"Therefore, Renounce War and Proclaim Peace."

A Critical Examination of Mormon Identity in the North and South of Ireland, and Mormon Thoughts on the Northern Ireland Conflict.

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ABSTRACT

This work attempts to determine how changing certain aspects of cultural identity affect the other dimensions of self-identification and culture. Specifically focusing on religious conversion, it examines the attitudes and feelings of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, also known as Mormons, in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland regarding both their ethnicity and their attitudes toward sectarian and political conflicts in the region. Latter-Day Saints consider themselves neither Catholic nor Protestant and, therefore, are removed from certain aspects of sectarianism regarding the conflict.

Research consisted of 41 interviews with members of the Church in both countries, 24 from the Republic of Ireland and 17 from Northern Ireland. Political feelings on both sides ranged from strongly nationalist or unionist to somewhat ambivalent. All of those interviewed considered themselves British, Irish or Northern Irish. The research found that there was little or no relationship between religious conversion to Mormonism and either ethnic identity or political affiliation.

Biographical Information

Tyler Anderson graduated with a Bachelors degree in political science from Brigham Young University in 2008 and a Masters degree in Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict from University College Dublin in 2010. He currently works in the anti-human trafficking field in Washington, D.C.

Acknowledgements

INTRODUCTION

Richard Jenkins has described the situation in Northern Ireland as one where religion is coterminous with identity and, therefore, although there are many facets to the conflict in the North, it may accurately be described as a conflict with religious dimensions (Jenkins, 2008: 125). The goal of this research was to determine if there was any unanimity regarding ethnic identity and political affiliation concerning the situation in Northern Ireland in a group of people who no longer share the same religion as their compatriots. Similar to how most Protestants in the North have a unionist perspective and most Catholics tend to have a nationalist perspective (Ruane and Todd, 1996: 55, 66; NILT Political Views, 2012), do most Mormons have a certain perspective regarding the conflict? Likewise, similar to how most Catholics in the North identify themselves as Irish, and most Protestants identify themselves as British (Ruane and Todd, 1996: 59-60,71; NILT Community Relations, 2012), do Mormons tend to identify with one group or the other, or something different?

The scriptural passage in the title of this paper comes from the *Doctrine and Covenants,* a book of sacred scripture to Mormons on par with the Bible. In this scripture and those preceding it, the Lord counsels members of the Church to obey the law of the land and suffer all things with patience (Doctrine and Covenants, 1989: 98: 13-16). Mormonism is a peaceful religion that detests war, but also at times acknowledges its unfortunate necessity in order for people to protect themselves and their loved ones (Hinckley, 2003). Many Mormons in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland have been both directly and indirectly affected by the conflict in the North, and most have feelings regarding it one way or the other. Although their presence is small and obscure, Mormons have strong feelings regarding the conflict and despite religious homogeneity, cannot all be placed in a nationalist/republican or unionist/loyalist bundle. The purpose of this paper is to use the Mormon example to show that religious conversion has little or no determination of an individual or group's ethnic identity or political affiliation.

After a brief explanation of the Church, and summary of methodology, this work focuses on the thoughts and feelings of Mormons toward ethnicity, politics and the conflict in Northern Ireland, and deals with the aspect of conversion itself, and the potential psychological and social implications that conversion from Protestantism or Catholicism to Mormonism entails.

Brief Overview of the Church in Ireland

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, commonly referred to as the Mormon Church, has a relatively small presence on the Irish island. Mormon missionaries arrived for the first time in 1840, and had periods of success and failure. Many early converts emigrated to the United States, and the Church did not have a modern foothold in the country until after World War II. (Barlow, 1968)

The most recent official Church count says that 3,013 Mormons live in Ireland (LDS Ireland, 2013). This number includes everyone on record, but the percentage of

practicing members is difficult to determine, and is certainly smaller than the official member count. This can be seen by the fact that the most recent Irish census puts the Mormon population at 1,284 (CSO, 2011), suggesting that a discrepancy exists between those identifying themselves as Mormon and those whom the Church keeps on its records.

The Church has not published its member count in Northern Ireland, as it only has statistics for the entire UK. However, according to the 2011 Northern Ireland census, 1,236 people claim Mormonism as their religion (NINIS Religion, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

Research for this paper consisted of personal interviews with members of the Mormon Church in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Being a Mormon, and regularly attending religious services in Dublin, allowed me to get to know many Mormons from the Republic and several from the North as well. All persons interviewed were either personal acquaintances gained through religious activity, or were referred to me by other Mormons with whom I had a personal relationship. I interviewed a total of 41 Mormons, 17 from the North and 24 from the South. I did not limit my research on the basis of age, gender, or class, but rather interviewed both sexes, people from different age groups, and did not solicit economic information in the interviews. The youngest person interviewed was a female from Northern Ireland who was 20 years old, and the oldest was a male from the Republic of Ireland who was 72 years old. Most were first- or second-generation members; although from the North, a number of members were third-generation on one side of their family, with one fourth-generation member from the Bangor area.

The interviews conducted were open-ended and without a formal set of questions. Members were asked to relate the story of their relationship with the Church and also their thoughts and feelings regarding the situation in the North. Follow up questions, on ethnic identity and political persuasion, were asked if the interviewees did not specifically cover these things in their initial answers.

For sake of convenience and to avoid repetition, the terms "Mormons", "Latter-Day Saints", and "members of the Church" (or just "members") will be used interchangeably throughout the paper; likewise any reference to the "Church" in this paper refers to the Mormon Church. Any other individual church, such as the Catholic Church or the Presbyterian Church will be referred to by its full name.

Table One below describes the make-up and attitudes of those interviewed. Those classified as first-generation members converted to Mormonism when they were old enough to understand what they were doing and make the personal decision to join the Church. Those classified as second-generation members had at least one parent who converted to the Church either before the interviewee was born, or when the interviewee was too young to make the decision on his or her own, therefore, Mormonism is the only religion the interviewee has any memory of practicing. Those

who are third-generation members had at least one grandparent who joined the Church, meaning at least one of the person's parents grew up in the Church. The background information consists of either the religion from which the person converted or the religion from which the person's parents or grandparents converted. A mixed background means the person had one Catholic and one Protestant parent.

