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"The ERA Is a Moral Issue": The Mormon Church, LDS Women, and the Defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment

Neil J. Young

For two days in June 1977, fourteen thousand women packed Salt Lake City's convention center for Utah's International Women's Year conference. Across the country, each state convened an IWY conference to discuss various issues affecting women, most notably the equal rights amendment. Utah's IWY conference ranked as the nation's largest state conference, by far eclipsing the second biggest, of six thousand participants in California, a state twenty times more populous than Utah. In Utah, the organizational skills of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ensured the conference's record crowds. The Mormon Church wanted to counteract the perceived liberal slant of participants in other state conferences by flooding the Utah meetings with faithful church members.

From the church's highest leadership ranks, word went out that every church ward was to recruit at least ten women to attend the Utah IWY conference. A church memorandum directed ward bishops and Relief Society presidents to tell selected women they had been "called" to attend and that they should defeat every conference proposal. When more than thirteen thousand Mormon women arrived at the Salt Palace, they overwhelmed conference organizers, who had expected two thousand attendees. These thirteen thousand women steered the conference in keeping with church directives by harassing various speakers, voting on platforms before discussion and soundly defeating every proposal. The Utah IWY conference had been a masterful performance on behalf of the Mormon Church in repudiating liberal agendas of the 1970s, particularly the equal rights amendment.¹

The historiography of the Equal Rights Amendment has largely ignored the Mormon Church's role in the political battle. Jane J. Mansbridge's study *Why We Lost the ERA* references the church in just one sentence when she locates anti-ERA opposition in "the fundamentalist South . . . and in the Mormon

states of Utah and Nevada, where the Mormon church actively fought the ERA.” Mary Frances Berry notes the church president’s official opposition to the amendment, but fails to examine any organized role the church played in the ERA’s defeat.² Mormon-centered studies, however, have offered notable supplements to the ERA’s historiography. These works have attributed the church’s part in preventing the amendment’s ratification to its hierarchal nature and Mormons’ solid deference to that hierarchy.³ As one work’s representative argument puts it, Mormons defeated the ERA “by *merely* flexing their considerable organizational muscle.”⁴

While this essay acknowledges that the church’s organizational structure provided the means by which LDS members could act in opposition to the proposed constitutional amendment, it finds the structure-based argument particularly lacking in its capacity to answer adequately *why* members of the church would believe they must act in keeping with the church’s counsel regarding a political matter. To say that the Mormon Church is a hierarchical institution fails to provide sufficiently for why members followed its pronouncements regarding the ERA. For Mormons, particularly the women who constituted the bulk of Mormon grassroots anti-ERA efforts, opposing the ERA allowed them to demonstrate to each other their right standing with the church through their obedience to its directives, both religious and political, and to signal to themselves and to others their “exalted” destiny in the afterlife.

Across the nation, Mormon women stepped forward to carry out their church’s fight against the equal rights amendment. Most remembered having never heard of the ERA until learning about it at church. Ruth Peterson Knight was raising three small children in Virginia when she received an anti-ERA pamphlet in church one Sunday. She quickly decided that if the church was against the ERA, she would oppose it too, and became active in a letter-writing campaign that deluged the Virginia legislature with thousands of anti-ERA epistles.⁵ Others, such as Arda Harman in Las Vegas and Eleanor Ricks Colton in Washington, D.C., learned of the ERA for the first time when the church called them to fight against the amendment. At first overwhelmed by the prospect of waging a political battle they did not know was raging across the country until their church told them of it, these women threw themselves into the task of becoming experts on why the Mormon Church opposed the ERA and of working to ensure the amendment’s defeat. “I pledged that I would do everything I could to understand the reasons for the Church’s opposition to the ERA,” Eleanor Colton remembered, “and try to explain them through my own firm testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁶ The Mormon

Church activated thousands of women like these across the country, almost all political neophytes, and asked them to step to the frontline of their fight against the ERA.

Sociologist Rebecca Klatch has argued that the unique characteristic of the New Right, the network of people and organizations that began to coalesce in the 1970s, was the "visible presence of women" in this conservative movement.⁷ The thousands of Mormon women who worked to defeat the ERA were a critical component of the New Right's ascendancy. But aside from assisting the conservative resurgence building in the 1970s, these women had personal motivations for battling against the ERA's ratification. In fighting against women's rights in the 1970s, Mormon women outwardly revealed to each other their internal acceptance of the church's teachings about proper gender roles, male-female relations, and the submission of women. Like Puritans eager to show each other that they belonged in the community of the elect, Mormon women battled the ERA to prove to their church, their co-religionists, and themselves that they embodied Mormonism's most fundamental beliefs. As Mormon theology heightened its emphasis on women's subordinate status and domestic place, the ERA fight provided women with an opportunity to resist some of those limitations by becoming public political actors for the church. In a decade marked by increasing conservatism within theological Mormonism regarding the role of women and by a decreasing prominence for women within institutional Mormonism itself, Mormon women asserted themselves by utilizing the network of their weakened Relief Society organization to carry the weight of the Mormon Church's biggest political effort ever.⁸ I argue that the Mormon Church helped defeat the equal rights amendment because Mormon women seized the opportunity of a political engagement to serve their church, to secure their eternal fate, and to expand their own power within Mormonism by working to defeat the movement for equality for all women in the United States.

This essay also maintains that the history of religion and the history of U.S. politics need to be examined together. To observe merely that evangelicals or Catholics or Mormons have voted for a particular candidate or issue barely scratches the surface of historical analysis. Blending U.S. religious and political history allows us to better see the motivations, the machinations, and the mass mobilizations that compel people of particular religious faiths to support certain political objectives. Historians necessarily treat religious faith not as an unchanging, eternal truth, as the devout do, but as a historical object, ripe for analysis. In examining shifts and changes in the theological emphases of

a particular faith at a certain historical moment, we can begin to understand how religious teachings are often tied to current conditions. Also, through comparing the political actions of a religious body to the contemporaneous doctrinal teachings of that group, we can begin to understand better how religiously devout citizens understand their political action as an outgrowth of their deepest spiritual convictions. More important, we can see how religious institutions utilize certain teachings and beliefs to bring about a desired political objective.

The Proposed Amendment

Both houses of Congress passed the equal rights amendment, which proposed equality of rights under the law regardless of sex, in the spring of 1972. By December 1974, thirty-three states had passed the amendment, just five less than the number required for ratification.⁹ Pro-ERA supporters sensed imminent victory, and five years remained to secure the ERA's ratification. Yet the momentum quickly abated. When the ratification period ended, the ERA fell just three states shy of becoming a constitutional amendment.

