



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

A study of Polish LDS (Mormon) conversion in two branches in Warsaw, Poland

Harrison, P.M.

Citation

Harrison, P. M. (2021, June 16). *A study of Polish LDS (Mormon) conversion in two branches in Warsaw, Poland*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3188569>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3188569>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3188569> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Harrison, P.M.

Title: A study of Polish LDS (Mormon) conversion in two branches in Warsaw, Poland

Issue Date: 2021-06-16

1. Introduction

Nowadays, new religious movements (NRMs) are increasingly studied, as some have become “global religions” containing “different characteristics” in “different parts of the world” (Clarke 2006: vi). The “global character of the contemporary world” has allowed many religious belief systems to disembody themselves from their original cultural contexts and move around the world through religions coming into closer contact with each other; modernisation/urbanisation; new scientific/technological developments; economic migration etc. (Ibid). Within this context, the history and size of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) and its international missionary programme occupies an important position in the field of studying NRMs (Givens and Barlow, eds. 2015; Mason, ed. 2016; Annus, Morris, and Östman, eds. 2018). When referring to the LDS in this thesis, I mean the LDS Church which has its headquarters in Salt Lake City; sends many missionaries around the world; and is easily the biggest body of a wider LDS movement through it numbering about 13.5 million members at the end of 2008 (Bryant et al 2014: 756). A smaller, fragmented LDS world is made up of over 100 separate denominations, of which the Community of Christ is the biggest with around 250,000 members, followed by “the Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonite)” with about 12,000 and Fundamentalist LDS Church with around 10,000 (Ibid). Towards the end of my research, the biggest body of LDS numbers over 16.5 million members worldwide (<https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/facts-and-statistics> accessed 9-05-20).

Through most LDS now living outside the USA, away from the “historic culture” region of Utah, the “new grassroots” of “Mormonism” need to be studied “in small units around the world” to highlight how the latter create “new hybrid identities, practices and understandings” (Hangen 2015: 220-221). The existence of the LDS in different places around the world deserves the attention of scholars, with my research on Polish LDS recruitment/conversion in Warsaw being important because it lies within the Polish context of the LDS Church’s international mission to find new converts. LDS recruitment/conversion is an important sociological topic because any kind of religious conversion may seriously affect the lives of the converts and their families, which necessitates a better understanding of the processes and consequences involved. In this respect, my research explores LDS recruitment/conversion in the wider context of the mainstream Catholic religious landscape in Poland, raising important issues concerning majority and minority cultures and contemporary trends in religious practice and secularisation. It builds up long-term perspectives on the LDS Church and

changes within Polish society/culture, which are important due to the evolving political and religious landscape in contemporary Poland. The latter concerns the strong historical role of the Catholic Church, and issues of secularisation that Polish society is experiencing. Poland is an “interesting case for sociologists of religion” because despite being one of the most religiously/ethnically homogeneous societies in Europe, with “over 90% of the population declaring themselves” Catholic, it may be “undergoing a deep transformation of its religiosity” (Marody and Mandes 2017: 231). While the case of the LDS in Poland only represents the movement of an extremely small number of people, recent LDS emergence and growth there can be viewed as presenting a particular reaction to and reflection of wider religious and political developments, which, as such, justifies my research.

In my study, I examine how Polish LDS converts from two branches (small congregations) in Warsaw, Wolska and Wierzbno/Raławicka, view two journeys. The first, recruitment, refers to religious and social processes that a recruit/investigator (somebody interested in the LDS) encounters with the LDS before joining them. The latter involves receiving baptism by full immersion in water, and not long afterwards, confirmation by a laying on of hands rite from a few male priests. The second journey, conversion, concerns the religious and social processes that converts encounter to become different LDS types (less actives, trainee temple-goers, and core temple-goers) after baptism/confirmation. Besides this, I examine how some Polish long-term investigators (LTIs) maintain contact with the Warsaw LDS without becoming LDS. LTIs are a regular feature inside LDS chapels worldwide.