Table One
Breakdown of Interviewees

From the North	17	From the South	24

Male	10	Male	16
Female	7	Female	8

Protestant Background	13	Protestant Background	0
Catholic Background	2	Catholic Background	23
Mixed Background	2	Mixed Background	1

First-generation	6	First-generation	22
Second-generation	7	Second-generation	2
Third-generation	3	Third-generation	0
Fourth-generation	1	Fourth-generation	0

Further tables cover the representative character of the interview samples, which will be broken down into tables regarding political persuasion and ethnic identity.

Identity and Religious Conversion to Mormonism

Religious conversion is a complex process that has social and cultural consequences. The idea of leaving one's traditions and family history behind for a new religious identity can be a dramatic step for some people. Converting from one religion to another can be seen as a form of apostasy, which can be very difficult (Rambo, 1993: 111, 165) and to the deeply devout can have eternal consequences. Social and family problems were the most cited sources of difficulty by Mormons regarding joining the Church. Indeed, many of those interviewed recounted instances of resentment on the part of family

members and difficulties within their social life. The Second Counsellor in the Dublin Stake Presidency (a Stake being a collection of wards or parishes) related the following story of his conversion from the Catholic Church,

"The only difficulty was the reaction of our families. My mother disowned me, did not want to have anything to do with us. Wouldn't visit our home. It took two years before she actually came to our home again."

Likewise, a female member from the Dublin area made the following statement, "I had a friend of mine who I was quite friendly with, and she said that I was denying Christ. Some people said I was denying my heritage."

According to Snow and Machalek, conversion can displace one's entire world of discourse for one that is completely new and unknown (Snow and Machalek, 1984: 170), and even though some found no difficulty converting, reassessing and evaluating your religious heritage is often an enormous personal ordeal.

With religion often being intrinsically bound within one's national identity, especially in the case of both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (Dingley, 2009: 367), it is not surprising that some family members and friends would find it difficult to accept a loved one renouncing what is widely viewed to be such a large part of their tradition, culture and identity. Because being Irish is often equated with being Catholic or being British means being Protestant, embracing a new set of religious ideals outside of those respective dogmas and conforming to a foreign religious body can leave family and friends feeling alienated and betrayed. Adopting the ethos and culture of the wider Mormon community, and adapting oneself to the norms and standards of the Church to the point where most of your life revolves around the Church, is termed by historian Jan Shipps as "ethnic Mormonism" (Shipps, 2001: 79). The Church itself helps foster an identity by creating an extensive system of rites, ceremonies, auxiliary programs and educational systems designed to instruct members of the Church about their religious heritage, doctrine and life, not only within their local communities, but within the larger Mormon community as well (Shipps, 2001: 79). One member from Waterford, who himself only converted from Catholicism five years ago, said this of the centrality of the Church in his family's life,

"Our spiritual life, and our Church life, and our relationship with our Heavenly Father and Jesus, and our callings, and our relationships with people in Church have taken over our lives really. It's our lives now."

Along with Mormonism comes a very distinct way of life (Bushman, 2006: 73). Although Mormons are eager to swell their ranks and openly welcome converts, only about 1 in 1000 of those who come in contact with the Church actually embraces the religion (Rambo, 1993: 87, 102). The high levels of participation expected within the church, as well as the expectation to conform to cultural and doctrinal norms, can act as a deterrent to those who might otherwise consider joining.

After conversion, Mormons often restructure their social circles as well. The Church encourages members to go out of their way to befriend non-members (Kimball, 1981: 47), however it does, although perhaps not consciously, practice a form of social encapsulation (Rambo, 1993: 106) in that active membership requires much from an active Mormon's discretionary time. The majority of those interviewed openly said that, with the exception of work or school colleagues, their social circle consisted almost entirely of other members. When asked whether her social circle consisted of others outside the Church, a Bishop of a Dublin congregation said,

> "Yeah, largely my better friends would be LDS, absolutely. Not that I don't have friends that aren't. I've got friends here at work that I would consider good friends. But, in the long term, yeah absolutely. Long-term friends are definitely LDS."

Conversion to Mormonism can have a very devastating effect on one's family and social lives, but once potential converts commit to conversion (Rambo, 1993: 124), they usually find themselves adopting a new social circle, new habits, new beliefs and, in a sense, a new life. A convert from Belfast, who credits the Church with helping him leave the Ulster Defence Association, said about the Church, "It's a real family. It's not a community, it's family." He not only credits his Mormon girlfriend, and later wife, with his conversion to the Church and his new spiritual life, but also with preserving his physical life. "If it wasn't for her, not only would I not be sitting here today, I'd probably be in a box."

Concepts and Theory

Because Mormons are theologically and traditionally neither Catholic nor Protestant, Mormonism falls into an "outsider" category regarding religion. They join the growing number of people who identify themselves as neither Catholic nor Protestant. Karen Trew's studies have shown that adopting such identities regarding ethnicity is becoming more popular (Trew, 1996: 147). This, however, poses a problem in a society still divided along sectarian lines, especially for Mormons.

Several members interviewed expressed frustration at a society that cannot grasp the idea of an outside religion. One man from the North with a Protestant background expressed his frustration upon being chosen for a work panel that had religious quota. On his questionnaire he checked the "other" box on the religion section, only to have his employers follow up by asking why he marked "other" and whether he was a Catholic or a Protestant. He replied, "I'm not a Protestant, I'm a Mormon." When asked what secondary school he attended he replied, "The Belfast Boys Model Secondary School." He paraphrased the explanation from his superior in the interview.

> "If you say 'other', we then have to look down and see where you lived, what schools you attended. You may have lived in a Catholic area for this amount of years, and then a Protestant area for this amount of years; where you lived the majority, or where you attended school the majority is going to dictate whether

you're a Roman Catholic or a Protestant…I remember thinking to myself, well that's a waste of time, them giving you a choice of three boxes."

