



BYU Political Review



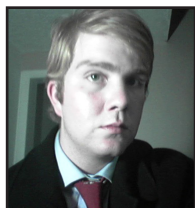
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The Truth About Church Growth

Zach Davis



When sociologist Rodney Stark famously predicted in 1984 that the LDS Church would swell to 265 million believers by 2080, most members believed that the Church was on the cusp of a new era of rapid growth and

world respect. Indeed, the Church's status as the fastest growing religion in the world has been so often repeated in elders quorum meetings that members have virtually accepted it as a point of doctrine.

Unfortunately, that is no longer true.

Since the mid-1990's convert baptisms have been declining while rates of inactivity have increased. Here are some facts from Mormon researcher David Stewart that highlight the dire condition of Church growth.

-With an 8% relative growth rate over the past decade, Mormon growth in the US is vastly outstripped by Catholics (+11%), Presbyterians (+12%), Episcopalian/Anglican (+13%), Pentacostals (+38%), Churches of Christ (+47%), Assemblies of God (+68%), and Congregationalist/United Church of Christ (+130%). In fact, the LDS Church ranks 29th out of 149 denominations that were studied.

-In 1995 there were 142 new stakes created. In 2001 that number was down to 26.

-The average missionary in 1989 brought 9.1 people into the church, while in 2000 the average missionary brought just 4.6 people into the church.

-A comparison with Seventh-Day Adventists in 2001 shows that they experienced a net increase of

2,099 congregations while the LDS Church only saw a net increase of 163 wards or branches.

-In 2001 & 2002 the church converted 49,000 people in the Philippines, but only 1000 of those people remained active.

-After more than a decade of proselyting in Russia with the largest full-time missionary force of any denomination, LDS membership has risen to only 11,000, with a fraction of those members remaining active. The same period has seen the number of active Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia rise to over 120,000, with some 275,000 individuals attending conferences.

The Church is clearly facing difficulties in its mission to "fill the earth." Even Church leaders have expressed their concern about the declining growth of the Church. In a 2000 West Area Training Conference President Boyd K. Packer noted, "*Currently, convert baptisms worldwide are at a free fall. The number of young men going on missions is going down. One of the worst statistics is the number of less active young women.*" There are undoubtedly hundreds of reasons why growth has slowed, but there are several that stand out.

First, demographics. Mormons are having fewer children. That in turn leads to fewer baptisms of children of record and a smaller pool to draw missionaries from. Fewer missionaries results in fewer converts, fewer temple marriages and fewer new families—all things that slow down growth.

Second, the internet. The declining rates of growth

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Defending the Firing of Todd Hendricks

Frank Gorzowski



Free speech—it rings throughout the ages as a banner to the oppressed and downtrodden. We savor it, like a spring the oasis of the desert, the flowing river of everlasting liberty and freedom for

all. Except in the Todd Hendricks case. Except at BYU. Hold it, before you condemn me as a BYU-hating, trash-talking demagogue ("there goes another one of those lukewarm Mormons"), hear me out. Believe it or not, I actually support the administration on this one.

I hate to be viewed as a mercenary for "the Man" of "the Administration" (few things are less cool than being viewed as a mercenary for "the Man"), but given the evidence available to me as a Joe-Schmo reader, BYU was fully justified in firing Hendricks and in wanting to keep it on the DL.

"But the First Amendment?!" so some critics cry. Say what you will about the ethics of firing a man for voicing his beliefs, but the Supreme Court has come down on BYU's side. True, the Supreme Court has been wrong before (Dred Scott and Plessy vs. Ferguson comes to mind). However, if we do not wish to descend to petty politicking and sound-bite argumentation, then the banalities of the "rule of law" is the best judgment we have for our course of action.

What does the Supreme Court say about a man like Hendricks who invokes his First Amendment privileges to criticize the institution that employs him? T'aint good news. I quote from the Supreme Court's ruling in Connick vs. Myers: A "limited First Amendment interest involved [does] not require petitioner (in this context, the employer) to tolerate action that he reasonably believes would disrupt the office, undermine his authority, and destroy the close working relationships within the office." Keep in mind that this particular

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Defending the Firing

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case dealt with a public sector termination. The freedom a private sector employer could exercise in termination would certainly be more fluid.

Obviously, the Supreme Court's ruling is set law, but is it correct ethically, philosophically? I would submit to you that it is. Any business does not merely constitute an amalgam of different individuals—it constitutes an organic state, where each figure plays its role, working through the proper channels to carry out his/her work. Like an organism, should a part malfunction, that part must either be repaired or replaced. No part is indispensable—even a CEO could find his head on the chopping block should the political environment not be amiable to him remaining. We fool ourselves if we think that a business is a CCC (that's the Community Conservation Corps—not the Russian acronym for the Soviet Union) devoted to employing people under any circumstance—even BYU must follow sound public relations practices. Public relations are established from the top-down. The question is not whether images will be established, as they certainly will be by somebody. The real question is: who will establish them? BYU is simply making sure that they hold onto the reins of their own message.