Initially, the Mormon Church issued no statement regarding the equal rights amendment. Meanwhile, Mormon legislators, both in Congress and in the legislatures of Hawai'i, Idaho, Colorado, and California helped ratify the ERA in their states.¹⁰ During the summer of 1972, a majority of candidates to the Utah legislature, regardless of party affiliation, expressed support for the amendment in a survey conducted by the *Deseret News*, the church's daily newspaper.¹¹ Two years later, the *Deseret News* surveyed church members in Utah and found that 63.1 percent of them favored ratification.¹² As the state legislature's 1975 session opened, thirty-four of the seventy-five members, 70 percent of whom were church members, indicated their intent to vote for the amendment.¹³ With just a few more votes, Utah could be the thirty-fifth state to ratify the amendment. Yet only a month later, the Utah legislature, with solid public approval, voted the amendment down fifty-four to twenty-one on February 18, 1975.¹⁴ What had happened in such a short time to overturn the supportive numbers for the ERA in Utah's general population and its state legislature? The Mormon Church had at last entered the fray and issued its position against the amendment. As the *Herald Journal* of Logan, Utah, foretold: "Church Stand Apparently Dooms ERA Amendment."¹⁵

The day before the Utah legislature's opening session in 1975, the Mormon Church killed the ERA's chances in Utah by publishing an anti-amendment

editorial in the "Church News" section of its *Deseret News*. Citing "the fact that men and women are different, made so by a Divine Creator," the editorial characterized the ERA as "not only imperfect but dangerous" and "so broad that it is inadequate, inflexible and vague" and that it "would work to the disadvantage of both men and women."¹⁶ For Mormons, editorials in the *Deseret News's* "Church News" section are more than journalistic opinion. Reading the anti-ERA editorial in 1975, church members would have believed that the First Presidency (the Church's ruling trinity of the president and his two counselors) had issued a divinely authorized prophetic proclamation. (A church officer officially confirmed what Mormons already generally believed when he went on record as saying in 1979 that "Church News" editorials "represent the viewpoint of the First Presidency of the church.")¹⁷ With one editorial, the Mormon Church ensured the ERA's defeat in the Utah legislature, but preventing the amendment's ratification elsewhere would take more work.

"We Have a Living Prophet"

Why did the Mormon Church wait nearly three years to enter the political battle over the equal rights amendment? In the initial exuberance of multistate ratification, anti-ERA forces, particularly Phyllis Schlafly's STOP ERA organization, made a delayed, but eventually successful, entry into the fray.¹⁸ The historian D. Michael Quinn attributes the church's belated anti-ERA stand not to national political trends but to changes in the church's leadership. Quinn argues that Harold B. Lee, church president when Congress passed the ERA, believed that the burgeoning women's movement presented the greatest test to the church's authority, but he wanted the church to remain out of the ERA debate because he feared confronting an issue he felt some Mormon women supported. A more committed conservative than some of his predecessors, Spencer W. Kimball, Lee's successor upon his death in December 1973, shared no such fear and moved the church into its critical position among the chief players in the anti-ERA coalition.¹⁹ But even if President Lee had been unwilling to mount an official challenge to the ERA, critical church pronouncements about the president as "Prophet" during his administration and that of his predecessor, Joseph Fielding Smith, provided a firm foundation upon which President Kimball could launch a successful campaign against the ERA.

Mormons have not always seen their president as a prophet. Before 1955, D. Michael Quinn notes that every mention of the church's leader in *Deseret News* articles referred to him as "President." The honorific "Prophet" was reserved

only for Joseph Smith, the church's founder, and prophets from the Bible and the *Book of Mormon*. Yet during David O. McKay's popular presidency from 1951 to 1970, church publications began occasionally referring to him as "Prophet." By the late 1960s, "President" had become interchangeable, if not synonymous, with "Prophet," thanks to routine references to the latter in church publications and at General Conferences, the semiannual church convention held each April and October.²⁰

Emphasis on the prophet and prophecy proliferated in the early 1970s. In three years, three different men—Harold Lee, Joseph Fielding Smith, and Spencer Kimball—assumed the church's presidency.²¹ A *Deseret News* editorial commented: "In many organizations such rapid turnover at the top could readily bring on confusing shifts of direction and with them a feeling of hesitancy and uncertainty. By contrast, the feeling within the church during this historic period has been one of stability and clear purpose, of constancy amidst change."²² More than that, the successive deaths allowed the church to strengthen the image of church presidents as prophets through General Conference talks in which speakers praised the prophecy of the deceased president and heralded the ascending president's divine prophetic authority.²³ By Kimball's presidency, it was as likely that he be referred to as "Prophet" as that he be spoken of as "President."

The political consequences of such a transformation cannot be overstated. By strengthening the president's role as God's mouthpiece on earth, rather than simply the administrative head of His church, the church's leadership strengthened its influence over all matters, including political issues, in the lives of Mormons. In earlier years, various church presidents had tried unsuccessfully to use their position to achieve political ends. Most notably, from 1932 to 1944, almost 70 percent of Mormons backed Roosevelt and the New Deal, despite President Heber J. Grant's repeated denunciations of FDR and the frequent anti-Roosevelt *Deseret News* editorials.²⁴ Lacking prophetic status, church presidents saw Mormons regard their political statements as ignorable opinions rather than divine proclamations that had to be obeyed.

By the 1970s, however, the transformation of the Mormon Church president into prophet was complete. During the Reagan era, Mormons fell in line with church proclamations on issues including abortion, gay rights, Sunday closing laws, and gambling.²⁵ This political authority was secured first in the equal rights amendment battle as church leaders tested their ability to mobilize members toward a political objective.

But why did the church decide to use the equal rights amendment as a testing ground for a national political presence? Perhaps the church's leadership felt that the amendment ratification process lent itself to the type of participation the church could most successfully produce. With just 2.7 million U.S. members by 1980, the Mormon Church could have little influence in a presidential election. But the localized process of ratification carried out in fifty state legislatures meant that the church was able to focus on states where it could be most effective: in Utah, where Mormons controlled the legislature; in Nevada and Idaho, with significant Mormon populations in both the citizenry and legislature; and even in Virginia, where a small, but politically active Mormon population could disproportionately affect the legislative process. Since 1.3 million, or nearly half, of the church's U.S. membership resided in Utah, Nevada, and Idaho, the church could offer itself to the anti-ERA movement as the best source for preventing ratification in the intermountain West. Also, though only twenty-six thousand Mormons lived in Virginia, the fact that half were concentrated in the politically active D.C. suburb counties of Arlington and Fairfax likely led the church to believe it could guarantee the ERA's defeat there.²⁶ Anti-ERA success, and indeed the success of much of New Right politics, depended upon the effective strategies of coalition politics. In its foray into New Right politics, the Mormon Church could use the ERA battle to show its political allies the significant contribution it could make to a national conservative coalition.