1.1 Motivation for undertaking the study

Despite my study background being in Literature, Philosophy, and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, I have been fascinated by the question of what religious change means since the early/mid-1980s. Back then, in my late teens, I moved away from post-Vatican II Catholicism as I started attending the old Latin Mass as a form of pre-Vatican II Catholic religious practice. This was prompted by seeing Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, founder of the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX), an organisation on the periphery of the modern-day Catholic Church that trains priests to say the old Latin Mass, celebrate High Mass in Preston, the UK, in 1983. Being born in 1966, I was brought up on the reformed Catholicism that followed the 2nd Vatican Council (1962-1965), which, for some Catholics, was a time when the Catholic Church started compromising its traditional beliefs through accommodating Protestant-type religiosity (e.g. the priest facing the congregation during the consecration at Mass) and secular ideologies such as liberalism and modernism (Lefebvre

1986, 1988/1994, 1997). By the age of 14, I had lost interest in post-Vatican II Catholicism, as it offered me little spiritual meaning and aesthetic beauty, and became a lapsed Catholic. In contrast, I felt enchanted by the medieval-type beauty and clear Catholic teachings that I encountered at the old Latin Mass with Archbishop Lefebvre. Seeing a traditional Catholic clergyman in old vestments offering High Mass facing east with his back to the people, and listening to Gregorian chant for the first time live made me feel that I was encountering something from time immemorial. After this, I attended the old Latin Mass offered by the SSPX in Manchester between 1984 and 1987, through which I encountered literature that strongly justified the central Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, the belief that the bread and wine literally change into Christ's body and blood during the consecration at Mass. The transubstantiation teaching was maintained by some/many of those who accepted the liturgical reforms that followed the 2nd Vatican Council, but the SSPX gave the teaching more meaning than I had encountered before. Some traditional Catholic literature (e.g. van der Ploeg 1975 in Davies, M. 1979/1993) that I encountered traced the roots of the Catholic priesthood and transubstantiation doctrine back to Biblical texts, and I came to view, for example, that:

- The Book of Genesis 14: 18-21 account about the king priest Melchizedek blessing Abraham/Abram and offering him bread/wine foretold the Catholic sacrament of holy communion instituted by Jesus on Holy Thursday
- The Book of Isaiah 53: 7-12 foretold Jesus being led to his crucifixion in patient suffering as an innocent, lamb-like sacrifice for human sin
- St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews (5: 1/5-6, 8: 3, 9: 12) justified a Catholic belief that Jesus replaced ancient Jewish priests, who offered animal sacrifice to God, as the high priest of salvation after his crucifixion.

Moreover, the traditional Catholic literature highlighted that when Catholic priests consecrate bread/wine on their altars, it is Christ himself, as both priest and sacrificial victim, who turns them into his body/blood as a re-enactment of his crucifixion. I found the belief that Christ's crucifixion is re-enacted on Catholic altars to free people from sin mind-blowing, as it offered a more meaningful explanation of transubstantiation than I had encountered before, and still view it as the heart of the Catholic faith.

Despite the above, in my early/mid-20s, I drifted away from Catholicism towards non-religious ideas that I encountered while doing English Literature and Sociology A Levels,

(British pre-university exams) at Bury College of Further Education (1987-1988) and a BA degree in Literature/Philosophy at Bolton Institute of Higher Education (1989-1992) in north-west England. Between 1987 and 1994, I encountered various non-religious outlooks, especially through my interest in late 19th/early 20th century literature. In particular, I became intrigued by the agnostic/fatalist worldview and criticism of institutionalised Christianity in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1892/2003) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895/2003), and D.H. Lawrence's male-female polarity theme in *The Rainbow* (1915/2007) and *Women in Love* (1920/2007). I was also interested in some existentialist literature, particularly Camus' *The Outsider* (1942/1983) and Sartre's *Nausea* (1938/2000), as it promoted the idea that human behaviour is mainly governed by the individual's freely chosen actions, and found Zola's *L'Assommoir/The Dram Shop* (1877/2001) and *Germinal* (1885/2004) fascinating, as they promoted the opposing view that human behaviour is mainly determined by genetic and environmental forces. Consequently, I started believing that human behaviour is influenced by complex interplay between genetic/social forces and a person's free will. However, in my late 20s, the religious seeking/yearning of my early adult years returned. In time, the agnostic outlook on life that I developed through higher education has stood alongside the pre-Vatican II Catholicism I encountered in earlier adulthood. This complex balance of opposing views has since remained throughout my life.