Frank is from Milwaukee, Wisconsin majoring in Urban, Rural, and Environmental Planning. His favorite band is Ace of Base.



I wonder what would happen if a student decided to walk around campus sporting a shirt with a large swastika printed on the center? I imagine we would “encourage” this student, in an enraged and offended manner, to purchase a different shirt at the Bookstore. Why? Well, the swastika is the quintessential symbol of fascism, hate, murder, and anti-Semitism. Who would tolerate this kind of nonsense at our campus? Sadly, we all do.

For some reason, it has become trendy to wear clothing with Soviet symbols and images. Students display the “CCCP” across their chests as proudly as they would the name of a favorite sports team. The sickle and hammer has become a fashion icon, and for some reason, it's supposed to be cool. So what's the big deal? The Soviets weren't Nazis! Nope, they weren't; they were worse. Their icons represent gulags, mass murders (far more than Nazi Germany), hatred towards America, religious oppression, atheism, and failed economics. Wearing such symbols isn't just a fashion faux pas, it's plain stupid.

Sickle n' Hammer 4-eva, dude!

Before Al-Qaeda reared its ugly head, the Soviets were the greatest threat to American security. Many Americans built bomb shelters and slept in fear because the USSR pointed warheads at them a couple miles off the coast of Florida. Nations were overrun by Soviet power. Thousands of German families were separated by a heavily guarded wall. Culture was replaced with “progressive” Marxism. People were murdered for speaking out against the regime, missionary work was halted, and now people want to display symbols of these atrocities on their shirts? Disgusting.

Beyond the gore, wearing such clothing shows a lack of economic intelligence. The Soviet empire crumbled as it could not sustain its failing economy; they had lots of bullets, but people can't eat ammunition. As nice as communism looks on paper, it doesn't work, no matter how much you root for it.

Furthermore, President Ezra Taft Benson spoke about the evils of communism in a 1979 issue of the *Ensign*. He wrote:

Communism introduced into the world a substitute for true religion. It is a counterfeit of the gospel plan. The false prophets of communism predict a utopian society. This, they proclaim, will only be brought about as capitalism and free enterprise are overthrown, private property abolished, the family as a social unit eliminated, all classes abolished, all governments overthrown, and a communal ownership of property in a classless, stateless society established (“A Witness and a Warning,” *Ensign*, November 1979).

President Benson emphatically denounced communism as the antithesis of the Gospel. Although other General Authorities have claimed communism

to be a necessary means to humble people and bring them to the Gospel, this does not excuse displaying Soviet symbols on clothes. Wearing them gives the appearance of evil.

All in all, sporting the sickle and the hammer doesn't make one look cool, but rather just the opposite. Doing so makes one look foolish and uneducated. But I suppose nothing I say will change the trends. I will just have to cope with the fact that someday my kid might display “Al-Qaeda” across his jacket. Won't that be cool!

Nostalgia for failure

Wearing the symbols of failed regimes isn't anything new in the world of fashion. Icons of empires that have passed away still capture the fascination of the fashion world. It's so prevalent, that the staff and I thought it would be a good idea to recap what's in and what's out in the world of political fashion.



The Sickle and Hammer: OUT

As discussed above, this makes you look uneducated.



Imperial Japan: OUT

Popular among many youth in Japan, nostalgic images of Hirohito's empire is a step backwards; Japan's modern industry blows so many out of the water. Why return to crappy production?



Old Dixie: NEUTRAL

I've got to be careful with this one. To some, this is a symbol of Southern pride. To others, it symbolizes slavery and hatred. You be the judge.



The Maple Leaf: IN

Okay, this isn't a failed regime, and we do poke a lot of fun at them, but our neighbors to the North are the best friends we could have. Don't be ashamed to show it.



The Cubs: IN

Sorry Cubbie fans, but this is a somewhat failed regime. Still, don't give up hope. They might pull it off someday!



The U: OUT OUT OUT!

I shouldn't even have to explain this one. Color of communism: red. Color of the U: red. You do the math.

Tony is from Cincinnati, Ohio majoring in German. His favorite band is Dream Theater.