But for more than just procedural reasons, the ERA battle appealed to Mormon leaders because of the issue itself. Indeed, the church continually justified involvement in the amendment battle by arguing that the "ERA is a moral issue."²⁷ A bid for a constitutionally protected equality of the sexes struck at the very core of Mormonism's deepest beliefs about the gender-specific roles for men and women in life. Because the question of the amendment concerned key Mormon beliefs about life's most fundamental aspects in a way that other political issues, such as taxation and national defense, did not, the church's hierarchy understood that this political battle would resonate with its membership like no other political issue could. And by first using a perceived "moral issue" to broach the subject of active political participation, the church could later expand its influence to include a variety of political issues. The Mormon Church entered the fight over the equal rights amendment because it recognized the particular way its institutional structure could influence the ratification process, but also because the substance of the amendment challenged the church's most important teachings about the proper role of women.

“The Lord’s Plan”: Salvation and the Place of Women

Women have had an unusual history in the Mormon Church. In some ways, the course of their social status flows counter to that of most women in the United States. In Mormonism’s early days, women shared with men in highly public roles. After Utah’s settlement in 1847, Mormon women enjoyed rights far earlier than other U.S. women: the rights to own property, to conduct business, and to file for divorce because of incompatibility. In 1870, Utah became the first state to enfranchise women, although the Wyoming territory already had done so. A Mormon became the first woman in the nation elected to a state senate spot, defeating her own husband in 1896.²⁸

Life’s difficulties in Utah’s early days meant that all residents had to contribute their abilities to the public community. Yet the economic and political stability of the church in the twentieth century spelled the end of Mormon women’s public prominence. Beginning in the 1920s, church women watched their autonomy and standing erode as General Authorities emphasized Victorian notions of domesticity while minimizing the legacy of female autonomy. By the 1970s, Mormon women regularly heard and read the instruction to, as the title of one *Ensign* article stated, “Maintain Your Place As a Woman.” In doing this, Mormon women were to reject the worldly lures of career, self-fulfillment, and independence in favor of the “eternal” womanly responsibilities of marriage, motherhood, and submissiveness. Most pointedly, church teachings in the 1970s continuously warned Mormon women to spurn the popular calls to liberation that feminism and its projects, such as the ERA, advocated. Liberation was a guise, Mormon leaders contended, that promised fulfillment but would destroy the timeless and divinely created distinctions between man and woman that ordered life.²⁹

As the church increased its emphasis on motherly obligation and female subordination, it also restructured itself to reflect the male-female hierarchy it championed. In 1970, the church’s First Presidency revoked the independent financial status of the Relief Society, the auxiliary organization to which all Mormon women belong. No longer an autonomous unit, the Relief Society and its leadership would henceforth be monitored and guided by a completely male leadership that was simultaneously increasing its institutional power while also directing the church in a national battle against the expansion of women’s rights. Relief Society president Barbara B. Smith would later liken the church’s new organizational setup to the proper relationship between husband and wife. “The priesthood presides,” she explained in an interview in *Ensign*. “This isn’t

my plan. It's the Lord's plan, and leaders who apply it and husbands and wives who abide by it know not only that it works, but also that it gives each party his or her greatest joy."³⁰

The church's new organizational structure not only resembled the ideal Mormon marriage, but also mimicked the unique Mormon notion of salvation. It should first be noted that Mormons do not worry about salvation so much as they do about exaltation. In Mormon doctrine, unlike most Christian theology, the realm of hell is small, containing only the world's most evil people. Unlike mainstream Christianity, which splits eternity into just heaven and hell, Mormon theology minimizes hell and expands heaven into tiers. Mormons believe, then, that all humans will live in glory. The question for Mormons is which realm of glory they will deserve based on their life on earth. The highest realm of heaven is the celestial kingdom, where families dwell together forever and continue to procreate, expanding their own universe infinitely. The next two tiers, the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms, have decreasing degrees of glory. In effect, Mormons do not so much seek salvation, that is, pardon from damnation, for they essentially have assurance of that. Rather, Mormons strive for exaltation in the celestial kingdom, the highest of the heavenly realms, with the greatest glories and closest proximity to God.

Exaltation, however, cannot be reached alone. While individuals can earn salvation, only temple-married couples will be exalted in the celestial kingdom. Marriages are not merely earthbound unions in Mormonism, but eternal pairings in which partners are "sealed" to each other in a temple ceremony. Thus, in Mormonism, exaltation cannot be received by grace, nor earned through individual works if one of those works is not entering into a sealed marriage. As the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* explains, exaltation to the celestial kingdom "is available to . . . a man and wife."³¹ Just as the Relief Society lost its organizational autonomy to the church's male authorities in 1970, Mormon women reach exaltation only by submitting themselves in marriage to a priesthood-holding Mormon man.³² And unlike the equal rights amendment's bid to apply laws regardless of sex, Mormon theology places sexual difference and male-female interdependency at the heart of its conception of exaltation. Told that the ERA would eradicate the basic distinctions between the sexes and loosen men and women from the gender-based obligations of marriage, Mormon men and women opposed the ERA because it contradicted their most fundamental beliefs about the nature of both life and the afterlife.

They also opposed it in order to increase their exaltation within the celestial kingdom. Like the church's administrative structure and like the arrangement

of its realms of the afterlife, the celestial kingdom too is tiered. Those at the very highest sphere of the celestial kingdom will live in more glory than those below them. Thus, in Mormonism, while there may be some assurance of an eternity in the celestial kingdom for a devout, married member, that same member believes that his or her family's eternal positioning might be further improved by additional earthly activity.³³ This ethos of perpetual striving for a greater heavenly reward played a role in influencing thousands of Mormons to engage in political activity to defeat the equal rights amendment, for they believed they were increasing their celestial exaltation and demonstrating their eternal destiny to each other.³⁴