Being in a different category can cause problems for Mormons. According to Moxon-Browne, "almost everyone in Northern Ireland is perceived or perceives himself as belonging to one community or the other" (Moxon-Browne, 1983: 124). The two monolithic entities of Catholicism and Protestantism make such a middle ground difficult because the society, as a whole, is largely dedicated to maintaining members of the community within these two respective belief systems (Hayes and McAllister, 1995: 79). Because Northern Ireland is still a sectarian-based society from both primary and secondary school to the work place (Hayes et al, 2007: 455), a person from an outsider religion might feel forced to identify with one community or the other in order to fully integrate oneself into his or her chosen community (Moxon-Browne, 1983: 124), and might face challenges because sectarianism continues to "profoundly structure" most aspects of a person's daily life (McVeigh and Rolston, 2007: 17). Feeling compelled to act and think within a certain expected framework, while maintaining a completely different set of religious ideals has caused heartache and frustrations for some in the Mormon population. However, none of those interviewed expressed any regrets at having converted or mentioned any plans to re-join any of the religions they left.

Church Positions on Political Matters

In order to fully understand the role of the Church in the political lives of its members, it is important to understand the Church's position on political matters. In short, it has none**.**

> "The Church does not endorse political parties or candidates, nor does it permit the use of its buildings for political purposes. The Church does not participate in politics unless there is a moral question at issue, in which case the Church will often speak out" (True to the Faith, 2004: 38-39).

The above quote comes from a Church pamphlet detailing Church standards and stances on a wide range of subjects including political activity. This applies to all nations in which the Church is established (LDS Newsroom Political Neutrality, 2010).

Regarding difficult situations where conflict might occur, a speech at the onset of the 2003 Iraq invasion, by then Mormon Church President Gordon B. Hinckley adequately sums up the Church's position. In it he addressed the fact that members would have different political opinions, especially within a worldwide Church. Regarding that conflict he stated,

> "We can give our opinions on the merits of the situation as we see it, but never let us become a party to words or works of evil concerning our brothers and sisters in various nations on one side or the other. Political differences never justify hatred or ill will. I hope that the Lord's people may be at peace one with another during

times of trouble, regardless of what loyalties they may have to different governments or parties" (Hinckley, 2003).

This is not referring to the conflict in Northern Ireland, on which the Church has never taken a stand, but it reflects the Church's stance on difficult issues. A first-generation male living in the North who converted from the Catholic Church, described the same idea poignantly when he said,

"I'm a nationalist republican…and to me loyalism or republicanism are two very, very honorable causes, but they're not worth spilling blood over. I believe that as a member of the Church you can be a very good loyalist or a very good republican…It doesn't make them less loyal or true Latter-Day Saints."

Whether a Latter-Day Saint on the Irish island is loyal to the Oireachtas, Westminster, or Stormont is irrelevant in the eyes of the Church.

BREAKDOWN IN ATTITUDES

The tables below represent a basic breakdown of attitudes of those interviewed on ethnicity and politics within Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. All members of the Church interviewed for this research had opinions regarding the constitutional status of the island of Ireland. Although some did not specifically say they were nationalists or unionists, those who did not give themselves a label but felt that Ireland should be united, or felt that Ireland should remain with Great Britain, are labelled as nationalists or unionists respectively. Those labelled "neither" said they had no feelings regarding the situation one way or the other. Some had strong feelings in the past, but now do not consider nationalism or unionism priorities to be pursued. Tables that break down those numbers further by background are found in later sections.

Table Two
General Breakdown of Members in the North Regarding Political Persuasion and Ethnicity

Unionist	13
Nationalist	3
Neither	1

British	10
Irish	4
Northern Irish	3

Table Three
General Breakdown of Members in the South Regarding Political Persuasion and Ethnicity

Unionist	0
Nationalist	19
Neither	5

Irish	24
British	0

Ethnicity and National Identity

The following tables show attitudes regarding ethnic identity in both the Republic and Northern Ireland by religious background. A correlation can be seen between the religion from which a person (or person's family) converted and his or her thoughts regarding who they are and with which group they identify themselves. These figures also show that some Mormons consider themselves Northern Irish, although it is not very prominent in overall self-identification.

Table Four
Ethnic Identity of Members in the North by Religious Background

	British	Irish	Northern Irish
Protestant	9	1	3
Catholic	0	2	0
Mixed	1	1	0

Table Five
Ethnic Identity of Members in the South by Religious Background

	British	Irish
Protestant	0	0
Catholic	0	23
Mixed	0	1

As can be seen from the figures, Mormons do not necessarily share a common sense of identity regarding ethnicity and politics. One woman from the North, a convert from Protestantism and the wife of a police officer, gave her thoughts on ethnicity when she made the following statement,

"We may inhabit the one island, but our cultures are very different. I was brought up to be British…They were brought up to impugn the Easter Rising as freedom. I

was brought up to view it as open rebellion against the state and against the crown."

A third-generation member on his father's side, whose mother converted from the Presbyterian Church, and who is a police officer in Belfast, took a different view regarding with whom he identifies himself.

"I have a British passport; I'm a British citizen. At the end of the day I was born in Northern Ireland, which is part of the British Empire, and don't make any apologies for that. I am British. But however, I suppose with work I've done in the Church, I've served a mission for two years in the Church and travelled an awful lot about. If you were to tell people outside of our wee island that you were British, they would automatically assume you're English, and that always annoyed me. Because I am not English, very much no. Just like I'm not Scottish or I'm not German or I'm not Icelandic. I'd say now, I'm Northern Irish and I was born in Northern Ireland. And I wish we had our own country flag. I wish we had our own national anthem. That's something we don't have; we would sing, as part of the British Empire, 'God Save the Queen.' Which is fine, and I'll sing it, and I'll respect it, but I wish we could be more proud of our own identity as Northern Irish people, rather than trying to be Irish or trying to be British."

While some members from the North identified themselves as Irish, a first-generation convert from Dublin best summed up his feelings about being Irish when asked with which ethnic group he identifies.