In the mid-1990s, I returned to the old Latin Mass through feeling some kind of guilt and yearning to encounter its beauty again. I attended SSPX churches in Preston (1994-1997); Cracow/Kraków (1998-1999); Herne village, the UK (1999-2003); and Warsaw (2003-2005). From 2005 to the present-day, I have attended the old Latin Mass at the Redemptorist church of St. Clement Hofbauer (Św. Klemensa Hofbauera) in Warsaw. Throughout my practice of pre-Vatican II Catholicism, I have read literature about the medieval Catholic worldview of St. Thomas Aquinas (Lefebvre 1991, Pieper 1962/1991); medieval mysticism of St. John of the Cross (Peers 1943); some traditional Catholic catechisms (e.g. *The Catechism of Pope St. Pius X 1910/1993*) etc. In my mid-50s now, I still attend the old Latin Mass for its clear sacerdotal meaning and the aesthetic pleasure of listening to Gregorian chant.

The LDS enter my story in mid-2007 as, while in my early 40s, I encountered two young female missionaries (YFMs) near the Gdański underground station in Warsaw. After this, I started meeting them at their Wolska chapel, as I found them and their religion fascinating. Through my interest in religion, I soon started reading three books of LDS scripture: the Book of Mormon (BOM), Doctrine and Covenants (D&C), and Pearl of Great Price (POGP), all

written by the founding LDS prophet, Joseph Smith. After this, I found myself reading the following kinds of literature about LDS religious/social issues:

- Official LDS literature (Ballard 1993/2006; Talmage 1915/1981)
- Semi-official LDS literature (Coleman 2003; Millet 1998; Kidd/Kidd 1998)
- Independent academic literature by scholars from LDS and non-LDS backgrounds (Bloom 1992/2006; Bushman 2008; Davies, D.J. 2000, 2003; Gaskill 2008; Givens, 2009; Shippis 1987, 2000).

When I refer to official LDS literature, I mean work published under the official name/logo of the LDS Church, including books of scripture, books written by Church leaders, and articles written and speeches given by Church leaders and members published in the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines. Regarding semi-official LDS literature, I mean work written by LDS Church leaders and members published by book companies connected to the LDS Church without having its official publishing name/logo. Examples of semi-official LDS book companies include the Deseret Book Company and its Shadow Mountain imprint offshoot (<https://deseretbook.com/about> and <https://shadowmountain.com/about/> accessed 12-04-18), and the Bookcraft Book Company which became incorporated into the Deseret Book Company in 1999 (Kratz 1999 <https://www.deseretnews.com/article/688955/Acquisition-of-Bookcraft-Inc-is-finalized.html> accessed 12-04-18). Both official and semi-official LDS literature offer orthodox views on LDS religious/social issues. Throughout this thesis, I integrate official/semi-official LDS and academic accounts together to create a jigsaw puzzle-type picture of LDS religious/social issues, as my work is not a compare/contrast study of LDS and non-LDS accounts.

