties, however, after she received papal approval at the Synod of Trier (Dronke 1984:148-9).

Koch concluded that as the movement became more institutionalized, men purposefully excluded women from priestly activities (Koch 1962a:156-69, 1964:755,771-2). The timing and extent of women's participation and institutionalization makes Koch's argument difficult to accept: women's participation in the sect was never as firmly established as Koch argued, the Waldensian organization was never as strong as Koch supposed, and the decline in women's roles began before institutionalization had progressed very far. Neither is Koch's 'purposeful squeezing' argument necessary: as Weber noted, women often are allowed more charismatic roles

than institutionalized ones (Weber 1978:488-90). In the process of institutionalization, movements incorporated the 'material and ideal interests' of the society (Weber 1978:246), including unequal status for men and women.

Various aspects of town life have been posited as causes of heresy: population densities, intellectual centers, concentration of wealth (Leff 1967:33-4), rational thinking, and bourgeois protest against feudalism (Erbstösser 1984:61-74). Urban environments supposedly facilitated dissent by undermining the traditional social order and creating a mass of individuals without social ties, susceptible to conversion (Moore 1977:266). The recent empirical work following the resource mobilization perspective suggests that individuals without social ties are not the usual converts, although some groups do prey on these types of individuals (e.g. the Hare Krishna: Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980). An examination of Cathar heresy by Abels and Harrison (1979) showed the importance of family ties in perpetuating heretical ideas and, although they considered a point in time when the heresy was well established, their research still suggested that the primary focus of this heresy was not to attract disconnected individuals. As a wealthy merchant, Waldes had many social ties. Medieval religious dissent was not confined to towns, although the extant documents often gave this impression for several reasons. Inquisition records were usually from major towns because trials were located there. Other 'events' (including letters, chronicles, protests, accounts, etc.) are attached to urban areas for convenience of reference. The attachment of relevance to religious movements in towns often stemmed from the nature of the political conflict, which provoked written accounts.

Lyons was an unusual town in the 1170's because it lacked a constitution and the burghers had no governing role. Instead, it was controlled by Archbishops and the Chapter of the cathedral (Erbstösser 1984:99). The twelfth century was characterized by the same struggle between secular princes and the clergy that troubled the church reformers; in Lyons, the Dukes of Forez and the Archbishops vied for control. The feuds, plundering, and additional levies and taxation made commercial life uncertain in this prosperous center of foreign trade routes from Marseille to Champagne and from southern France to northern Italy (Erbstösser 1984:98-99). Waldes' preaching exhorted his fellow citizens to choose between God and money (Wakefield and Evans 1969:200-202, text is *Chronicon universale anonymi Laudunensis*, paralleling the message of other reform movements: the separation of religious devotion from worldly possessions. Waldes' message was noted because it coincided with the political battle in Lyons. The same political struggle between merchants and bishops coincided with heresy in northern Italian cities (Brooke and Brooke

1984:55). Apostolic poverty was one solution to the growing tension between the church as a worldly power and the church as a spiritual guide.

It is difficult to tie religious dissent to a particular social class. If the sources mention peasants, does this reveal a 'movement for the poor' (Lambert 1976:158-161; Leff 1967:453)? Catholic clerics often called heretics' followers 'peasants and women' to discredit them. Even if it were empirically possible to determine the composition of movements from the extant sources, a numerical preponderance of peasants would only indicate that the heretics were gathering followers in proportion to the numbers in the population. The evidence that there were merchants, artisans, nobles, clerics, and peasants among the Waldensian supporters and perfects indicates a broad base of support for the movement (Davison 1927:270; Lambert 1976:158).

In summary, the Waldensians were a classic example of the institutionalization of a movement initiated by a charismatic leader. The Waldensian's ideology was not predetermined, but developed over time in a coherent, logical manner. It was formed in the consciousness of the participants as a result of interaction with the orthodox Catholic Church, the process of institutionalization, and by working out the implications of the central symbol of the movement, apostolic poverty. This form of symbolic protest was not only quite powerful, but also implicated a set of political and religious reforms, involving the church's relation to property and wealth.