"I would be Irish. There would be no other discussion of that. That's what I am. I was born in Dublin, Ireland. I've lived here most of my life….but even when I lived abroad I've always counted myself Irish…When I had the opportunity a number of years ago to go on a mission for the Church, I went to America, Arizona, and when they were there, the first thing I'd tell them…they knew by my accent, it wasn't like I had to tell them a lot, but I would be, 'I'm Irish.' I always knew I was Irish, but I was very proud to be Irish. Still am. I think it's an honour to be."

The above statements came from three different members of the Church and reflect the complex and differing views that members have regarding their ethnicity. The first two quotes came from unionists in Northern Ireland with Protestant backgrounds, while the third came from a person from Dublin with a Catholic background.

Most answers were simpler such as, "I'd class myself as British." Or, "I would consider myself British if I had to define myself." A third-generation member from Protestantism on his mother's side gave this simple answer,

"I'd consider myself Northern Irish. I have a driver's licence from Northern Ireland, and my passport says I'm British. I have no problem being called Irish. I served a mission in England, and all the American missionaries called me Irish and it didn't bother me."

The idea of people from the North classifying themselves as Irish when they were not in Northern Ireland struck one former Catholic first-generation convert from the Falls Road area as interesting. Regarding his ethnicity, he simply said, "I put myself as being Irish," but regarding the ethnicity of others, especially unionists, he said,

"I believe that you get a lot of people in Northern Ireland who are of the unionist tradition and some of them don't really know what nationality they are. Are you Irish? Are you British? British to me is not a nationality, British is a citizenship. I mean you're English, you're Scottish, you're Welsh and you're, well Irish or Northern Irish. I don't get offended if someone tells me they're Northern Irish, but the thing is outside Northern Ireland, if a unionist person goes to England or America then they'd be classed as Irish. And an interesting sort of thing is that a lot of unionists…their Irishness can blossom once they're away from the place. They don't have a problem with it I'd say, but when they're back in the tribal situation then they got to kind of take up their position on that side of the line."

Of the seventeen people interviewed in the North, only four people considered themselves to be Irish and, interestingly the one person from a Protestant background was perhaps the most enthusiastic about her Irishness. She is a second-generation member, and stated,

"I would say to people I'm Irish but I have a British passport. But if I'm filling in forms then I have to say British because that's what's on my passport, but if someone would say to me 'What are you?' I would say 'Irish.'"

This is a stark difference with those in the Republic of Ireland, all of whom classified themselves as Irish. One female from Tralee considered herself "very Irish." While another person from Dublin was "very much Irish." Just like the majority of those in the North answers were short but poignant. "I consider myself an Irishman" and such statements were typical responses.

As can be seen in the tables, ethnic identification both in the North and the South falls primarily along the lines of a person's background. If a person came from a Protestant background, that person most likely considered himself or herself British. The same applies with Irish members from the North with two exceptions. Of the four who considered themselves Irish, only two came from a Catholic background. The other two came from mixed or Protestant backgrounds respectively. Those who are Northern Irish all came from Protestant backgrounds. Everyone in the Republic came from a Catholic background, with the exception of one man with a mixed background, and each person considered himself or herself to be Irish.

Most Mormons did not feel that being members of the Church in any way conflicts with their respective British or Irish identities. In this sense, their ideas of identity are neither fluid nor frozen (Todd, 2006: 341) in that Mormons are willing to change certain aspects of their identity and their religion, but still maintain old thought patterns regarding ethnicity. Also, many Latter-Day Saints, especially second- and third-generation

members and those who have been members for many years, now feel that the Church is their identity. The same female from Tralee, herself a second-generation member, said this,

"Well I think that being in the Church would like completely influence everything that I do and am, because it is such a strong and major part of my identity and who I am, you know."

There were certainly some aspects that members found difficulty with, but those were primarily cultural. The most cited example was Mormon abstention from alcohol. The woman from Tralee, when asked if there was a conflict regarding her membership in the Church and being Irish stated this,

"I don't think it would take away at all from being Irish…I mean maybe not stereotypical of Irish traits when you go to America or whatever. People are like 'Oh you don't drink?'…'Oh you're not Catholic?' or 'You don't have red hair?' But in real sense of Irishness, I don't think it has any effect on my sense of nationalism or Irishness."

Religion

Mormons differ theologically from Catholics and Protestants in many ways. Mormons feel that the true religion of Jesus Christ was "restored" to the earth in the early nineteenth century by Joseph Smith (Gospel Principles, 2009: 94-100). Two of the largest doctrinal differences between Mormonism and more mainstream Christianity are the Mormon reliance on additional scripture alongside the Bible; this includes *The Book of Mormon* and the *Doctrine and Covenants*, and the rejection of a Trinitarian Deity. Mormons believe that God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are three separate and distinct beings and that God and Jesus Christ have tangible bodies, an obvious deviation from conventional Christianity's views of a three-in-one Trinity.

When asked if he or she is Catholic or Protestant, most Mormons will respond, "neither." None of those interviewed for this work claimed any theological ties to either the Catholic Church or any Protestant Church, despite all having converted from either Catholicism or Protestantism, or having family that did so before.

When one examines the numbers in Table 1 regarding converts' backgrounds, one immediately sees a few patterns. Every person but one in the South came from a Catholic background. However, that one person with a mixed background was raised Catholic. That can easily be explained in that the majority of people in the Republic are Catholics, meaning that the majority of converts will come from Catholic backgrounds. However, in the North the ratio of members with Catholic backgrounds to Protestant backgrounds does not reflect the religious population of Northern Ireland; most Mormons come from Protestant backgrounds. Other than conjecture, there is no definitive evidence as to why this is the case, and further research on the subject might be beneficial.

One will also immediately notice that there are far more multi-generational members in the North than in the South. Members have tried to explain that as well, and the best explanation is that the organizational structure of the Church is older in the North than in the South. The Church only recently created the Dublin Ireland Stake in 1995 (Connolly, 1995), where it used to be a district. The Belfast Stake was created in 1974 (Perry, 1987: 44). Districts are turned into stakes when Church leadership feels that membership numbers are large enough to justify their formation, as a stake has greater administrative and organizational requirements compared to a district.

