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# BY COMMON CONSENT

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Vol. 13, No. 2

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## Conference Critique

Our semi-annual gathering will be held Monday, April 2, 2007, exploring trends and topics that emerge from this year's April general conference. We will gather from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in Conference Room A at Salt Lake City's main library downtown (210 E. 400 South). This conference room is the first on the right going west from the elevator on the lower level. Take the elevator just inside the east plaza-level entry and go down one floor. Janice Allred will lead this freewheeling and insightful exchange.

The best parking (though not free) is in the lot under the building. Enter from Fourth South going east and turning right at the mid-block entrance between 200 East and 300 East.

## Missing Bob

*Lavina Fielding Anderson*

Missing from our Conference Critique in April will be Robert G. Vernon, who died at home of natural causes during the last week in January 2007. To my knowledge, Bob never missed a conference critique since they began in 1994 and audio-taped every single one of them, thus adding to a comprehensive and

historically invaluable collection of Mormon media-related materials.

Bob was a keen Churchwatcher, alive to its quirks and idiosyncrasies. Documenting those quirks gave him a lot of enjoyment. But he also had a big heart, and his reaction to someone in pain because of an official statement or position was never just curiosity but always compassion. In addition to taping events of the Mormon Alliance, he also taped every Counterpoint Conference of the Mormon Women's Forum and was the first to try taping Mormon History Association sessions.

He was always impeccably groomed with a bright white shirt, carefully parted hair, and sparkling eyes behind his horn-rimmed glasses, but what I'll miss most is his quick, bright smile.

See also his obituary, *Deseret Morning News*, Feb. 2, 2007, B-7.

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To bear with patience wrongs done to oneself is a mark of perfection, but to bear with patience wrongs done to someone else is a mark of imperfection and even of actual sin. --Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

*This Singer trading card advertises a 1900 drawing book being used by the three children clustered around the closed machine. Measuring approximately 5½x3", the book contains black and white line-drawings of various Singer models topped with tracing paper upon which the children could "draw" the sewing machine.*



stung years, Mormon women have regarded the sewing machine as a necessary tool in clothing their families and in doing good work. In both the first and second World Wars, Church women banded together like other women's groups to sew for those in the armed forces and for families in Europe who had lost many of their belongings. Designating these projects as welfare work, the sisters produced clothing, bedding, and household linens.

During other times of stress, sewing machines whirled in busy harmony as the women sewed for good causes. For instance, during the 1930s Great Depression, the Relief Society in St. George started a cottage industry to make burial clothing. They also repaired used apparel and furnished machines for a sewing center where mothers could come and remodel clothing with the help of experienced seamstresses.<sup>46</sup>

Today's Relief Society enrichment program includes women

<sup>46</sup>Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach

## Following the Leaders

Fred A. North

Some time ago, my bishop came to our home to remonstrate with me about some opinions I held that he felt were dangerously unorthodox. (For the record, I agreed. My opinions were *indeed* dangerous--because they followed the Savior's injunctions to love our fellow human beings without regard to class, race, or religion.) As our discussion evolved, he declared that his full moral obligation was met in being obedient to whatever the Brethren declared the truth to be. He did not care what the truth or the good was. His duty was to obey. He told me that if there was error, the Brethren would answer to God. Even though he was a college graduate and had a law degree from a respectable state university, he was an innocent in pure obedience to hierarchy and orthodoxy.

In this context, then, I read with interest Salmon Rushdie's commencement address at Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, May 7, 2006, titled, "Don't Follow the Leader: March Out of Step." I found particularly relevant these paragraphs:

"If individual freedom is what you're interested in, then heterodoxy, the ability to reject received ideas and stand against the orthodoxies of your time, may help you find your way there.

"The power of orthodoxy has not diminished. Governments still routinely accuse their opponents of lacking patriotism, religious leaders are quick to anathematize their critics, corporations dislike whistleblowers and mavericks, the range of ideas available through that mass media diminishes all the time. Yet right and wrong, good and evil, are not determined by power, or by adherence to this or that interest group. The struggle to know how to act for the best is a struggle that never ceases.

Don't follow leaders. Look, instead, for the oddballs who insist on marching out of step."