The Waldensians were forerunners of the sects and denominations of the Protestant Reformation. While there is no direct historical continuity between the Waldensians and, for example, Luther, (Russell 1963) they set the stage for the critical problem facing the founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith, that of religious choice. Western Medieval Catholicism and Counter-Reformation Catholicism were fundamentally different entities. Medieval Catholicism was not intolerant in the way that Counter-Reformation Catholicism was, neither was it all encompassing or a 'dominant ideology' of the elite. It was repressive to some extent, but there was a wide range of piety and much open disbelief. It was, however, incognisant. Before the Reformation, Catholicism was not a choice for Western European Christians, it was taken for granted.

Mormonism

Once Catholicism was no longer the only form of western Christianity, the multiplication of Christian religions became a real possibility. The extreme case of this was the United States – the state did not embrace a particular sect – and denominationalism confronted Joseph Smith, who founded Mormonism in the 1830's. He grew up in the 'Burned-

Over' district of New York, famous for its frequent 'spiritual fires' and the plethora of preachers, each claiming exclusive religious authority (Cross 1950). Smith was torn between the rival claims of the many charismatic preachers in that region, each claiming spiritual superiority, truth, and salvation. Later he wrote, 'In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself, what is to be done? Who of all these parties be right? Or are they all wrong together?' (Smith 1902, as quoted in O'Dea 1957:3). Mormonism was his attempt, based on prophetic revelation, to unite all true Christians (O'Dea 1957:14).

Like the Waldensians, Mormon origins can be placed in a historical context. Smith's family alternated between wage labor, small shopkeeping, and farming made unsuccessful because of an inability to accumulate capital. His family combined marginal farming and intermittent odd jobs with digging for buried treasure (Brodie 1945; Kern 1981:138; Linn 1902). Thomas' recent work (1989) using Cross' (1950) descriptions, rejected interpretations of revivalism based on dislocations from capitalist production, instead finding 'isomorphisms' between religious and political ideology based on individualism. Unlike previous researchers who suggested that revivalism was a reaction to rapid social change and its accompanying disorder, Thomas found that revivalism was common among the middle class who benefited from capitalism (1989:84-89). He did not consider the Mormons to be revivalists (see his scale on page 175), yet they originated from the same region of New York that produced revivalism. Cross (1950:150) made a special point of noting that Mormons were quite similar to other religious groups from the region; they were not recruited from the frontier populations, but from locations of mature capitalism. It is possible that Thomas' classification of the Mormon religion was based on a later period of time and during its origins it was more revivalistic. Or, revivalism and utopian movements may have appealed to different segments of the population: Mormonism appealed to those marginalized or made unsuccessful by capitalism while revivalism appealed to those who were more successful. Here, the 'strain theory' and the 'resource mobilization perspective' seem to clash: one movement depends on grievances, the other on successful organization; yet, individuals affected negatively by capitalism may have also used religious movements to their advantage (though they may have had fewer resources at their disposal to be effective).

Finding a relation between Mormonism and the class displaced by capitalism preserves Thomas' technique of finding isomorphisms between social class and religious ideology. Yet, as Thomas' analyses also show, this is insufficient. Much of the impact of ideology – whether political or religious – resides not in likenesses between different ideologies, but from the practical effects of individuals

acting in the world on the basis of their beliefs. Here lies much of the impact of the Mormons, who caused an enormous stir and often provoked violence everywhere they went (Leone 1979:13-18; O'Dea 1957:41-83), usually concerning marital relations, Native American affairs, or the judicial system. The Mormons moved further west trying to establish communities first in Palmyra, New York, and then successively in Kirtland, Ohio; several counties in western Missouri; Nauvoo, Illinois; and finally in Utah. The root of these difficulties lay in the Mormon conception of theocracy. Everywhere the Mormons settled, there was an initial vying for their votes from the local political parties, who sensed the opportunity of obtaining the approval of a large group of people who were likely to vote in a block. While Mormon leaders had no objection to using local politicians to their advantage, they had no interest in local politics in and of itself. In addition, the Mormons were land hungry, buying large tracts for their ever growing number of converts (Brodie 1945; Linn 1902).