CHECK IT OUT

Upcoming Political Events on Campus

Arab Awareness Lecture

The Arab World Before and After Islam
Usama Baioumy
Monday, 10 April 2:00 238 HRCB

Area Focus Lecture

Global Organizations and Brazil
Luis Erlanger Director, TV Globo Brazil
Thursday, 13 April 10:00 238 HRCB

Ambassador Lecture

Spain-U.S. Relations
His Excellency Carlos Westendorp y Cabeza
Spanish Ambassador to the U.S.
Thursday, 13 April 11:00 a.m.
HBLL auditorium (first floor)

Ambassador Lecture

South Africa-U.S. Relations
Her Excellency Barbara Joyce Mosima Masekela
South African Ambassador to the U.S.
Thursday, 13 April 12:00 238 HRCB

Arab Awareness Lecture

How Arabs Saved the Western World
Cynthia Finlayson
Friday, April 14 10:00 238 HRCB

Congress Still For Sale

Timothy Brownrigg



I don't mind airports. I know a lot of people who hate them, but airports really aren't so bad. Sure, the lines are often long and the waits are tedious, but that is

what we should expect in a post-9/11 world. In fact, airports always represent a kind of hope for me; I know that on the other side of any journey lies something good. If I am flying home, it is to friends and family. If I'm flying to school, it's to my studies and social life. One could even go so far as to say that I like airports.

I just don't like paying for tickets.

Money is tight, and I have to log a lot of hours at work to afford a flight to... anywhere. When I do fly, it's always in the cheap seats near the back of the plane or over the wing, but I don't mind; I'm a college student, and that's what we expect as poor college students, right?

So what do we expect from Congressmen?

The Senate voted 90 to 8 on Wednesday

in favor of a bill that would reform lobbying practices on Capitol Hill. As it stands, lawmakers receive tickets to special events, free dinners in expensive restaurants, and even private air travel from lobbyists who hope to influence how they vote from the outside. In the wake of the Jack Abramoff scandal, however, Congress knew that it had to change something. In a rare bi-partisan push, the Senate pushed through a bill that makes a token effort at lobbying reform, but falls short of real change.

The bill calls for lobbyists to submit quarterly reports detailing their activities on capitol hill, which is an improvement over the biannual reports previously demanded. These reports will be placed on the Internet at a searchable sight in an effort to increase transparency. Also, the bill prohibits former Congressmen from becoming licensed lobbyists for at least two years after the end of their terms. The bill even prohibits lobbyists from giving free meals and gifts to lawmakers, which is landmark. In theory, this means no more free airfare to private golf games in Scotland.

Unfortunately, that's not how it works.

The Senate bill failed to prohibit the companies that lobbyists work for from providing free meals and gifts to Congressmen, so the hand-outs will continue. After all, these are the companies that fund the lobbyist's activities in the first place; why should a company act differently than the people it employs?

Senator Russell Feingold, a Democrat from Wisconsin, advanced a plan that would have extended the ban on free gifts to all organizations and companies that use lobbyists; his plan was shelved. Instead, the Senate voted to continue allowing itself to receive free stuff. Lobbyists will still have plenty of influence on the policy making process because the Senate is unwilling to give up the unofficial perks that come with being a Senator. And can we really blame them? If I were receiving free food and free plane rides to anywhere I wanted to go, I wouldn't want to change the status quo, either.

Then again, I'm not a Congressman.

Tim is from Cleveland, Ohio majoring in International Relations. His favorite band is Fastball.

Danger in Central Utah: Kanab's Natural Family Resolution

Jonathan Beutler



Kanab, Utah has recently become one of the most dangerous cities in America. You may wonder how a town like Kanab, which has a population of only

about 3,500, could pose much danger at all. But a great threat has emerged from the Kanab City Council's recent adoption of a resolution called the "Natural Family Resolution," which mixes religion and state, violates civil liberties, and alienates many citizens of this rural town.

First of all, the language of the resolution is alarming because it has such a strong religious tone. The resolution contains language that resembles the LDS Church's *Proclamation to the World*, only with more extreme references to "non-traditional" family situations. Although most of the residents of the city of Kanab are Mormons, all official city laws and statements must refrain from favoring, or appearing to favor, any particular religious group. It is frightening that a city in the United States is attempting to mix a particular religious belief

with governmental affairs.

The resolution poses a great threat to the civil liberties of the city's own citizens. Although the resolution is not an official law or ordinance, it demonstrates a certain degree of contempt towards constitutional law, which guarantees equal treatment and protection for all citizens. This resolution has become official and has been approved by the mayor of Kanab and the city council, meaning that the intention and objective of the City Council of Kanab is to promote a biased and prejudiced agenda, and also to protect first and foremost the rights of those involved in "normal" family situations, therefore implying an inferior treatment and protection of the fundamental rights of single people, working women, gays, divorced individuals and couples without children, among others.

Consider the following irony. At one time in Kanab's history, the city became a symbol of social progress. This was in January of 1912 when the residents of Kanab voted to make Kanab the first city to be led by a female mayor and a city council entirely composed of women. This is a stark contrast with today's

situation where Kanab has now adopted an official resolution that discourages women from leaving the kitchen and becoming involved in the community.