## The Mormon Use of Persuasive Techniques

Bob McCue

*I have made a ceaseless effort not to ridicule, not to bewail, not to scorn human actions, but to understand them. --Baruch Spinoza*

Bob Cialdini has been for many years one of the world's leading experts on persuasion. He identifies six primary "buttons" regularly used by those adept at persuasion to get that they want:

1. Reciprocity. If I give you something, you are more likely to do what I want you to do.
2. Consistency or "saying is believing." If I can be caused to publicly commit to a position by either word or deed, I am unlikely to renege on that and my behavior is likely to be consistent with my commitment.
3. Social proof. I am more likely to do what is asked of me if I believe that many others are doing the same thing.
4. Liking. I am more likely to do what you want if I like you or if you connect me to things I like.
5. Authority. I am more likely to do what you want me to do if you appear authoritative.
6. Scarcity. I am more likely to do what you want if I think going along with you will provide me with something that is in short supply.

The Mormon Church, and virtually all other long-lived human organizations, makes extensive use of each of these persuasive techniques.

1. Reciprocity. Mormons are led to believe that all of life's blessings result from obedience to God's commandments, as interpreted by



*This Singer trading card suggests ease of operation by the attractively dressed and well-groomed woman. The iron ornamental and treadle are typical features.*

purchasing a sewing machine made what was originally an object of luxury into an accepted necessity. As the machines improved, so did the lives of many seamstresses and tailors who could produce more articles of clothing with regulated and even seam stitches and with tucks, ruffles, gathers, and buttonholes. Mending was quickly accomplished with machine attachments. Not only was the apparatus valued for its function, but it beautified homes with its decorative iron scroll supports and treadles and colorfully painted flowers on the machine heads.

With the introduction of the sewing machine to Utah, individuals with little income became entrepreneurs whose sales of the device benefitted the state's economy and their own finances. The sewing machine also had a positive effect on the businesses that added it to their inventories and to the publications that found increased advertising markets as a result.

In spite of Brigham Young's concern about the reduction of women's unity and Erastus Snow's grievance against "peddlers," women in Utah welcomed the invention, and installment purchases of the device became an accepted part of consumers' lives. In the en-

Mormonism's leaders. In addition, the Mormon community provides its members with emotional and social experiences that make them feel good. They respond by being willing to do much of what Mormon leaders ask of them.

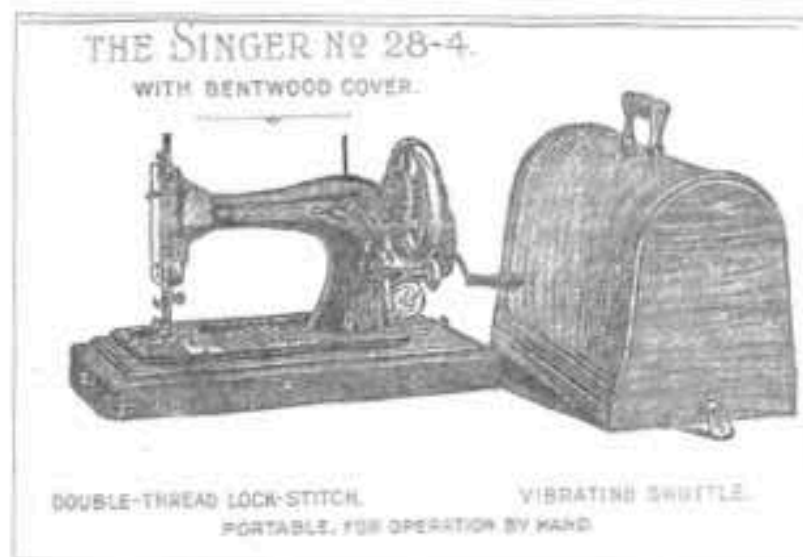
2. Consistency or "saying is believing. Once we have borne testimony in public even once, let alone many times, we tend to behave in a manner that is consistent with what we have said. This sheds new light on the "every member of missionary" concept. Its primary benefit to Mormonism is most likely its effect on current Mormons instead of potential converts. Public prayer, teaching lessons, giving talks, etc., all bring the same force to bear. Missionary discussions are designed for this purpose as well—that is, potential converts are encouraged to express agreement with Mormon principles, pray using the Mormon format, etc. And once committed to Mormonism through baptism, their level of commitment is gradually increased as they accept callings, receive priesthood ordinations, and make temple covenants. As long as each step is relatively small, our tendency to be consistent with prior commitments facilitates a gradual ratcheting up to the commitment pinnacle that characterizes temple-recommend-holding, leadership-track Mormons. And the greater the commitment requested, the more likely it is that a reasonable offering will be given. For example, in many experiments financial contributions to charities have been dramatically increased if the charity first makes a huge request ("Could you spend a weekend helping to care for our mentally challenged adults?") and, when that is declined, asks for a financial contribution. It is therefore not surprising that Mormons who have made the ambiguous temple covenant to give all of their time, talent, and money to the Mormon Church are more likely than non-temple-going Mormons to make sizable financial and temporal