Landslide in the Salt Palace: Utah's IWY Conference

Originally, the Mormon Church made no plans to involve itself in Utah's International Women's Year conference, scheduled for June 24–25, 1977. The United Nations had proclaimed 1975 as the "International Women's Year." In response, President Ford created the National Commission for the Observance of IWY, which allocated money for fifty state conferences and a national conference to be held in Houston in November 1977. The commission formulated sixteen resolutions for each state to vote on, covering various issues including the equal rights amendment. Each state conference would also elect delegates for the national conference. Despite the diverse issues considered, most people perceived the state IWY conferences as a referendum on the equal rights amendment. And as each state held its IWY conference, the delegations enthusiastically voted in support of resolutions backing the proposed amendment. Because of this, church leaders in Utah initially thought it best to steer Mormon women away from the state's IWY conference, fearful that their participation might be interpreted as a support of feminism, in general, and the ERA, in particular.³⁵

But plans changed when someone in the church's leadership realized that a carefully orchestrated mass influx of Mormon attendees at the conference could tip the scales against a pro-feminist, pro-ERA agenda. For five days in June 1977, Relief Society president Barbara B. Smith met with a four-person team to develop a strategy for turning the Utah IWY conference into a church-controlled affair.³⁶ The group assisting President Smith included Moana Ballif Bennett, a Relief Society board member and frequent speechwriter for Smith; Oscar McConkie Jr., a senior partner in the church's law firm; Wendel Ashton, the church's director of the Public Communications Department; and Georgia

Bodell Peterson, president of "Let's Govern Ourselves," a conservative, anti-ERA organization in Utah. These five, three of whom were women, crafted a plan for the IWY conference, and Ashton acted as a liaison between their group and the Special Affairs Committee, the church's policy-making board for social issues.³⁷ Certainly President Smith must have viewed this as a propitious opportunity to show church leadership that the Relief Society and its thousands of Mormon women, even if weakened by the 1970 reorganization, could play a major role in carrying forward the Mormon Church's emergence onto the national political scene.

Meanwhile, Ezra Taft Benson's office called all of the church's regional representatives in Utah, informing them of the IWY conference and of the church's plan that each ward send at least ten women to the conference.³⁸ After the phone call, Benson's office distributed a letter on Relief Society letterhead further elaborating the steps each ward should take to ensure high Mormon participation in the conference. "This is a follow-up on the phone call you received from President Ezra Taft Benson's office, and here is what should be done," the letter began. Stake Relief Society presidents were instructed to remind their women to read all *Deseret News* articles regarding the IWY convention and to make sure that "at least ten women and hopefully many more from each ward" attended the conference. "We hope Mormons everywhere will participate in the meetings and become part of the decision making process," the letter concluded.³⁹

How each ward selected its ten designates varied. In some wards, the Relief Society president asked women to accompany her to the meetings. In other wards, the bishop (equivalent to a male pastor) "called" women to represent the ward at the conference. These different types of selection would have carried vastly different meaning for the women.

Aside from the very highest echelons of the church's leadership, the Mormon Church is an entirely lay ministry operation run by volunteers who retain their secular occupations. As part of a hierarchical organization, all men, from local ward bishop to regional representative, are "called" to their positions by the man directly above them. At the ward level, the bishop calls men and women from his congregation to fill the various positions, such as Relief Society president, primary teacher, organist, and door greeter. Mormons believe that a calling is a revealed, divine appointment, not a human-made decision. A ward bishop, for example, presents his selection for a calling to God and seeks confirmation of his choice through prayer. Thus, as the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* explains, "when leaders select members to fulfill callings . . . members understand that

callings have divine approval.”⁴⁰ Given this divine sanction, few Mormons decline their calling, believing also that blessings, both on earth and in the afterlife, come to those who graciously accept their callings. In accepting and fulfilling their callings, Mormons add to their work toward exaltation in the celestial kingdom.⁴¹

So, when ward bishops in the summer of 1977 selected women from their wards to attend Utah’s IWY conference, most women, whether specifically told so or not, believed that this was not a voluntary invitation, but a calling from God. Even in wards where Relief Society presidents *asked* the women to go to the IWY conference, as opposed to *called* them, since only male bishops can issue callings, the Relief Society presidents often did this by reading letters of instruction from the highest ranks of the church’s leadership, thus apparently passing on a calling to these women from higher authorities.

It also appears, based on accounts, that the specificity of instructions given to these women regarding what to do at the IWY conference varied from ward to ward. Many Mormon women attended antifeminist, anti-ERA workshops organized by the Conservative Caucus of Utah, an organization led by Dennis R. Ker, a Mormon bishop. Though not an official church organization, the Conservative Caucus utilized the church’s highly organized Relief Society network via its comprehensive telephone tree to spread the invitation to Mormon women to attend any of the caucus’s fourteen workshops that would prepare them for participating in the state convention.⁴² At these workshops, leaders instructed the women to vote no on all resolutions, no matter how good they might seem, because some of them “had been deceitfully written and baited with hidden hooks,” as one woman remembered them being described.⁴³ While the Mormon Church had no official connections with the Conservative Caucus of Utah’s workshops, it would have been hard for the average Mormon woman to know this. Made aware of the workshops through her Relief Society network, a Mormon woman likely would have thought she was attending the preconference workshop, surrounded by other women from her own ward no less, at the behest of the same church that had also called her to attend the state convention later that month. In this light, while the church could publicly claim to a skeptical national media that it had no role in directing its women in how to vote at the state convention, it could also rest assured that its women would perceive these meetings as church organized and directed and that the instructions given in the workshops were church approved and inspired.⁴⁴

Of course, not every Mormon woman who attended the Utah IWY conference participated in the Conservative Caucus’s workshops. Also, many Mormon

women remember hearing no specific instructions from their leaders about what to do at the IWY conference. However, even without instruction, most of the women still understood what was expected of them. Dixie Snow Huefner, a Utah IWY conference participant, remembered that the calls made through the church's telephone tree relayed not so much a nonpartisan encouragement for women to participate in a community event, but rather an urgent warning that Mormon women were needed to offset the anticipated feminist nature of the conference and, as her Relief Society president told her, to reflect "church standards" at the meeting. Huefner's Relief Society president then sent her a copy of the conference preregistration form marked up to highlight the workshops that Mormon women ought to attend, including the session on the ERA. "It seems obvious that members did not need to be told explicitly how to vote," Huefner recalled. "Their attitudes about the conference had already been shaped."⁴⁵

Of the nearly fourteen thousand women who packed the Salt Palace convention hall for the Utah IWY conference, thirteen thousand belonged to the Mormon Church. These women commandeered the convention's proceedings and defeated every proposed resolution, even one motion to curb pornography.⁴⁶ But the attendees had really come to the Salt Palace because of the equal rights amendment. When the votes were tallied, the resolution "The Equal Rights Amendment should be ratified," lost in a landslide: 8,956 votes to 666. The Salt Palace erupted in cheers upon hearing the resolution's lopsided defeat.⁴⁷

Finally, the attendees selected Utah's fourteen delegates and five alternates for the national IWY conference in Houston later that year. Of the nineteen elected, eighteen were Mormon, five of whom were Relief Society leaders. All nineteen had expressed opposition to the ERA as their primary motivation for serving as a delegate to the national convention.⁴⁸ The Utah IWY conference concluded as a resounding rebuke to the national pro-ERA movement and as a testament to the Mormon Church's ability to activate its women through the Relief Society network to accomplish its political goals. Successful first in Utah, the Mormon Church repeated this strategy of utilizing the Relief Society network to flood the state IWY conferences with Mormon women in states as diverse as Hawai'i, Florida, New York, Mississippi, Washington, Alabama, Montana, and Kansas.⁴⁹ And Mormon women seized the opportunity to serve their church, accepting a political mission wrapped in a discourse of religious calling.