As Latter-day Saints, we must defend religious liberty and tolerance. We should ensure that our government remains pluralistic and fair. Our own scriptures teach us that the state must behave separately from religion. We must be reminded of the struggles that our people faced throughout the nineteenth century because others did not approve of LDS beliefs and lifestyle. People sought to suppress the Mormons' freedom to worship, thus violating the Saints' constitutional rights. Our people once suffered the pain of being a persecuted minority, and today we must strive to preserve the rights of all people, regardless of race, age, class, gender, religion, marital status, and sexual orientation. If you would like to defend liberty and speak out against intolerant and irresponsible government, please contact the Kanab City Council at (435) 644-2534.

Jonathan is from Salt Lake City, Utah majoring in Linguistics. His favorite band is Run DMC.

Church Growth

continued from front page

for the Church have eerily paralleled the rise of internet use. Before the advent of the internet, anti-Mormon information was relatively hard to come by for the average person. Now potential converts do a quick search about the Church are bombarded with anti-Mormon sites, leaving many disillusioned and uninterested. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of men and teens in the Church are having their lives destroyed because of this new age of easy-access pornography. Missions are unfulfilled, adulteries are committed and families ruined all due to a few clicks of the mouse.

Third, increased competition. Sociologist Roger Loomis argues that proselyting should be seen as a business. The success of Pentecostals, Adventists and other churches is relevant because “these are the Mormons’ competitors in the market of strict, Christian oriented religions. The market is of limited size, and any one of these religions won’t be able to keep growing exponentially without cutting into the growth projections and membership of the others.” There are fewer people now than in the past who seem to be sitting around waiting for the true church to come along. Most of them have already been picked up by others.

Fourth, a focus on superficial vs. actual growth. For decades, mission presidents, many with business management backgrounds, were pressured to produce high numbers at any cost. Who hasn’t heard the horror stories of missionaries offering candy to young kids to go take a “swim” in some white clothes, to then gleefully report high baptism numbers to their Zone Leaders? These inflated numbers swell the church lists, put strain on members, and give a false impression of growth. Mission presidents should put more emphasis on strengthening and building congregations rather than running up quick and easy

baptismal numbers.

There are obviously many other causes of the Church’s slow growth but the imperative question is what we should do to once again see significant numbers of our brothers and sisters join the Kingdom of God? Drastic situations call for drastic actions—more than just a slick rearranging of the discussions. Here are a few proposals.

First, decentralize the missionary program. Give each stake and ward its own budget and flexibility to attract new members themselves. Most members are lax in their missionary efforts with the knowledge that 50,000 young men and women are out in the world knocking on doors. Five hours a week of proselyting ought to be a required duty of all able-bodied members in the ward—coordinated and encouraged much the same way that home teaching is. Members would then be involved in the finding and teaching of potential converts with the full-time missionaries called in only for final baptismal preparations. This would give the Church not only millions more missionaries, but also provide members with valuable testimony-building experiences and, because members remain in the ward to fellowship new converts, increase retention.

Second, redistribute the full-time missionaries more effectively. Although home to only 5% of the world’s population, 32% of LDS missions are in North America. Meanwhile Asia and Africa, representing 70% of world population, only have 10% of missions. The fact is that baptismal rates are dismal in first world countries, with the vast majority of converts being poor immigrants who rarely make significant contributions to the wards. If the Church really wants to build for the future it needs to start allocating more resources in the Global South. The expansion of the Church in Nigeria and Ghana are hints of possible success.

Third, better communication. In my mission in

southern Spain the only tracts we had to give people were the Proclamation to the Family and the Joseph Smith testimony. Both are great for members but lousy for introducing the gospel to the average person. The Church needs to develop effective literature to easily and simply teach the basic principles of the gospel. Most people are not immediately ready to read and understand the Book of Mormon and must be prepared before reaching that point. Efforts should also be taken to counter the influence of anti-Mormon websites, either through the building of more apologetic sites or by negotiating with search engines to balance the availability of pro and anti sites. Programs such as the More Good Foundation are a good start to address some of these concerns, but more needs to be done.

Although I have suggested several practical measures that ought to be taken to encourage Church growth, obviously the most important thing any individual member can do is to strive to pattern their life after Jesus and share their testimony of Him with others. Hopefully the new Preach My Gospel program will help generate not just more baptisms but spiritually stronger members and wards.

To sum up, there are about four million active members in the world. We’re not the fastest growing, or really growing at all right now for that matter. Many scholars think 30 million is a more accurate prediction for membership by 2080. The good news is that we have the ability to change that fact. I send out a call for anyone concerned with the growth of the Church to help develop ideas so that many more people will accept and live the teachings of Christ. It is our responsibility to more effectively proclaim the Restoration and prepare the world for the Second Coming. And that’s the truth.

Zach is from St. George, Utah majoring in International Relations. His favorite band is Kings of Convenience.

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CURRENT EVENTS

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