offerings.

3. Social proof. The Mormon Church emphasizes doing things together and in a "correlated" fashion since it is easier to extract commitments from people who are surrounded by others whom they perceive to be doing the same thing. Most Mormons believe that a far higher percentage of their fellow Mormons hold temple recommends, have orthodox Mormon beliefs, and invest long hours of service in the Mormon community, etc., than is, in fact, the case. Mormon leaders achieve this perception by presenting a consistent image about what constitutes acceptable Mormon belief and behavior and simultaneously controlling information about actual belief and behavior that circulates within the group.

In fact, conforming belief and private behavior are not required. But public behavior must conform to the Mormon standard, and silence is required with regard to private disbelief and disobedience. Those who will not obey to this minimum standard are silenced, removed from view, or discredited.

Simon G. Southerton's case illustrates this dynamic. A geneticist and a former bishop, he eventually became inactive after many years of service over intellectual problems with the Mormon faith claims. After years of inactivity, he published *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004) on Book of Mormon claims contrasted with DNA evidence. His stake president excommunicated him in July 2005 on the grounds that he had committed adultery five years previously. Simon admitted the affair, which had occurred while he and his wife were separated; they have since reconciled. Everyone familiar with the case understood that the publication of his science-based critique of the Book of Mormon's historicity was responsible for this hearing. The charge of



*This Singer trading card concentrates on the features of this portable model in a carrying case, hand-operated by turning the wheel on the right, with "double-thread lockstitch" and "vibrating shuttle." (Courtesy of Loy and Rodell Johnson, Logan, Utah)*

draw customers may also have been used.<sup>44</sup>

In 1893, the Singer Sewing Machine Company produced a boxed set of cards to commemorate the Chicago World Columbian Exposition. The cards featured women in folk costumes of various countries using Singer machines. For the 1901 Pan-American Exposition, Singer published a booklet entitled "All Over the World" featuring beautifully depicted Victorian scenes that included women at sewing machines. Other Singer cards showed American songbirds and other attractive pictures with advertising copy printed on the reverse side.<sup>45</sup>

#### THE LEGACY OF THE SEWING MACHINE

Over the years, innovative marketing and the financial ease of

<sup>44</sup>Photocopy in my possession; provenance of the image unknown.

<sup>45</sup>"The Virtues of the Victorian Sewing Machine," [what happened to the rest of the note?] [www.sewitgoes.net/Vic/victorinc.html](http://www.sewitgoes.net/Vic/victorinc.html).  
(2/16/2006).

Added



adultery discredited Southerton within the Mormon community, thus making it less likely that anyone within the Mormon community would take the science outlined in his book seriously.

(4) Liking. Mormonism strongly encourages overtly cheerful, loving behavior, high levels of service within the community, and the expression of love for local and general group leaders, who are perceived to routinely make immense personal sacrifices for the group's benefit. This dynamic creates strong bonds that are described in terms of "love" within the community which in turn makes continued obedience to the norms that dominate the group more likely.

(5) Authority. Mormon activities are authority oriented. The leaders are prominent participants, they are usually dressed for "power," and the activities are carefully controlled. Ideas do not come up from the bottom, as is the case in organizations that are trying to maximize the innovation and efficiency. They come down from the top, as is the case in organizations where control is the goal--the military, for example. The content of public discourse, including "testimonies," talks, and lessons, is carefully regulated.