Politics

The tables below show the religious background of those interviewed, and whether or not each person considers himself or herself a nationalist or a unionist. Upon immediate viewing, it can again be seen that a relationship exists between a member's previously held religious ideologies and his or her current views. These attitudes, and the differences of opinion held by members of the Church, will be further discussed in this section.

Table Six
Constitutional Feelings of Members in the North by Religious Background

	Unionist	Nationalist	Neither
Protestant	12	1	0
Catholic	0	1	1
Mixed	1	1	0

Table Seven
Constitutional Feelings of Members in the South by Religious Background

	Unionist	Nationalist	Neither
Protestant	0	0	0
Catholic	0	18	5
Mixed	0	1	0

Differences within the Church

The results of this research found that Mormons feel differently about the conflict in Northern Ireland. Many of the first-generation converts in both areas lived through the Troubles and, therefore, have first-hand knowledge of some of the most difficult periods of the time. Mormons do not have a unified outlook on the conflict, and a correlation can immediately be seen between backgrounds before their individual conversion or a

previous generation's conversion and their personal views. The Mormons who converted from Catholicism are overwhelmingly nationalist and those who converted from Protestantism are overwhelmingly unionist.

Most Mormons also acknowledge that the majority of members in the North have a unionist perspective as opposed to a nationalist perspective. A unionist from the North who is currently serving as a Bishop made this statement when asked about whether or not he knows any Mormons in the North with nationalist views,

> "My perception would be that the majority of members of the Church in the North of Ireland would have a unionist view…Because a lot of the converts have come from Protestant Evangelical backgrounds as opposed to Catholic backgrounds."

Mormons are aware of differences in attitudes, and some have even labelled members as "Catholic Mormons" and "Protestant Mormons" depending on their background and political outlook. Most use these terms in a tongue-in-cheek fashion, but one member openly labelled himself in such a way. Said one Mormon with a Protestant background from Bangor, "Community background-wise, I'm a Protestant Mormon; I hope I don't take sides otherwise."

Because of such divisions, some members related occasionally being surprised at, or even disappointed in, the differing feelings of fellow Mormons. A female nationalist living in the South whose father grew up in Belfast said,

> "I was really shocked one time, we went up for a dance when I was about 18 or 19 or something like that. In the stake centre [a Mormon meeting house] there was a big Union Jack and I was completely shocked by that. Because I felt, that's fine if they want to believe that, but it might put off Catholic [people who are investigating the Church], because it was so obviously unionist."

Another person recalled going up to Belfast for a youth activity and being surprised at the reaction to the Irish paraphernalia they brought with them.

> "We were up [in Belfast] and it was a youth convention, I was a leader. Ireland [was] playing a soccer game, and it was a big game. And they had brought up hats, the shamrock hats, and the tricolour and all the rest, and they asked if they could go into the stake centre early in the morning to watch the game, because it was on, I think 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning. They went in, they brought all the paraphernalia and were watching, and there was a few people, members from the North standing along the side. It was my first introduction to this, but [they were] shaking their heads, and not a bit happy at all. I didn't think they'd react like that. [They were] not impressed, not happy."

The uneasiness of members toward either the Union Jack or the Irish tricolour validates studies that show that those who take on a traditional identity, such as British or Irish, still respond emotionally, whether positively or negatively, toward such emblems

(Muldoon et al, 2008). Such surprise and disappointments are not confined to the Irish members either. One British member from the North recalls being in the Temple, a place of worship different from a regular meetinghouse where only Mormons can enter, and said this,

> "I can remember one day being in the Temple and some guy saying to me, 'Oh you're Irish.' And he was saying it very disparagingly, and I said, 'Excuse me, but I'm not Irish.' I said, 'I'm British.' And one of the other sisters who is from the North said, 'Oh you're ashamed of your heritage?' and I said, 'No, I'm not ashamed of my heritage, which is why I say that I am not Irish.'"

A third-generation member from Bangor was surprised when he was housing some young members from the Republic for a youth activity, and was dismayed at a youth's support for violence against policemen.

> "There were people staying with us for a youth conference and, [my wife] would probably remember better than me, but I think he was saying they used to cheer when they heard a policeman had been killed and that kind of thing. Just different attitudes…There may be different points of view towards history. Different understandings or perspectives."

When asked about the differing attitudes amongst members, a self-identified republican who moved to Newry from the South said, "You certainly had the Catholic Mormon and the Protestant Mormon attitudes." However, the President of the Belfast Stake, himself from the Falls Road, resented such divisions and labels placed upon different members of the Church. When asked about the Catholic Mormon and Protestant Mormon division he admitted that it takes place, and that he has stopped members when such discussions arise.

> "As far as I'm concerned, there's no such thing as that. You're a Mormon and you're a Mormon. That's all you are. If you start thinking of being a Catholic Mormon and a Protestant Mormon you're not converted. So for me, that would be something that is quite, I feel, offensive to the Church and to me. I'm not a Catholic Mormon; I'm a Mormon Mormon. If you're completely converted you're neither Protestant nor Catholic. You come either from a Catholic or a Protestant background. But when you come to Church you leave those things behind. That's what you should be doing. I've heard people say that before, and I've had to stop them and say, 'No, there's no such thing.' You're either a Mormon Mormon, or you're not."

Despite what might seem like large divisions most members expressed little or no concern regarding other members' political views, and these cited instances were outlying examples. The Stake President followed up his comments with his experience upon joining the Church and how he feels that membership in the Church actually heals divisions and conflict.

"You know when I became a member of the Church I was treated with so much respect, so much dignity and no one ever said, 'You're from a Catholic community, you're no good.' That never happened. It just never happened; it was never thought of. So from my point of view, I love being a member of the Church…All through my youth as a young person growing up, I've seen people being murdered; I've seen friends being killed; I've seen people being shot in the street; I've seen people being blown up; and I just say the only solution is be a member of the Church."