The Battle in Sin City: Stopping the ERA in Nevada

The Mormon Church identified Nevada as a state where it could prevent the ERA's ratification. Though constituting just 10 percent of the population, Mormons in Nevada, repeatedly instructed by the church that they should "pray to the Lord for guidance, and go to the polls and vote," often represented more than 30 percent of Nevadan voters in any given election.⁵⁰ From 1975 to 1978, Nevadan Mormons applied enough pressure on state legislators to make sure the state senate never passed the ERA.

Having watched the amendment be repeatedly defeated in the senate, ERA backers in Nevada hoped that a 1978 ballot referendum on the amendment might change its fate. Most candidates in the 1978 campaign demurred on voicing their position on the ERA, saying instead they would support the results of the referendum, so pro-ERA forces hoped that an apparent amendment-supporting majority of Nevadans could ensure at last the ERA's ratification in the state. Shortly before the election, a poll showed a slight majority of Nevadans intended to vote for the ERA's ratification. Inspired by this challenge, the Mormon Church's leadership in Nevada mounted a last-ditch effort against the amendment.⁵¹

The weekend before the election, Mormon leaders held a meeting for approximately two thousand Las Vegas-area Saints. Because more than 50 percent of Nevada's population lived in greater Las Vegas, church leaders targeted their anti-ERA campaign to the metropolitan area.⁵² The two thousand Mormons gathered at the Saturday evening meeting witnessed a spirited presentation on how they could help defeat the ERA by enlisting as many members from their wards as they could for a full-out final assault. The next evening, Sunday, November 5, wards and stakes all over Las Vegas organized special assemblies so that all area Mormons could learn about what the church expected of them in the remaining days before the election.⁵³ Deb Turner's experience that evening was common. Her North Las Vegas stake held a meeting, which all married couples had been asked to attend. At the meeting, Turner listened in horror as church leaders described the new world that passage of the ERA would create, with women dragged to the frontlines in war and unisex bathrooms providing havens for rapists to attack women. "But wait! There was a way we could stop this," Turner recalled,

They just happened to have a bunch of literature . . . and had broken the community up into geographical areas for us to canvas (which just coincidentally corresponded to the wards and stakes) and we could go door-to-door handing out literature and telling people why they

should vote against passage of the ERA. Only the women were to canvas the neighborhoods . . . so people could see that women were opposed to the ERA. . . . They had already broken down our ward into the streets and blocks they wanted each one of us to canvas. . . . I took what had been assigned to me and did the street I was assigned.⁵⁴

Throughout greater Las Vegas, nine thousand Mormon women like Turner spread out over the city in similar fashion. The church later boasted that every Mormon in Las Vegas was contacted and reminded to vote and that anti-ERA pamphlets were placed on almost every doorstep in the metropolitan area. The day of the election, 95 percent of all eligible Mormons in Nevada showed up to vote. Having rallied its members and widely disseminated through its women its anti-ERA message, the Mormon Church brought about a rousing two-to-one defeat for the referendum on the equal rights amendment in Nevada. The church guaranteed that one more state would not ratify the amendment.

Sonia Johnson, Mormons for ERA, and the Threat of Excommunication

In January 1978, Sonia Johnson and three other Mormon women in northern Virginia organized Mormons for ERA (MERA). Johnson, the ward organist and a former Relief Society teacher and president, knew nothing, like many Mormon women, about the ERA until she learned of it at church. "And everything I heard about it was bad," she remembered. In April 1977, the stake president for northern Virginia visited Johnson's ward to deliver a sermon on why the church was opposing the ERA, a message that primarily consisted of him reading a First Presidency statement against the amendment. Following this, Mormon leaders in northern Virginia organized the Virginia LDS Women's Coalition (VLDSCC), an anti-ERA organization all Mormon women were encouraged to join. Those who did were then "set apart," signifying a church calling had been extended and accepted. The VLDSCC quickly ballooned to sixteen thousand members, and it joined with other Virginia anti-ERA groups in lobbying state legislators, circulating anti-ERA literature, holding demonstrations, and collecting signatures for anti-ERA petitions, many gathered before and after church services. Though accounting for less than 1 percent of Virginia's population, Mormons wrote approximately 85 percent of the anti-ERA letters Virginia state legislators received.⁵⁵

Incensed by the church's role in the ERA battle, Johnson and three other women organized Mormons for ERA to oppose the church's work against the amendment. Johnson, who held a PhD in education from Rutgers University but remained a homemaker, had recently become interested in feminism,

devouring books such as *The Female Eunuch* and *The Feminine Mystique*.⁵⁶ Initially, MERA remained small and local, but it counted a thousand members nationwide by 1981.⁵⁷ Many more supporters sent money to MERA but refrained from joining, or even signing their letters, for fear of reprisals from the church. These secret donors understood what Johnson would learn: the Mormon Church would not ignore a woman challenging its authority.⁵⁸

While the Mormons for ERA group seemed minuscule in light of the thousands the church had activated to oppose the amendment, the church still wanted to quiet the voices of protest raging from the group. No one represented a bigger public threat to the church's power over its members than Johnson herself. Johnson's testimony supporting the ERA before a Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights in 1978 had thrust her into the national spotlight, and she traveled throughout the country speaking out on the role the Mormon Church was playing in defeating the ERA.