In relatively small group settings (such as home and visiting teaching) great effort is made to control the message content. Mormon leaders tend to be drawn from the financially successful segment of Mormon congregations. This pattern harnesses secular conceptions of authority for Mormon purposes and places many Mormons who have the potential to pay the highest tithes in leadership positions where they will be regularly called upon to express their commitment in public. The "saying is believing" principle noted above is thus used to secure a lucrative revenue stream.

6. Scarcity. Mormons are taught that the

powerful emotional experiences they find so attractive are available only through Mormonism, that obedience to Mormon authority offers the only means of salvation, and that all other brands of spirituality are at least inferior if not counterfeit.

The Mormon Church's use of persuasive technique does not indicate that it is evil--just human. However, uses of persuasive techniques can be either more and less ethical. Ethical persuasion educates and informs, thus expanding the individual's degrees of freedom. Unethical persuasion is based on information distortion or suppression, emotional manipulation, and the exploitation of well-known cognitive biases such as those related to "saying is believing," social proof, and authority figures. Unethical persuasion tends to reduce human agency while strengthening the person or institution that is doing the persuading. It is a means of exploitation.

The Mormon Church's use of persuasive technique falls, for the most part, at the unethical end of the spectrum.

## **O Canada!**

Gene Mahalko

State legislatures are reliable sources of amusement and frustration, and the Utah Legislature is particularly reliable in this regard. My favorite episode was in 1995 when Kelli Peterson proposed that a gay-straight alliance be organized at East High School in Salt Lake City.

The Eagle Forum got a film and presentation organized, and managed to talk most of the legislators into attending this call-to-arms about the gay agenda. Everyone was literally sworn to secrecy. The fact that secret closed meetings were a direct violation of state law seemed not to matter when it came to containing the threat of homosexuality.

and will not be missed.

4. Anyone can learn to sew.

5. I will be glad to "show-up" the machine without any obligation.<sup>41</sup>

Ruben would then demonstrate the sewing machine. He carefully removed the canvas cover and showed how the head moved up and down in the cabinet. He emphasized the following points regarding the machine: it had ball bearings, a perfect stitch, was easy to clean, could sew any material from crepe de chene to leather, and with the included attachments one could make anything. He then whipped up a doll's bonnet with great ease using the ruffler, the tucker, and the binder. How could anyone resist such a presentation?<sup>42</sup>

#### SEWING MACHINE TRADING CARDS

Besides typical advertisements in publications such as newspapers, merchants and manufacturers took some interesting approaches to catch the public eye. Sometimes they were aided by newspaper editors who introduced their products in editorials. Sometimes stores carrying the machines handed out broadside advertisements. Beginning in the 1870s, a new sales method became a big success nationwide. Salespeople and the businesses they represented began to offer humorous or decorative trading cards advertising their products. Collecting them was a popular pastime, and recipients pasted them in albums and used them to decorate their homes. For example, the Warburton family of Tooele, Utah, pasted the beautifully illustrated cards in decorative albums.<sup>43</sup> Others framed them and hung them on their walls. In addition to romantic scenes, these colorful cards featured various machine models and praised their capabilities. Usually the merchant's address appeared in black print. A rare stereopticon image of a woman sitting at her sewing machine shows that this method to

<sup>41</sup>Violet Ruben Walker, "A Review of the Sewing Machine Business and Arthur Ruben, Sr., 1859-1928," n.d., typescript, Utah State Historical Society Library, Salt Lake City.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>"Albums of the Warburton Family," *Treasures of Pioneer History*, 6:144; D. A. Brumleve, "19th Century Sewing Machine Trade Cards," <http://www.ismaes.net/articles/cardsart.html> (accessed February 25, 2004).



Word of the meeting quickly leaked, but a number of legislators refused to comment on the meeting, since they had given their word not to disclose what was being discussed. Apparently they felt their oath to the Eagle Forum trumped their oath of office, about upholding the constitution and the laws of the State of Utah.

Nobody was charged for this breach of the law because it would have been too embarrassing to haul in half the legislature over an illegal "pinky-swear." It was not their finest hour.