A SMALL COMMUNITY OF SAINTS

Because there are such small numbers of Mormons, activities and other services frequently include members from both the North and the South, especially amongst the youth. Many Irish members remember fondly travelling to Belfast, even at the height of the Troubles, to attend youth activities with the Northern members. One woman from a Protestant background who married a man from Dublin said,

"My husband and I would never have met if it wouldn't have been for the Church, because we were in the youth program in the eighties, and at the time the only organization that I'm aware of that was doing anything at the height of the Troubles was in the Church."

Another woman from Dublin in her fifties remembered the following about cross-border youth programs within the Church,

"We socialized a lot with Church members from the North of Ireland. We had a fabulous Young Single Adult Program; there would always be dances arranged. They'd come down here or we'd go up there. Youth Conferences, Single Adult Conferences, where you would spend the whole weekend, and again you would alternate between North of Ireland and South of Ireland each year. I was friends with quite a lot of the families in the North."

Regarding the political views of her peers, she said it was "never discussed" and went on to say,

"I would have just known them as Latter-Day Saints. I did have friends who were RUC men and I did have friends who were prison officers in the North of Ireland, and we were friends with a couple of British soldiers…members of the Church."

One younger convert from Dublin in his twenties, however, recalled the potential for conflict at such inter-stake youth activities that he attended with the following comments,

"There was always a heightened awareness of your politics, as a fifteen year old even when you went up to Belfast. And there was this mad rush of everyone to write IRA on the windows or to bring a tricolour with them or to wear a Celtic jersey, and I remember the leaders of the Church…just telling us, 'You just can't

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do that, that's just not appropriate'…While we'd have some really good friends up there and a very good mingling with the other members of the Church from the North, there's also a tendency or at least a potential tendency for conflict to occur. Oh, they support Rangers, we support Celtic. They're loyalists, and we're nationalists. They're English and we're Irish…There was kind of an automatic polarization there."

However, aside from "potential" conflict, he could not recall any specific incidences of conflict or violence, and no other members could either.

The Stake President from Belfast praised the idea of the members from the North and South coming together for both worship and other activities, and he deemphasized notions that geography or other differences might have negative implications on fellowship within the Church.

"We don't have borders anywhere…I witness that here as a member of the Church in Ireland. It's great. We have a Northern Ireland Stake, we have a Southern Ireland Stake, and we meet regularly. Our youth mix very well together. In other religious groups, they have borders. They have a Presbyterian group in the North and there's a border, different in the South than it is in the North. I've seen that in other Churches, but not the one I belong to, and I'm grateful for that. The youth in the South, and the youth in the [Limerick] District really impress me as great young men and women, and when they mix with ours it's a way of building them up. And you know what, the more we get together the better, and the less impressive any border, so called border would be. It just doesn't work anymore; they'll realize that."

The attitude of this Stake President represents a growing trend in Ireland to disregard physical borders as something that separates groups of people. Although, not specifically living in a border area, Mormons did not allow a tangible border to reflect in any way their sense of identity, community or nationality (Todd et al, 2006: 372). Mormons view their small community as something that transcends physical boundaries and brings them together under a blanket of common belief and identity irrespective of latitude.

Thoughts on the Northern Irish Conflict

All of those interviewed from the Republic of Ireland came from Catholic backgrounds, and most supported a united Ireland. The intensity of those feeling varied from relative ambivalence to staunch republican views and political support for Northern nationalists. Many mentioned the struggle to expel the British in the early twentieth century, and two even went as far as connecting the Irish struggle against the British with Mormonism's early history of persecution. A first-generation female convert from the Catholic Church who avidly studies Irish history said this regarding the early struggle for independence, "I believe that the Irish people were very like the early [Mormon] pioneers. I think their struggle was very similar."

Specifically regarding Catholics in the North, another male first-generation member from the Dublin area said this,

> "I'd say [the Catholic struggle] was no more than what Joseph Smith had to go through and the early pioneers in the Church. That they were being victimized by mobs. It's exactly the same kind of thing."

Although some nationalists felt a connection to the republican armed struggle at the beginning of the twentieth century, most denounced contemporary violence whether from republican or loyalist paramilitaries. However, one strong republican from Dublin, although he said he did not condone violence, went so far as to acknowledge that an armed campaign in Northern Ireland was justified when he said,

> "I can't condone a lot of the things that happened during those times, but people needed to be protected. There were things done that should have never happened. There were lives taken that should have never happened, but I honestly believe there was collusion between Protestant UDA, UVF and the police and the armed forces. There's evidence of that…It's always been denied, but I think there's a lot of evidence to show that there was collusion. And if that was happening, and people had to take arms to stop that…You know what happened on Bloody Sunday, I mean innocent people were shot dead. If people needed to take up arms to stop that happening, or to try and stop that happening, then so be it."

There were some, however, that felt ambiguous about the idea of a 32 county Republic, and some who supported the idea but did not feel emotionally attached to the issue. Despite this, most sympathized with Catholics and nationalists in the North as victims of injustice much more than with Protestants and unionists. Mormons with a Catholic background denounced the IRA, but also stressed heavily the violence committed against Catholics in the North. One member openly admitted to feeling worse for Catholics who died during the Troubles rather than Protestants. "I would have been a bit more horrified at some of the things when somebody on the Catholic side or the nationalist side is a victim rather than on the other side," said a middle-aged man from Dublin who never felt a strong emotional attachment to the Troubles or the conflict in general.

Some of those nationalists in the South, while expressing hope for a united island, also realized that a pragmatic solution through peaceful and democratic means was the best way to produce the desired outcome. A Bishop and first-generation convert from the South who commutes to the North to attend Church made this statement,

> "My attitude to that is whatever the majority of the people want. I feel, poetically speaking, philosophically speaking, it would be wonderful to say Ireland is one island. But we have to start from where we are."

While there were some Mormons from the North who shared nationalist views with their southern counterparts, most members in the North had unionist views, also varying from strong to ambivalent. One woman from the North only had this to say about Northern Ireland's union with Great Britain, "I really just think things should stay just the way they are. I don't really see the point of changing."