Mormonism was a utopian community (Kern 1981; Foster 1981); the eventual withdrawal to the frontier of Utah was an escape from the corrupt Eastern environment (Jeffrey 1979:150-1). Smith's dream of a 'Kingdom of Heaven on Earth' was modelled on Old Testament Israelite theocracy (Van Wagoner 1986:3), a community in which worldly and spiritual goals were unified (Foster 1981:139). Therefore, Smith's claim to civil and religious authority meant that he felt free to marry women and to perform marriage ceremonies for others without obtaining a divorce (Van Wagoner 1986:38). Various mechanisms existed to redistribute resources communally (Leone 1979:13-14, 43-85; Muncy 1973:123-6). These mechanisms encouraged common ownership of property and classlessness. Smith's solution to the problem of religious choice is thus an understandable one: the eradication of the possibility of choice, by combining political and religious spheres within a pre-Reformation logic. Other religious movements sought similar solutions to repair the fragmentation of capitalism and Protestantism (e.g. Comaroff 1985:177-184).

In contrast to marginal farming and meager living in New England, a livelihood was promised on the Utah frontier: church authorities established a liberal land policy and new settlers were integrated into the community in a number of ways. The Perpetual Emigrating Fund made the journey relatively easy (Jeffrey 1979:155; O'Dea 1957:95). Although the work was undoubtedly laborious, the arrangement resounded with the American ideology of a reward for hard work. Like the Waldensians, there is evidence that the movement also drew educated and wealthy followers (O'Dea 1957:41).

Polygyny evoked an enormous outrage (Foster 1974:22, 1981:132,147; Larson 1971:53-6) and created a rift in the church which was never resolved (Mulder and Mortensen 1958:127,143;

Van Wagoner 1986:53,61-69,89). Many of the church elders considered this prospect extremely distasteful, even those who eventually practiced it. Experimentation with marital and sexual practices was common in nineteenth century American utopian communities and included virtual freedom, complete celibacy, and 'spiritual wifery'. Many of these ideas were associated with individuals living in the 'Burned Over' district (Foster 1981; Kern 1981; Van Wagoner 1986:9,38-9). Smith apparently formulated his notions of marriage while experimenting with polygyny, polyandry, spiritual marriage, and extra-marital affairs in the 1830's and 40's (Foster 1981:157-60; Muncy 1973:130-32; Van Wagoner 1986:4-46). The revelation of 'marriage for eternity' resulting from his reflection and activity bears a resemblance to spiritual wifery. During this time, he and other leaders publicly denounced polygyny (Foster 1981:132-134; Muncy 1973:127). In the doctrine of polygyny, it is possible to see the effects of both practical experimentation and the institutionalization of religious doctrine.

One important ideological context for polygynous marriage was the 'cult of domesticity'. Rapid industrialization and the growth of factory labor went together with the creation of separate spheres of male and female labor and, at least for those able to afford it, wives who were relegated to the role of child and home care (Foster 1981:131; Kern 1981:4,9). A woman's power in society supposedly derived from her influence on her husband and children (Dunfey 1984:524, Kern 1981:10). The ideal woman provided stability in a rapidly changing society (Dunfey 1984:524). On the frontier, the woman's role as a 'civilizer' became even more important. The move to Utah transplanted the community into a more pre-industrial, agricultural context. The eventual penetration of an industrial economy in the late nineteenth century was accompanied by a decline in polygynous marriage, although polygyny was officially abandoned as a result of overt pressure by the Federal government and an attempt on the part of the Mormon hierarchy to secure statehood (Larson 1971:62). Mormon women defended polygyny as a way to prevent the corruption of 'Gentile' society: infanticide, alcoholic and abusive husbands, desertion, divorce, adultery, and prostitution. They also used contemporary imagery of the pure and passionless qualities of women as compared to the uncontrollable lust of men to justify polygyny (Dunfey 1984:527-32).

Foster (1974) analyzes a pamphlet (published under circumstances which are not entirely clear) called 'The Peace Maker' or 'The Doctrines of the Millennium', printed in 1842 and written by Udney Hay Jacob. The pamphlet is an explicit justification for the 'restoration' of polygyny based on the practices of Old Testament patriarchs. Its author couples an extreme patriarchalism with a concern for