In particular, Bloom (1992/2006) caught my imagination, as he shows how a non-LDS scholar can be enchanted by LDS religiosity. In response, I started engaging in what the Catholic theologian Phan (2004, 2007) and Polish sociologist of religion Obirek (in Harrison 2009) view as interreligious experience, as I attended LDS Sunday meetings and old Latin Masses simultaneously for several years. Through attending Sunday meetings at both Warsaw LDS branches, some Polish LDS viewed me as a potential convert. While meeting several pairs of YFMs between 2007 and 2008, I did consider becoming LDS, as I valued the opportunities the LDS provided for discussing religious issues, and had uplifting feelings reading and praying about the BOM. However, I refrained from joining the LDS, because it would have caused conflict with family members, and my Catholic faith played a role in

blocking this. Nonetheless, during my Catholic-LDS interreligious experience, which mainly occurred between 2008 and 2012, the opportunity arose to study how Poles move towards LDS baptism and become different types of converts or LTIs in Warsaw.

While Catholicism is the dominant religion in Poland, the LDS represent a small NRM, numbering just over 2,000 official members (<http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/facts-and-statistics/country/poland> accessed 22-09-19). However, having lived in Warsaw, Poland's capital city of about one-and-a-half million inhabitants, since 2003, I am aware of what some Polish sociologists of religion (Mariański 2006; Obirek in Harrison 2009) view as gradual secularisation occurring in bigger Polish towns/cities. This may be due to Poland adopting a more pluralistic outlook since joining the EU in 2004. Despite this, some Polish sociological accounts about religious change in post-communist/post-1989 Poland (e.g. Libiszowska-Żółtkowska 2006) highlight that while Poles now have more opportunities to choose their own religion, a strong association of Catholicism with Polish national identity may still deter them from exploring other religions. Through practising Catholicism or just valuing it as a symbol of national unity, many Poles still identify as Catholics. Against this background, the LDS have struggled to attract converts which is reflected by the fact that there are no LDS stakes in Poland. A stake is a collection of LDS congregations which contains wards, large congregations with 300+ members, and branches, smaller congregations (<https://www.lds.org/topics/church-organization/how-the-church-is-organized?lang=eng &old=true> accessed 25-02-18). Many, mainly inactive, Polish LDS live in or around Warsaw where the LDS have their only officially-owned chapel in Poland in the Wolska district of the city. In contrast, in other Polish city branches (Łódź; Poznań; Wrocław etc.), the LDS hold their meetings in rented property, with the Raclawicka (former Wierzbno) branch in Warsaw having done the same until it officially merged with Wolska in early 2017.

1.2 Background to the study

This section discusses how the LDS originated in the early 19th century; doctrinal similarities and differences between the LDS and mainstream Christians (Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants); and what a conversion journey from being a recruit to becoming a core/established LDS member may involve. After this, I trace how the Poland LDS Mission came into existence in the later part of the 20th century, and discuss the large missionary force that the LDS Church has at its disposal. Finally, I discuss some contemporary Polish academic (mainly sociologist) views on how the wider Polish social world may influence NRM recruitment/conversion in Poland.

1.2.1 LDS growth and religiosity

To examine how the LDS originated, have grown in number, and represent a Christian religion that sits uneasily with mainstream/trinitarian Christianity, I refer to the official LDS account of Ballard (1993/2006), a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, the highest leadership level below the LDS President and his two counselors/assistants; the semi-official LDS accounts of Kidd/Kidd (1998) and Millet (1998); and many independent academic accounts by LDS/non-LDS scholars.