Unionists also had varying views regarding the direction the country should take. Some favoured the current status of the country, while others favoured a more devolved system of government where Northern Ireland had more autonomy to make its own decisions. Most gave fairly simple answers such as, "Yeah, I would consider myself unionist. I would be in favour of the union," or "I would be strongly that Northern Ireland would be part of Britain."

The third-generation member who is a police officer from Belfast said this regarding a devolved government,

> "I think my idea would be like Scotland, like Wales. That Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland can be part of a Britain, but independent in the sense that we're Northern Irish."

Another Northern female in her twenties supported the idea of a devolved government when she said, "Yeah I'm really supportive of the Northern Irish parliament they're trying to set up as well, if they could just get that together." Regarding whether Northern Ireland should be separate from the union she said, "If it was set and still had to have ties to a certain government it would be the British government."

Most unionists did not speak of the nationalist struggle aside from denouncing terrorism, and none mentioned that Catholics had had legitimate grievances. Regarding the civil rights movement, one third-generation member who grew up in the Troubles said, "I probably just didn't think about it." That is not to say that unionist members in any way disparaged Catholics or members of the Church who came from Catholic backgrounds. Many mentioned that they had Catholic friends and went to school with Catholics, but they never mentioned any sympathy for Catholic or nationalist concerns.

Those who considered themselves neither unionist nor nationalist, both in the North and in the South, all came from Catholic backgrounds. Three of them never expressed any interest in politics, while the others, including the man from the North, all told of previously being sympathetic to the nationalist cause. One man, a first generation convert who drives a taxi in Dublin, simply said, "If they left it, it wouldn't bother me. If they changed it, it wouldn't bother me. No, I don't have any feelings." One first-generation former Catholic seemed so disillusioned with the process that she lost interest to the point where she no longer feels that nationalism should be pursued, and that the conflict can be resolved within a greater European context.

"I think probably very early, I would have seen myself as a nationalist…But I think as I grew a little bit older, probably about 14 or 15 and the Troubles were getting quite bad at that stage, you really could see them for what they were. You'd say, 'For goodness' sake, what is going on up there?' Really I think I felt by the time I was a young adult that the best solution would be to cut off Northern Ireland and just push it out into the sea and let them just deal with their troubles themselves, because they were just killing each other...I think they need to forget about a united Ireland at this stage, and I think they should look and see that we're all European; we're all part of the European Union now. Can we not just see ourselves as European and forget about the divide between Northern Ireland?

As can be seen, however, such feelings are clearly exceptions to the rule, and most members of the Church consider themselves either unionist or nationalist but with varying degrees of intensity. It would appear that if Mormons were all to vote on the future of Northern Ireland, their votes would fall along the sectarian lines of their, or their families', former religions.

Most members did not openly say exactly which political parties they endorsed, but many did say that they followed politics, including paying close attention to the political situation in the North. While most Mormons on the Irish island fall within the respective nationalist/unionist categories, some are willing to look outside their inherent political views and vote for something or someone they normally would not. A British woman, and first-generation convert, had this to say about the Church's admonition to be prayerful in political matters and crossing political lines,

"In Northern Ireland...you vote to keep people out. If you live in a Protestant working class area and a member of the SDLP or Sinn Féin stand for office, you may not like who your Protestant one is, but the majority of the people will vote for them. As Latter-Day Saints, we can't do that. Because we've been told that we need to pray about who we should vote for. So you have to pray about who you should vote for, and just hope that it's not Sinn Féin."

While Mormons' opinions regarding the conflict vary, almost all of those interviewed condemned violence, all wished to see a peaceful solution to the conflict, and most supported political developments such as the Good Friday Agreement. Despite expressing sympathy for either unionist or nationalist causes, no one endorsed violence, and no one expressed sympathy for paramilitary organizations. Such groups were referred to by different interviewees as "rackets," "terrorists," "gangers," "thugs" and "secret combinations," which is a term from *The Book of Mormon* that refers to secret groups that use violence and terror for personal gain and to destabilize political structures (The Book of Mormon, 1989: Ether 13:18).

That Mormons for the most part, whatever their political leanings, denounced violence on both sides and called for peaceful dialogue, would coincide with both Catholic and Protestant teachings during the Troubles (Todd, 1991: 5-6).

ANALYSIS

Most Mormons still maintain their political and ethnic beliefs after conversion. None of the Mormons interviewed completely abandoned their old way of thinking regarding ethnicity and politics. Some may have modified or tempered their feelings, and those that did drastically change their ways of thinking, such as no longer actively pursuing nationalism, never attributed those changes to the Church. A first-generation member from the Dublin in his twenties made a poignant statement about his take on politics and the Church.

> "Within the Church I knew people who also had strong opinions on politics...and it was republican politics. That carried through, even to members of the Church. I've found that there's a number of people that I know quite well who are in the Church now who would have been very strongly republican. Then my own family's influence. I wouldn't say this Church has affected my politics. I don't think there's any kind of take on politics in that sense within the Church. Maybe that's just my experience too, but it doesn't seem that way to me, but it seems like what I had I carried with me."

This member acknowledged that the opinions and feeling that he had before he converted to the Church "carried with" him after he converted. The Church did not influence him to change his politics, and he knows many republican members who have not changed their opinions as well.

Opinions and feelings seem to carry with members throughout subsequent generations. The second-generation member from a Protestant background who is currently a Bishop and who "strongly" supports the union between Northern Ireland and Great Britain related growing up in a loyalist family.

> "[G]rowing up, my mother's family would be from quite a strong loyalist background, so we would have grown up as wee boys going to parades, waving a Union Jack at the parades and things like that."

These findings show that multi-generational members will generally keep the political and ethnic identifiers of their parents and grandparents. There are obviously exceptions, such as the second-generation member from the North who came from a Protestant background who considers herself Irish. She said regarding her background,

> "Each year of course you'd have the parades and huge bonfires in July. On the twelfth of July they would have parades with bands marching. We always went, because I suppose it's funny now as a tradition because my Dad had grown up as a kid in a very Protestant family. In fact his family for generations back were in the Orange Order."