establishing satisfactory marital relationships. Under monogamy, men were sexually enslaved by women; the destruction of male dominance was responsible for the corruption of society. Since men were superior beings, they could not freely divorce women dependent upon them for support, and since women were not morally responsible, they were never at fault for the husband's displeasure. Polygyny was the solution, since it allowed the man to continue relations with the first wife while taking another. It freed men from the domination by women and produced perfectly passive and submissive wives. Strict divorce laws forced 'alienated' wives, ones who were no longer devoted to their husbands, to live with them and 'fornicate'; consequently, women should be allowed to divorce freely. A woman's main objective was to win and retain the affection of her husband, which was accomplished by her bearing many children. The pamphlet can be viewed as an extreme example of nineteenth century marital practices: laws treated women, to a large degree, as property of the husband, while the cult of domesticity emphasized women's motherly qualities above all others. Foster views polygyny as an outgrowth of American values, a fundamental protest against careless individualism and irresponsibility of romantic love. Polygyny was viewed as a way to strengthen the family, kinship, and social solidarity (Foster 1981:139-40).

In the same way, the peculiar story that Smith found on golden tablets and translated about the forbearers of the Native American can be interpreted as an attempt to draw a Biblical link between the Old and New World, to provide relevance for the 'Ancient Hebrew's' culture in nineteenth century America (Foster 1981:130,135). In fact, much of the content of the Book of Mormon can be linked to themes common to American culture, including democratic, republican, antimonarchical, and egalitarian doctrines (O'Dea 1957:32). Seemingly anomalous stories and practices, then, can be placed in a more general context. Like the Waldensians, it is possible to see how Mormons creatively selected and juxtaposed cultural symbols for a dramatic effect.

Polygyny was fundamentally not 'taken-for-granted', although it was practiced for about 60 years and was institutionalized, accepted, and defended even by monogamous Mormons as a hallmark of their religion. Polygyny always was a explicit protest of, and contrast to, 'Gentile' society. It was introduced consciously - again, in contrast to its practice elsewhere - into a monogamous community to reform what was viewed as corrupt family life and was an explicit critique of contemporary marital practices. While Mormon polygynous marriage in its institutionalized form appears quite similar to this practice in other societies, it was continually shaped by its anomalous appearance in an otherwise monogamous society, which was shocked and

horrified by it.

At the heart of Mormon polygyny lay a set of contradictions which shaped the practice. Some were contradictions between the religious beliefs and practice, some were contradictions between sets of religious beliefs. Polygyny was viewed as a religious blessing which would bring divine favor - most men and women entered polygyny out of true religious belief (Kane 1974:104-6; Tanner 1983:12,62,66,129,151; Van Wagoner 1986:90) - and increase the number of children (Larson 1971:39; Muncy 1973:136). In Mormon theology women were considered to be inferior and their salvation depended upon marriage and childbearing; just as a husband's status in heaven depended upon his number of wives, a woman's depended upon her number of children (Foster 1981:145; Jeffrey 1979:156-7; Kane 1974:70). However, aggregate polygynous female fertility was lower than monogamous female fertility. Polygynous fertility varied by wife-order: first wives had higher, while other wives had lower, fertility than monogamous women (Anderton and Emigh 1989). Polygyny certainly increased the number of children for husbands, and it may have increased the Mormon population by allowing all women of childbearing age to be in marital relations for a longer period of time (Muncy 1973:133). But, it did not increase the number of children for second, third, or higher order wives who consciously chose polygyny (most first wives never imagined the possibility of polygyny). Some younger women became higher order wives because of the economic security and/or social status that marriage to an established elder of the church would bring, essentially forsaking status achieved through childbearing for status achieved by marriage to a powerful man.

From the woman's perspective, there was no satisfactory way to reconcile all the possibilities. Some second and higher order wives felt that they were too old or had some other impediment to being a first wife (Brooks 1934:300-1; Mulder and Mortensen 1958:432). Although there are no indications from polygynous women's writings that higher order wives felt diminished opportunities for childbearing, competition among wives for children was keen (Young 1954:207-8). But, polygyny unambiguously increased religious blessings for men who controlled the religious and marital system. Polygyny was virtually mandatory for church leaders, who were often threatened with expulsion from their positions if they did not take another wife. Women were also threatened with damnation or expulsion from their house if they protested (Larson 1971:44, quoting speeches of Brigham Young and Joseph F. Smith [not the founder]; Mulder and Mortensen 1958:431; Van Wagoner 1986:101-2, quoting Phebe Woodruff). And, although men were considered superior, polygyny was justified because there were 'undeniably...more good women than good men

on earth (Dunfey 1984:529, quoted from Lucinda Lee Dalton), since most men were deprived (Foster 1981:203-4,328, quoting Helen Mar Kimball; Young 1954:44). The tension between polygyny as a religious blessing and a severe worldly trial (Jeffrey 1979:148) was partly reconciled by considering it to be a religious penance (Foster 1981:208, quoting Jane Richards; Van Wagoner 1986:93) and/or sacrifice (Young 1954:52, quoting from Helen Mar Whitney). Women were able to withstand the sacrifices of this marital arrangement because of their deep religious faith (Kane 1974:60; Tanner 1983:131-2).