Johnson most enraged the church leadership when she announced that President Kimball had received no divine revelation guiding the church's opposition to the ERA, but that God instead had revealed to her that the church should support the amendment.⁵⁹ Johnson's flouting of established church doctrine regarding the president's prophetic status helped strengthen the conviction in most Mormons that her work, and that of Mormons for ERA, was outside of the church's will and the first step toward apostasy. Indeed, faithful Mormons questioned whether those who supported the amendment could even call themselves Mormons, and church leaders helped support that doubt. Hartman Rector Jr., a General Authority of the church, sent Teddie Wood, one of the Mormons for ERA's founders, a letter voicing such an accusation. "The Lord has spoken through his Prophet Spencer W. Kimball," Rector wrote to Wood. "If you are really serious about being a Mormon, you will sustain the Prophet. . . . So far as I am concerned—you are not a 'Mormon' and should'nt [*sic*] make pretenses that you are—certainly you don't represent the rank and file membership of the Church." Sonia Johnson frequently answered her phone to the voice of an enraged member yelling at her that she was not a Mormon.⁶⁰

While Mormons for ERA's leaders weathered challenges to their spiritual authenticity, other pro-ERA Mormons experienced various forms of discipline from their leaders. Wanda Scott of Utah County was released from her calling as Relief Society teacher after she voiced support for the amendment. The bishop of Sonia Johnson's mother in Logan, Utah, warned her of the precarious status of her church membership after she signed a pro-ERA letter and threatened to revoke her temple recommend if she continued to support the

amendment. Many other stake presidents issued no such warning and instead denied temple recommends to those women who were unaligned with the prophet's admonition.⁶¹

The revocation of a temple recommend was one of the harshest ways a bishop could discipline a member. In Mormon temples, worthy Saints perform sacred rituals that relate to salvation and exaltation. Unlike Mormon wards, temples are closed to the public. Indeed, not even all Mormons may enter a temple. Temple admission, instead, extends only to faithful Mormons whose bishops judge them worthy to hold a temple recommend card. In yearly interviews, ward bishops assess the worthiness of a member with questions that include, "Do you sustain the [Church] President . . . as a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, recognizing no other person on earth as authorized to exercise all priesthood keys?" and "Do you earnestly strive to live in accordance with the accepted rules and doctrines of the Church?" and "Will you earnestly strive to do your duty in the Church . . . and to obey the rules, laws, and commandments of the Church?"⁶² A temple recommend tangibly signifies one's right standing with the church, and thus with God. Only those who regularly retain their temple recommends can hope to spend eternity in the celestial kingdom. And those with temple recommends frequently engage in temple work in order to further exalt themselves in the afterlife through earthly activity. Thus, revoking one's temple recommend has frightening eternal consequences.⁶³ By refusing temple recommends to various Mormons who supported the equal rights amendment, the church sent a strident message of the timeless importance for each member in following the prophet's will.

Fearful of the growing prominence of Sonia Johnson and Mormons for ERA and their mutinous potential, the church excommunicated Johnson by letter in December 1979. The letter reminded Johnson that she had never been dissuaded "from seeking the ratification of the equal rights amendment." The church was excommunicating Johnson not because of her political views, the letter maintained, but because she was "not in harmony with church doctrine concerning the nature of God in the manner in which He directs His church on earth."⁶⁴

Johnson's excommunication achieved a double success for the church. First, it effectively minimized Mormon support for the ERA by instilling the fears of a similar fate for those who worked against the church's political objectives. Mormons for ERA's membership flatlined at a thousand in 1981, a paltry number in light of the church's approximately 3 million American members in 1980.⁶⁵ Conversely, thirteen thousand Mormon women in Utah

had turned the IWY conference into an anti-ERA protest; nine thousand Saints had canvassed Las Vegas on behalf of the church's anti-ERA mission; sixteen thousand church members in northern Virginia had joined the church's anti-ERA organization there. Across the country, Mormons by the thousands, mostly women, worked locally to defeat the equal rights amendment that their church so vigorously opposed. That Mormons for ERA could amass no more than a thousand members nationwide, many of whom considered themselves to be Mormon only out of tradition rather than active participation, demonstrates the difficulty, indeed the near impossibility, for church members to organize a movement that challenged the church's official position. Mormons for ERA, then, was little more than the tiniest drop of dissent in a very large bucket of Mormon loyalists.

Second, and perhaps more important to the church's own long-term objectives, the excommunications of Sonia Johnson and other ERA supporters strengthened the ability of the church's hierarchy to command complete obedience from its members—no matter the issue, ecclesiastical or political. The 1970s not only had witnessed the church's organized attack on the equal rights amendment, but had also revealed an equally well orchestrated movement by the church to solidify in members the belief that they were led by a prophet whose voice was animated by God and that they could gain salvation and exaltation only through active, faithful membership in the Mormon Church. At the same time, Mormon women watched the church undercut the Relief Society's independence while it increased emphasis on women's dependence on and subservience to their husbands. Faithful Mormon women, fearful of earthly judgments and their heavenly consequences, fell in line to support the church's actions against Johnson, to demonstrate their submission to the prophet's absolute authority over all matters, and to question the true Mormon identity of any dissenting members. Shirley Sealey, of Highland, Utah, expressed typical feelings about pro-ERA Mormon women: "In my opinion . . . [they] aren't aware of the gospel and . . . aren't living it." "Usually active women aren't for the ERA," she continued.

I think there might be a few . . . If they are really living the gospel of Jesus Christ, they don't have these kinds of feelings. Now the way I think, if we believe in a prophet . . . that's why we belong . . . If we don't want to follow that prophet, what are we in the church for? We'd better get out. Because even when you join a club . . . you follow the rules or else you leave. And so a lot of people that are speaking out . . . [about] the ERA—well, our prophet is against it and tells us we shouldn't fight for the ERA because the principles of it are against our Gospel principles. But our prophet and the church are certainly for women being upheld and honored. In fact, women are cherished in the church.⁶⁶

As N. Eldon Tanner, the church's second highest ranking official, stated in the opening pages of the August 1979 issue of *Ensign*: "When the prophet speaks the debate is over." Acknowledging the swirling controversies of the day, not least the equal rights amendment, Tanner reminded his readers that "True Latter-day Saints" faced no dilemma choosing between following the prophet or the ways of the world. True Mormons, Tanner instructed, "who heed [the prophet's] counsel will be partakers of the promised blessings which will not be enjoyed by those who fail to accept his messages."⁶⁷ Against this backdrop of strident orthodoxy and authoritarianism, the Mormon Church launched its first national political effort with the committed work of its faithful members.

But Mormons who opposed the ERA were not merely sheep following a controlling master. Certainly, the Mormon Church emphasized its authoritarian and exclusivist theology as it prodded Mormons to political action. But this emphasis, while important, cannot completely explain Mormons' willingness to engage in a political battle on their church's behalf. Mormons worked to defeat the ERA not simply because they believed they had to, but also because they wanted to. Fighting the ERA gave Mormons the opportunity to add to their strivings for exaltation in the celestial kingdom by opposing what the church depicted as one of the greatest evils of their day: feminism. Also, the public nature of so much of the anti-ERA work—the marches, conferences, workshops, and rallies—allowed Mormons to perform for one another their alignment with the church and its teachings.