Later in the interview she had this to say about her subsequent divergence from the views of her upbringing,

"Before I moved [to Boston], I bought a book…and it was talking about the Easter Uprising in Dublin and all the things that went on there and some of the atrocities that the Black & Tans committed who were Protestant. I saw a different side because up until that point I didn't know anything about Irish history. As far as I was concerned we were Northern Ireland and we were British because that's just what you were. Now it's very interesting because I have a greater understanding of the whole Republican side of things."

Regarding her nationalism and support for a unified island she stated, "I came from a background that would have been extremely opposed to that." Although this woman might be an exception, nowhere in the interview did she say that the Church influenced her decision to change her political views from unionism to nationalism or her ethnic identity from British to Irish.

A third-generation male member from the North who has a Presbyterian and unionist background said this about his choice of political persuasion,

"People that have converted from either Catholicism or Presbyterianism, if they've converted to the Church, they would have existing views that they had before, and the Church doesn't teach us to lean toward one political party or another…so we're free to choose about that, and it's just a choice. It's a choice I've made; it's a conscience choice. I know my parents probably did influence it, but it's a conscience choice that I've made. If I had decided that I wanted to vote for nationalism when I vote then I could have done so. My parents might not have been too happy, but it's my choice.

Aside from perhaps helping to temper strong feelings one way or the other, conversion does little to change the views and identity that were instilled in a member before that person joined the Church, and it seems that parents pass those values on to their children.

Patterns and correlations can be seen within Mormon membership, namely that most Mormons who consider themselves Irish and/or nationalists came from Catholic backgrounds, and those that consider themselves British or Northern Irish and consider themselves unionists came from Protestant backgrounds. This suggests that religious change does not change nationality.

Despite holding on to certain old beliefs, once that important religious change has been made, Mormons use that change to justify changes in attitude, culture and temperament. While very few Mormons changed their political or ethnic attitudes after conversion, there are a few who attributed membership in the Church with the ability to lessen the intensity of their feelings or involvement in the situation in Northern Ireland whether as a unionist or a nationalist. The previously quoted man who credits the Church with his exit from the UDA is an example, as is the republican from Dublin who made this statement,

"I think if I wasn't in the Church, I might have behaved differently…I think when they marched on the British embassy here in Dublin and after that, I didn't participate in that. I think I might have, and I think I might have been quite happy to throw stones or whatever. But because of my belief system I couldn't do that, because it wouldn't be right to behave in that way. I think the Church saved me probably from prison."

While perhaps not as extreme of an example, the British woman previously quoted who mentioned seeking guidance in matters of where to cast her vote serves as another example of how membership in the Church has moderated attitudes. Her willingness to even consider (albeit tepidly) voting for Sinn Féin shows that she has a more tempered approach towards politics that many unionists in Northern Ireland would refuse to take. She later made a statement that further shows her willingness to compromise on certain issues and how her religious values have perhaps influenced that willingness; although she mentioned a very strong sense of being British and supported the union, she made the following statement regarding a united Ireland,

"As long as I could still remain British, I don't have a problem…See me living in an all-Ireland that was peaceful that I was allowed to still be British, it doesn't bother me. But I think as a member of the Church, you have to say to yourself, 'What way does the Lord view it?' The Lord doesn't view me as British or Irish, the Lord views me as His daughter and that's the most important thing. Not the fact that I have a Union Jack instead of the tricolour."

Specifically regarding the conflict between differing ideologies, a first generation former Catholic who claimed to be a nationalist commented on how the Church helps him to overlook differences,

"I think that as members of the Church, it's been my experience that the longer I'm a member of the Church, the more I live my beliefs, the more I'm able to overlook things that I didn't see as important maybe as before...I'm able to bypass politics probably a lot easier, and not be as concerned about it. I'm still very interested in it, very interested in my own domestic politics in this country, very interested in international politics, but it's not as important to me with other people. I'm not as defined by it as I was before. My identity as a member of the Church has moved more to centre stage, and so that means the other things aren't as important, therefore, I can kind of work around them a lot more."

Mormons seem unwilling to allow their new religion to completely supplant their previous ideas and opinions, but they are willing to let it soften their outlook and perspectives where perhaps they once would have taken a much stronger position.

CONCLUSION

Religious conversion, at least in the case of the Mormons, has very little effect on a person's ethnic or political philosophies. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints come from diverse backgrounds with diverse opinions. This means that although people might be willing to upend their religious world by abandoning the faith of their fathers, they are less likely to abandon the ethnic identity and political leanings of those that came before them.

Mormons seem to be inclusive and do not discourage individuals and groups from having their own opinions, even if those opinions differ from their neighbours or fellow Congregationalists. The Church encourages political activity, and no members ever expressed any fear of disfellowship or other direct or indirect punishment within the Church for having a specific political opinion.

Mormons also have varying ideas regarding identity, and both Irish and British members of the Church seem to understand that and have few problems sitting next to someone in the pew who does not consider himself or herself to be of the same ethnic group. Likewise, Mormons do not have trouble sitting next to someone who holds allegiance to a different government, although, as was seen, some still express a personal uneasiness toward certain things pertaining to different political or ethnic philosophies.

Aside from abandoning certain cultural aspects that might not be in line with their religious ideals, Mormons do not seem eager to completely abandon who they are ethnically, nor are they willing to distance themselves from previously held political ideas. Whether a Latter-Day Saint within the 32 counties considers himself or herself a Catholic Mormon, a Protestant Mormon or a Mormon Mormon, those opinions and feelings are both vibrant and diverse within the Church.

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War and Peace. weakness in myself as yet,I know a little person who is very unhappy with her father. She is a relation of yours, Princess Mary Bolkonskaya.â€™ Prince Vasili did not reply, though, with the quickness of memory and perception befitting a man of the world, he indicated by a movement of the head that he was considering this information.Â War and Peace. be your most devoted slave-slafe wigh an f, as a village elder of mine writes in his reports. She is rich and of good family and thatâ€™s all I want.â€™ And with the familiarity and easy grace peculiar to him, he raised the maid of honorâ€™s hand to his lips, kissed it, and swung it to and fro as he lay back in his armchair, looking in another direction.