Despite the patriarchal arrangements and belief in the husband's superior intelligence and dominant role in the home, women in polygynous unions often found an independence denied to monogamous women (Dunfey 1984; Iversen 1984; Jeffrey 1979; Tanner 1983:29,60,69,116,267,272). The husbands often established separate residences for each wife and the women controlled their households during the long absences of their husbands. They turned to their children and to other women for help (Arrington 1971; Foster 1981:213-4, quoting Jane Richards and Mrs. Horne; Iversen 1984:510-19; Jeffrey 1979:171-5; Tanner 1983:268-74; Van Wagoner 1986:102-3, quoting Vilate Kimball; Young 1954:220). Annie Clark Tanner wrote that as a result of her experience of independence in polygyny she came to doubt that men's judgment was superior to women's (Tanner 1983:271). The relationships between 'sister wives' were often quite close and the children and the 'aunts' often formed close relationships as well (Dunfey 1984; Iversen 1984; Jeffrey 1979; Kane 1974:46-50). Thus, the same women who competed for the husband's attention were often dependent upon each other for help. Emmeline B. Wells, Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon (Van Wagoner 1986:94-6) and Annie Clark Tanner (1983) wrote ambivalently about their husbands. Their opinions of polygyny, especially Tanner's, changed as they experienced the hardships of polygynous marriage.

The independence some women gained through polygyny was a different, though related, phenomenon from the less strict division of labor found in Mormon and other frontier communities. Women's contributions - childraising, household tasks, or financial - were valued components of the economy. Women engaged in a wide range of occupations because of the necessities of frontier life (Arrington 1971; Jeffrey 1979:158; Kane 1974:5; Van Wagoner 1986:90). Most polygynous males were high-ranking church leaders, often occupied with church work, missions, and business affairs, and unlikely to engage in agricultural labor. Monogamous couples' work was the most similar: they were more likely to share farming and childraising tasks (not equally among men and women), while the polygynous wife often undertook both (or at least a large garden). Polygyny, intended to reduce the 'unnatural' influence of women, actually widened it;

perhaps this remained comfortable as long as it was subsumed under a more thorough patriarchy.

It was polygyny that caused the greatest outrage among non-Mormons and that was the greatest hindrance to statehood. Non-Mormons in Utah perhaps disliked Mormon theocratic control more than polygyny, yet the issue of polygyny could be exploited most usefully to disrupt Mormon control (Larson 1971). The Mormons petitioned for statehood in 1849, realizing that self-government would, in this era when the states-rights issues were still alive, preserve their religious practices. At the time, however, Mormon statehood did not coincide with the national goal of preserving a balance between slave and free states, and Utah was organized into a federal territory, thus assuring the federal government some control there (Larson 1971:6). Mormon theology conflicted with the American political system at several levels: court jurisdiction and Native American affairs, but polygyny caused the most outrage (Larson 1971:10).

Mormon drives for statehood were vigorously resisted by the non-Mormon minority population: both Church-controlled or democratic elections would insure the selection of Mormon officials. Continued federal control insured a degree of protection for this population. The ideals of 'freedom of religion' and 'democracy' meant quite different goals for the Mormon and non-Mormon population. A series of anti-polygyny laws were enacted and enforced by the government that increased the number of men imprisoned for 'illegal' marriages. This 'Americanization' of Utah previous to admission to statehood is described in detail by Larson (1971) - the most powerful symbol of Mormon differences and refusal to follow American laws was polygyny. It was virtually abandoned in exchange for statehood. Interestingly, Republicans had been harsh towards polygynous Mormons, while Democrats had been sympathetic, but as both vied for Utah to become a state under their auspices, church leaders came to believe that the Republicans would be more successful; thus, Utah became a Republican state.