Rallying to the trumpet's alarm, the school board voted to ban all non-curricular clubs. The East High students simply rented a room to meet in. This went on for four years, at which point the school board felt sufficiently silly and allowed non-curricular clubs back into the school district.

It does my heart good to see a tenth-grade girl stare down the the full power of the state government and eventually win.

I have lived about half my adult life in or near Canada. After seeing the near-panic of the Utah legislature at the prospect of having to deal with gay students, it has been very instructive to see how our northern neighbors dealt with the issue of same-sex marriage.

In 2003, several Canadian federal courts ruled that bans on same-sex marriage failed to provide equal protection under the law to same-sex couples. The reaction of federal politicians was very un-Utah-like. They essentially said, "I suppose you're right about that." Several provinces legalized same-sex unions in short order. The federal Parliament rewrote the marriage laws and ran them by the Supreme Court of Canada to make sure they passed judicial muster.

By the time the court gave its okay, all provinces except Alberta (not coincidentally the province with the most Mormons in it) had

already legalized same-sex marriage at the provincial level. The federal law made it the uniform law of all the land. There was very little uproar. To my surprise, support for same-sex marriage was not very strong among the electorate. It seems federal and provincial legislators were ahead of the voters on this issue.

In the 2006 federal election, the Conservative Party ousted the long-ruling Liberal Party. There had been talk of the Conservative government allowing a free vote within Parliament to debate the prospect of repealing the same-sex marriage law. The legislators showed very little enthusiasm at the prospect. A motion to reopen the debate was brought up December 6, 2006, and voted on the next day. It was trounced, 175 to 123—a wider margin than that enjoyed by the original same-sex marriage law. That should put the matter to rest for good.

A Seattle newspaper writer was asked why there was such a stark difference between Canadian and American social values. His partly tongue-in-cheek answer was that, during the great settling out in North America 400 years ago, Canada got the French, and we got the Puritans. I think he has a point.

## Seeking and Searching

Hugh Nibley

If we have no professional clergy in the Church, it is not because the Church cannot use expert knowledge, but because all members should be experts where the gospel is concerned, and as such they should make their contribution. All the same contribution? Not at all! The Church is structured for eternal progression, and that takes place as we all feel our way forward along a broad front. Seeking and searching are among the most common words in our scriptures; we are all supposed to be seeking all the time. Just as

Smithfield in Cache Valley taught school, tailored, and clerked. He also served the community as postmaster and labored for others. Then came another career change. In 1872 he recorded in his journal, "During the last four months I have taken agencies for the following articles Secombs Sewing machines, Dr. A Kings Mother Nobles Syrup; and L.C. Kennedys Golden Wonder. I am doing very well." He canvassed for buyers, taking the time to instruct prospective customers in how to use the sewing machine. After making the sale, he sent his customers' money orders to his supplier "through the Ogden city P.O." He thought the variety in his work kept him in good health.<sup>39</sup>

Lucretia Wightman of Payson, an exception to male peddlers, sold both Singer and Wheeler and Wilson sewing machines in about a twenty-five-mile radius. Her buggy was arranged to hold two sewing machines, and she wore out three buggies during her career. Installment payments were so poor that, in about 1885, she thought up an innovative method to collect from those indebted to her. She decided to build a hotel and let those who owed money pay in either material or labor to balance their accounts. The construction lasted five or six years, but in the end Lucretia owned "one of the best and largest buildings in the county"—the Hotel Wightman—all paid for in full and ready to give her a stable income.<sup>40</sup>

Although he sold sewing machines in a different era, Arthur Ruben of Murray, Utah, describes his work in the 1920s, suggesting the process used by those who sold products door to door. Arthur took his work very seriously and had his sales pitch and demonstrations down to a science. His daughter, Violet Ruben Walker, recalled that her father referred to his demonstrations as "showing-up" a machine, and his sales presentation followed this pattern:

1. Life can hold little meaning to the family who does not own a machine.
2. The time to buy is now because the opportunities are at their best.
3. The payments are so small that they are practically negligible

<sup>39</sup>Blair R. Holmes, ed., "The Journal of James Sherlock Cantwell," 1973, photocopy of typescript in my possession.