For Mormon women, the chance to fight the ERA allowed them to work within restricted roles while subtly challenging them. As they assisted the church's political objectives, they resisted some of its most constricting expectations for them as women. Instructed to spurn public life for domestic responsibilities, Mormon women seized the opportunity to take the leading role in the Mormon Church's emergence onto the national political stage. Under the auspices of religious calling and societal preservation, LDS women used their weakened but still impressive Relief Society network to show the church that they were useful not only as housewives but also as effective political actors. In doing so, Mormon women did not seek to topple Mormonism's strict gender hierarchy as much as loosen some of its tightest constraints. In opposing equality for American women, Mormon women grabbed a little more power and opportunity for themselves.

Notes

1. "Women at Utah Meeting Oppose Rights Proposal," *New York Times*, June 26, 1977; John M. Crewdson, "Mormon Turnout Overwhelms Women's Conference in Utah," *New York Times*, July 25, 1977; Martha Sontag Bradley, "The Mormon Relief Society and the International Women's Year," *Journal of Mormon History* 21.1 (Winter 1995): 105–67; Dixie Snow Huefner, "Church and Politics at the Utah IWY Conference," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 11.1 (Winter 1978): 58–75.
2. Jane J. Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 3; Mary Frances Berry, *Why ERA Failed: Politics, Women's Rights, and the Amending Process of the Constitution* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986), 76.
3. See D. Michael Quinn, "The LDS Church's Campaign Against the Equal Rights Amendment," *Journal of Mormon History* 20.2 (Fall 1994): 85–155, and *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 373–406; O. Kendall White Jr., "Overt and Covert Policies: The Mormon Church's Anti-ERA Campaign in Virginia," *Virginia Social Science Journal* 19 (Winter 1984): 14–16, and "Mormonism and the Equal Rights Amendment," *Journal of Church and State* 31.2 (Spring 1989): 249–67; Marilyn Warenski, *Patriarchs and Politics: The Plight of the Mormon Woman* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978), 181–224; James Coates, *In Mormon Circles: Gentiles, Jack Mormons, and Latter-day Saints* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1991), 127–34; and, Robert Gottlieb and Peter Wiley, *America's Saints: The Rise of Mormon Power* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1984), 201–13.
4. Gottlieb and Wiley, *America's Saints*, 21; italics added.
5. Ruth Peterson Knight Oral History, interviewed by Matthew K. Heiss, 1990, 26–27, James Moyle Oral History Program, archives, Family and Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
6. Eleanor Ricks Colton, "My Personal Rubicon," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14.4 (Winter 1981): 102; Arda Harman, "The Equal Rights Amendment Defeated in Nevada, a Report by Arda Harman, July 1984," photocopy of typescript, archives, Family and Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
7. Rebecca Klatch, "Coalition and Conflict Among Women of the New Right," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 13.4 (Summer 1988): 672. For other works on the role of women in the New Right's battles against women's rights, especially the ERA, see Theodore S. Arrington and Patricia A. Kyle, "Equal Rights Amendment Activists in North Carolina," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 3.3 (Spring 1978): 666–80; David W. Brady and Kent L. Tedin, "Ladies in Pink: Religion and Political Ideology in the Anti-ERA Movement," *Social Science Quarterly* 56.4 (March 1976): 564–75; Iva E. Deutchman and Sandra Prince-Embury, "Political Ideology and Pro- and Anti-ERA Women," in *The Equal Rights Amendment: The Politics and Process of Ratification of the 27th Amendment to the Constitution*, ed. Sarah Slavin (New York: Haworth Press, 1982), 39–55; Rebecca Klatch, *Women of the New Right* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); and Susan E. Marshall, "Ladies Against Women: Mobilization Dilemmas of Antifeminist Movements," *Social Problems* 32.4 (April 1985): 348–62.
8. On Mormonism's increasing conservatism in the 1970s regarding the role of women, see Laurence R. Iannaccone and Carrie A. Miles, "Dealing with Social Change: The Mormon Church's Response to Change in Women's Roles," *Social Forces* 68.4 (June 1990): 1231–50.
9. Berry, *Why ERA Failed*, 63–67.
10. Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 375.
11. Margaret I. Miller and Helene Linker, "Equal Rights Amendment Campaigns in California and Utah," *Society* 11.4 (May/June 1974): 42.
12. "Most Favor Full Rights for Women," *Deseret News*, November 15, 1974.
13. Warenski, *Patriarchs and Politics*, 208; Gottlieb and Wiley, *America's Saints*, 203.
14. Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 377.
15. "Church Stand Apparently Dooms ERA Amendment," *Logan Herald Journal*, January 19, 1975, quoted in Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 377.
16. "Equal Rights Amendment," *Deseret News*, January 11, 1975; Warenski, *Patriarchs and Politics*, 205.
17. Peter Gillins, "'Circle of Gold' Pyramid Plan Headed for Utah Court Ruling," *The Provo Herald*, February 27, 1979.
18. Berry, *Why ERA Failed*, 65–68.

19. Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 376.
20. *Ibid.*, 363.
21. *Ibid.*, 863–64.
22. "Editorial," *Deseret News*, July 8, 1972, quoted in Spencer W. Kimball, "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," *Ensign*, January 1973, 33.
23. In the 1970s, Mormons heard or read nearly thirty General Conference talks and *Ensign* articles on the subject of the prophet and/or prophecy.
24. Gottlieb and Wiley, *America's Saints*, 69–70; Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 358.
25. Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), 111–12.
26. Bernard Quinn et al., *Churches and Church Membership in the United States 1980: An Enumeration by Region, State and County Based on Data Reported by 111 Church Bodies* (Atlanta: Glenmary Research Center, 1982), 1, 14, 19, 25.
27. "First Presidency Reaffirms Opposition to ERA," *Ensign*, October 1978, 63.
28. Ostling and Ostling, *Mormon America*, 77; Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 44, 373; Warenski, *Patriarchs and Politics*, 1–13.
29. Harold B. Lee, "Maintain Your Place As a Woman," *Ensign*, February 1972, 48–56.
30. "Editorial," *Ensign*, January 1971, 97; "Women and the Church: A Conversation with Sister Barbara B. Smith, Relief Society General President," *Ensign*, March 1976, 11; Gottlieb and Wiley, *America's Saints*, 197–98; Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 374.
31. Margaret McConkie Pope, "Exaltation," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism: The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedures of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2: 479; Alma P. Burton, "Salvation," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3: 1256–57; Douglas J. Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation: Force, Grace and Glory* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2000), 154–55; Ostling and Ostling, *Mormon America*, 164–65; Warenski, *Patriarchs and Politics*, 226–29.
32. Since Mormonism has no professional clergy, all "faithful and worthy" Mormon men are ordained to the priesthood, authorizing their leadership both in the church and the family. Mormon women cannot hold the priesthood. Richard C. Elsworth and Melvin J. Luthy, "Priesthood," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3: 1137.
33. Burton, "Salvation," 1256–57; Pope, "Exaltation," 479; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 109–10, 238–40, 390, 602–3; Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation*, 66–67; Ostling and Ostling, *Mormon America*, 332.
34. While the connection between Mormonism's theology of salvation and anti-ERA activism needs more attention, my argument here draws on the works of sociologists who have argued about the complicated and multiple connections between motivation and theology for different people engaged in the same acts, especially, Ziad Munson, "When a Funeral Isn't Just a Funeral: The Layered Meaning of Everyday Action," in *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, ed. Nancy Ammerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 121–35; and Rhys Williams and Jeffrey Blackburn, "Many Are Called but Few Obey: Ideological Commitment and Activism in Operation Rescue," in *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social Movement Activism*, ed. Christian Smith (New York: Routledge, 1996), 167–85.
35. Bradley, "The Mormon Relief Society," 108–12; Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 378.
36. Smith was president of the Relief Society for the entire Mormon Church. Like the church itself, the Relief Society is organized in a federated structure with authority that extends from the church's headquarters down through every level of the hierarchy to each ward—or congregation—itsself.
37. Bradley, "The Mormon Relief Society," 132–33; Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 378–79.
38. Benson was then president of the Quorum of the Twelve, the group of a dozen men directly below the First Presidency in the church's leadership hierarchy.
39. Letter to "All Regional Representatives in Utah," June 3, 1977, quoted in Bradley, "The Mormon Relief Society," 127–28; Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 379. A stake is the Mormon equivalent of a Catholic parish and contains many wards (Mormon congregations) within it.
40. Brian L. Pitcher, "Callings," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1: 250.
41. *Ibid.*, 248–50; Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation*, 177–78.
42. Bradley, "The Mormon Relief Society," 134; Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 379.
43. Bradley, "The Mormon Relief Society," 135.

44. Through Don LeFevre, a church spokesman, the Mormon Church acknowledged to the *New York Times* that it had encouraged its women to take part in the IWY Conference but claimed its influence over the women in how to act at the conference had extended only so far as to encourage the women to "vote for correct principles." LeFevre did concede that the women had been provided with information materials that outlined both how to register at the conference and the church's positions on various issues, including the E.R.A., "in case they had any questions." LeFevre quoted in Crewdson, "Mormon Turnout Overwhelms Women's Conference."
45. Huefner, "Church and Politics at the Utah IWY Conference," 58, 67.
46. Crewdson, "Mormon Turnout Overwhelms Women's Conference"; "Women at Utah Meeting Oppose Rights Proposal"; Gottlieb and Wiley, *America's Saints*, 202; Ann Terry, Marilyn Slaght-Griffin, and Elizabeth Terry, eds., *Mormons and Women* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Butterfly Publishing, 1980), 111.
47. Bradley, "The Mormon Relief Society," 145, 160; Huefner, "Church and Politics at the Utah IWY Conference," 62; Crewdson, "Mormon Turnout Overwhelms Women's Conference"; and "Women at Utah Meeting Oppose Rights Proposal."
48. Bradley, "The Mormon Relief Society," 148; Huefner, "Church and Politics at the Utah IWY Conference," 61.
49. "At Women's Parley Conservative Bloc Exceeds Liberals," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, July 9, 1977.
50. Spencer W. Kimball, "God Will Not Be Mocked," *Ensign*, November 1974, 4.
51. James T. Richardson, "The 'Old Right' in Action: Mormon and Catholic Involvement in an Equal Rights Amendment Referendum," in *New Christian Politics*, ed. David G. Bromley and Anson Shupe (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1984), 215, 222.
52. Janet Brigham, "Beyond the Glitter," *Ensign*, February 1979, 38.
53. Richardson, "The 'Old Right' in Action," 222.
54. Deb Turner, e-mail message to author, January 26, 2003. Deb Turner is a pseudonym.
55. Sonia Johnson, *From Housewife to Heretic* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1981), 101, 102–105, 359; O. Kendall White Jr., "A Feminist Challenge: 'Mormons for ERA' as an Internal Social Movement," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 13.1 (Spring 1985): 34–35; Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 390, 395.
56. Johnson, *From Housewife to Heretic*, 46, 90–99; Heather Kellogg, "Shades of Gray: Sonia Johnson's Life Through Letters and Autobiography," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29.2 (Summer 1996): 84.
57. Though the ratification period for the ERA was to end in 1979, Congress controversially extended the window three years until June 30, 1982. Berry, *Why ERA Failed*, 70.
58. Johnson, *From Housewife to Heretic*, 153.
59. Terry, *Mormons and Women*, 76, 44.
60. Hartman Rector Jr., letter to Mrs. Teddie Wood, August 29, 1978, in White, "A Feminist Challenge," 44; Karen DeWitt, "The Pain of Being a Mormon Feminist," *New York Times*, November 27, 1979.
61. Amy L. Bentley, "Comforting the Motherless Children: The Alice Louise Reynolds Women's Forum," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 23.3 (Fall 1990): 40; Johnson, *From Housewife to Heretic*, 202–3; White, "A Feminist Challenge," 37.
62. From *Temple Recommend Form Book*, Instructions to Interviewing Authorities, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1979, quoted in Terry, *Mormons and Women*, 62–63.
63. Robert A. Tucker, "Temple Recommend," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4: 1446–47; McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 557, 703–6; Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation*, 39–40, 72–76.
64. Ben A. Franklin, "Mormon Church Excommunicates a Supporter of Rights Amendment," *New York Times*, December 6, 1979; "Mormons Eject E.R.A. Activist," *New York Times*, December 9, 1979.
65. Kenneth A. Briggs, "Mormon Church at 150: Thriving on Traditionalism," *New York Times*, March 30, 1980.
66. Terry, *Mormons and Women*, 89.
67. N. Eldon Tanner, "First Presidency Message: 'The Debate Is Over,'" *Ensign*, August 1979, 3, 2.