Mormon ideology combined symbols from the dominant society and reorganized them to a powerful effect. This is surprising because the Mormon beliefs were often incongruent with nineteenth century mainstream culture, especially their marital practices. It offered a theocratic vision of society, intended to solve the problem of denominationalism. It was also a radical political protest: it denied civil authority in general, while the marital practice of polygyny suggested revisions of property and inheritance laws.

Analysis

I analyzed two movements, six hundred years apart, and sharing few

specific elements. The power of this comparison lies in the differences between the cases: a general theoretical point can be made by showing that quite different particular circumstances gave rise to the same general processes. Both movements arose from a critical juncture in a changing economy and these conditions influenced the form and content of both. The best information suggests that both movements found followers from a broad range of society and both movements borrowed and reorganized symbols from different social classes. Although much of the content of the Waldensian message was sympathetic to peasants and the poor, the movement itself arose from urban roots and borrowed from the orthodox reform movements of the previous centuries. Explicitly, the Waldensians message contrasted the immoral wealth of the church at the expense of the poor - usually peasants. Implicitly, there was also a critique of the usurpation of the merchants' roles by the church: the movement arose when the church's profit making activities were preventing merchants from expanding their economic role in Lyons. Similarly, the Mormon ideology appealed to a wide range of social classes, though its roots were in marginalized farming communities. It combined different aspects of bourgeois family ideology, although this is not immediately apparent, since polygyny seems highly incongruent with nineteenth century American culture. Mormons strongly defended polygyny as a solution to many of the perceived evils of nineteenth century American culture.

Both Waldensians and Mormons were concerned with the relation of sacred and secular power. In both cases the leaders joined spheres of power by drawing on cultural paradigms, while all the participants helped, through their practice, to determine the exact relationship between the political and the spiritual. Neither group wished to abandon practical power, but both tried to exercise it from a sacred power base. Waldensians separated worldly (monetary) from sacred power by demonstrating that they, and not the Catholic priests, were truly 'holy' (poor, celibate); thus, they were able to wield political power. The Mormons, on the other hand, explicitly combined worldly power and sacred power into a theocracy. The contradictions between sacred and secular power motivated actions which brought different solutions in an attempt to restore the unity between spheres of life. Both movements were 'political religions'; both contested what facets of life were to be included in the political and thereby demonstrate that both 'religion' and 'politics' are historically specific empirical categories.

How can Waldensianism and Mormonism be viewed as protest? For the Mormons the form of protest was polygyny, a marriage practice, which was so detested within the larger American society that the 'cohabits' were imprisoned. Poverty was the form of protest in

Waldensianism, and once the inquisition was well organized, they became targets of repression. Neither movement started as open rebellion against the larger society; each was an explicit critique of certain aspects, though both became embroiled in a deeper conflict in the process of interaction with the society. Each movement creatively selected and combined symbols from the culture which surrounded it. These symbols related to the material conditions, but not mechanistically, for locating protest in a particular class relation tells little about ideational form. Furthermore, I have shown that for the Waldensians, the very process of defining beliefs was a result of interaction with the Catholic Church, an interaction between the symbolic and material content of social life, a 'coming to consciousness' by its participants as to the content of its ideology. This was accompanied by the complementary process of institutionalization of charismatic authority.

'Apostolic poverty' was a persistent theme of the Catholic Church, but it became the central symbol for the Waldensians and it was derived from their most important precept, to 'obey God'. It arose from an insight that the Catholic Church's interference in worldly affairs crippled its ability as a spiritual leader. Waldes was a merchant in a city where religious politics and power limited the merchants' commercial enterprises, at the same time it nominally approved of apostolic poverty and the religious reforms of the previous centuries. The Waldensians complete adoption of apostolic poverty was a powerful symbolic protest to the wealthy and worldly Catholics.

The symbols of Mormonism implied protest. The central symbol of polygyny was created and institutionalized over time as an outcome of experimentation. Polygyny, not theocracy, caused the uproar among non-Mormons and was the most important impediment to statehood. The establishment of a new marital ideology threatened the taken-for-grantedness of monogamy in a profound way, just as the Waldensians threatened the Western Catholic cosmology. Polygyny was an explicit critique and outgrowth of American culture and marital practices. Mormons saw evidence of the evils of monogamy in infanticide, abortion, prostitution, and spouse abuse. Although the Mormon's religious movement also had far reaching consequences on the face of the American frontier and still sets the political stage in Utah and many Western American communities, the onslaught of industrialization on the frontier reduced the totalizing cosmology of Mormonism again to religion.