<sup>40</sup>Dr. Roy Wightman, "History of Lucretia Jane Pepper Wightman," n.p., n.d., typescript; "Biography of Lucretia Jane Wightman," n.p., n.d., typescript. Lucretia's descendants provided me with photocopies of these histories.

missionaries go forth as an amateur army, searching out the honest in heart in the most scattered and unlikely places on the widest possible front, so the rest of us increase in knowledge, here a little and there a little, not by trusting a few experts to come up with all the answers but by all of us searching all along the line, finding out a fact here and a document there, and reporting the discovery to the whole body. — *Collected Works*, 13:304-5

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ORGANIZATIONAL STATEMENT

The Mormon Alliance was incorporated on July 4, 1992. Its purposes are to identify and document ecclesiastical/spiritual abuse, to promote healing and closure for its survivors, to build more sensitive leadership, to empower LDS members to participate with more authenticity in Mormonism, and to foster a healthier religious community.

*By Common Consent* is the quarterly newsletter of the Mormon Alliance. Comments, articles, and items for inclusion are welcome, if they are submitted thirty days before the mailing

deadlines, which are the last weeks of December, March, July, and September. Please send all correspondence about articles and subscriptions to Mormon Alliance, 1519 Roberta Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84115.

Subscriptions are \$30 for each calendar year. At any point during the year that a subscription begins, you will receive the four newsletters of that year and the *Case Reports* volume for that year. Copies of Vols. 2 and 3 of the *Case Reports* (1996 and 1997), are available from Signature Books for \$20 apiece (price includes shipping) at 564 W. 400 North, Salt Lake City, UT 84116. The order line is (801) 531-0164 or 1-800-356-5687. Volumes 1, 2, and 3 are also posted on the organization's website, which may be visited at [www.mormonalliance.org](http://www.mormonalliance.org).

To report cases of spiritual and/or ecclesiastical spiritual abuse, contact Lavina Fielding Anderson, <[lavina@elavina.org](mailto:lavina@elavina.org)> 1519 Roberta Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84115, (801) 467-1617.

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Mormon Alliance  
1519 Roberta Street  
Salt Lake City 84115

bought grain, stock, and garden produce to replenish their supplies before continuing on to California and the Northwest. The military and stage lines also contributed to the state's currency.<sup>35</sup> One historian noted that "many farmers, while possessing property worth hundreds and even thousands of dollars, were often without a dollar of actual money."<sup>36</sup> And of course, many farming families were far from being worth "thousands of dollars." An unnamed Cache Valley farmwife in 1876 contrasted her situation (unrealistically) with those of "our sisters in the large cities whose husbands are merchants or clerks, etc., that receive very large salaries. . . . Our husbands that follow farming, raise a little wheat, potatoes, etc. etc., and if we did not use economy, we should never be able to sustain our families."<sup>37</sup> The continual stream of Mormon immigrants into Utah Territory until the end of the nineteenth century exacerbated the problems of overpopulation and underemployment, despite "missions" to settle and farm land on the outer limits of the territory. Utah's industries and manufacturing enterprises grew more slowly than the population until World War II.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the possibility of creating a job for oneself as a sewing machine agent was an appealing one, though unusual for ~~children~~ <sup>children</sup>.

#### THE SALES PITCH

Each sewing machine agent developed his personal strategies of dealing with the day-to-day challenges of sales: finding a market, developing a pitch, and finding a way to collect money owed by customers. Some sewing machine agents in Utah came up with quite innovative solutions.

During the 1860s, for instance, James Sherlock Cantwell of

(Salt Lake City: Pioneer Book Publishing, 1913), 1243; for Goddard, see *ibid.*, 802. For Wright, see Isabella Zenger Christensen, "Faithful All His Days," *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 2:301.

<sup>35</sup>Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah: 1540-1886* (1889; rpt., Las Vegas: Nevada Publications, 1982), 578, 759-60.

<sup>36</sup>Noble Warrum, ed., *Utah since Statehood*, 4 vols. (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing, 1919), 1:272.

<sup>37</sup>*Woman's Exponent* 5 (August 15, 1876): 46-47, quoted in Carol Cornwall Madsen, "A Survey of the Life of Cache Valley Women in 1890" (1979), Special Collections, Merrill-Cazier Library, Logan, Utah.

<sup>38</sup>Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 354-55.