Waldes was in a convenient position to note and act upon the contradictions between the Catholic Church's various representations of itself. His stance against the power and wealth of the organized church turned into a political battle, rather than just a call to spirituality, in the context of the interaction between the two. The

protest against the organized church as such and against its political power in the larger society developed as the Waldensians found no room for their radical spirituality in the organized Catholic Church. Like others, they challenged the notion that spirituality was intimately connected with economic privilege; but unlike movements that found support within the church, they were defined to be heretical. As this occurred, the element of protest against the position of the church as a politically powerful force became more and more dominant. The symbolic struggle over 'apostolic poverty', 'authority', 'women's roles', or 'good', implicated political relations and the Waldensian position became reified into an alternative church. The Waldensians' actions and beliefs exposed the lack of spirituality of parts of the orthodox church. More radically, Waldensianism displaced Catholic Christianity from the taken-for-granted realm of cosmology to the realm of religion, by being something so similar to the Catholic Church, yet an alternative structure. In other words, the radical spirituality of the Waldensians could not be accomplished without political protest because the political was implicated within the set of cultural reforms they desired.

Similarly, the Mormon's political impact developed out of the institutionalization of their radical spirituality. Theocracy was a fundamental political threat to the Mormon's 'Gentile' neighbors, both in theory, because it sought to undermine the existing ideological division of church and state, and practically, because of the Mormon's thriving frontier communities. Smith's conception of a theocratic society was explicitly political, as it nullified civil authority not based on his spiritual authority. Polygyny itself was a political threat; it implied that civil authorities were not responsible for marital relations; Mormon church leaders controlled the actual distribution of monogamous and polygynous marriages among their followers. Furthermore, the introduction of polygyny had far ranging consequences for property rights and inheritance practices. The outrage against polygyny was the central reason Utah's statehood was contested. Polygyny was accompanied by violent counter-protest wherever the Mormons tried to practice it. For a time, the polygynous Mormons were safe on the Utah frontier, but its gradual incorporation into the United States ushered in violent repression.

The comparison of two different movements shows a similar transhistorical process. In each case, a deep sense of spirituality envisioned a revival too powerful to be contained within existing organizational structures. Ideas stemming from a personal recognition of contradictory ideologies developed into political protest. The leaders and participants reworked symbols of the culture into new forms and as these radical spiritualities became institutionalized, both movements became interwoven with their respective local

politics and economies. Thus, the origins of the movement can be located in a particular historical context. These movements were processes: the ideological constructions of poverty and family implied for the followers paths of action, the consequences of which entailed further protest. The participants' actions contradicted the positions of the politically powerful, who tried to prevent ideological change, both religious and political. The nature of the struggle, over cultural symbols, poverty and monogamy, does not negate its political impact.

In both cases, the material impact of these ideological movements is blatantly clear. Mormonism changed the face of the American frontier. Waldensianism prepared for the Protestant Reformation by showing how remarkably similar ideologies could be uncontainable within a common political framework. Religion and politics were joined, so that a critique of one implied a critique of the other.

Both movements were certainly political protest, though neither Waldensianism nor Mormonism was able to transform the larger society. The Mormons abandoned polygyny in exchange for statehood, while the Waldensians were banished to the high alpine valleys by the repressions of the Medieval Inquisition. Waldensianism was in this sense too early; the Protestant Reformation accomplished its mission. Mormonism, on the other hand, was too late to reverse the inevitability of industrialization and thorough penetration of capitalism. This recognition, however, does not negate the real effect of each on its respective society. The processes by which participants form beliefs – whether religious or political – and become embroiled in conflict are found everywhere. My analyses suggest that the important empirical question is not whether religious (or other ideological) movements are political, but the extent to which they are political. Religious movements that validate the prevailing political structures are not protest. Yet, reality is rarely so simple that religious beliefs are merely confirmatory of existing power relations. Thus, religious movements should be analyzed in specific historical contexts, in terms of a continuum from confirmatory to revolutionary.

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