The LDS story starts with Joseph Smith's religious search in early 19th century New York state. This occurred during a time of massive religious and socio-economic change, when many people were seeking a return to the primitive/apostolic Christianity, unhindered by denominational arguments about beliefs, found in the Bible (Millet 1998: 2; Bryant et al 2014: 756). This religious seeking seems to have been mixed with practices related to alchemy, folk magic, freemasonry, and unorthodox religious influences (Shipps 1987: 6-7; Davies, D.J. 2003: 15; Bryant et al 2014: 756-757). Joseph Smith came from a family of non-conformists who explored the hotbed religious atmosphere provided by the Protestant denominations in New York state (Ballard 1993/2006: 31-32; Bloom 1992/2006: 74; Shipps 1987: 6-8). Smith's establishment of his Church in 1830 seems to have been partly prompted by societal dissatisfaction towards mainstream Christian bodies, with some of his family joining the Presbyterians, others remaining aloof from organised religion, and Smith feeling drawn to but not joining the Methodists (Millet 1998: 4-5; Ballard 1993/2006: 31-32; Shipps 1987: 8). While attending Protestant revivalist meetings, Smith worried about the salvation of his soul and questioned which Protestant denomination (Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian) was the correct one (Millet 1998: 5-6; Ballard 1993/2006: 32). In spring 1820, the teenage Smith followed the advice of James 1: 5 from the New Testament, praying to God about which denomination to follow, and the LDS believe that God the Father, accompanied by Jesus Christ, appeared to Smith telling him that no existing Church on Earth represented his true religion (Millet 1998: 6-7; Ballard 1993/2006: 33-35; Davies, D.J. 2003: 2-3). The LDS refer to this episode as the First Vision.

Smith's First Vision provided a doctrinal foundation for the LDS movement, and despite his religious vision evolving over many more years, it pushed the early LDS towards believing that:

- God the Father was a separate person/being from Jesus

- An apostasy (falling away from doctrinal truth) occurred in 1st century Christianity
- No existing Christian denomination had the authority to act in God's name
- A restoration of doctrinal truth was needed for authentic Christianity to return to the Earth
- People could seek religious truth through praying directly to God
- Divine communication had not ended with the New Testament
- Direct revelation from God was returning to Earth through Smith's LDS movement (Millet 1998: 8-9; Ballard 1993/2006: 39; Gaskill 2008: 119-120; Shipps 1987: 2, 2015: 8).

After his First Vision, Smith believed that the authority to act on God's behalf and real Christian priesthood had been missing since the death of the original apostles, which left him waiting for God to restore ancient apostolic Christianity on Earth (Millet 1998: 9). Thus, right from their early 19th century origins, the LDS have rejected the "institutional history" of mainstream Christianity (Shipps 1987: 51-52).

The LDS religion was founded through Joseph Smith's First Vision and later visions which lead him to produce his first book of LDS scripture, the BOM, and to legally found the "forerunner" of the LDS Church in 1830 (Shipps 1987: 1). The BOM first appeared in Palmyra, a small town in New York state, in March 1830 (Shipps 2015: 7). Soon after, it started drawing people towards LDS religiosity and to view Smith as a prophet leader (Shipps 1987: 33, 2015: 8; Bryant et al 2014: 757). The LDS believe that after the First Vision reopened the world to divine revelation, three years later in 1823, an angel Moroni led Smith to find a collection of golden plates containing ancient Egyptian text, and that between 1827 and 1830, Smith translated the text into English to produce the BOM (Millet 1998: 20-21; Ballard 1993/2006: 41-42; Shipps 1987: 9-10). For the LDS, the BOM represents another historical testament of Jesus Christ to accompany the Bible, as it describes:

- Hebrews leaving Jerusalem around 600 BC to find the new promised land of America where many prophets call people to repent for their sins
- A Nephite tribe being reminded to prepare for the coming of the messiah
- Jesus visiting the Nephites (after his ascension in the Middle East) to establish a Christian Church in the Americas
- The Nephites being destroyed in a final battle with their enemies, the Lamanites

- The final American prophet leader Mormon and his son Moroni completing the BOM on metallic plates in about 400 AD.

(Millet 1998: 21-22; Ballard 1993/2006: 42-43; Bloom 1992/2006: 78-79; Shipps 1987: 25-26; Davies, D.J. 2003: 50-51).

The LDS believe that the BOM and Bible reinforce each other's messages, with the BOM helping people to understand many religious questions that the Bible leaves unanswered (Ballard 1993/2006: 44-45). For the LDS, the BOM is the clearer book of scripture through offering doctrines unrevised by any religious authorities, and having only been translated once from the ancient golden plates (Ibid 46-47). In contrast, they believe that the Bible has lost some doctrinal "purity" through the "changes and alterations" of "countless translations" (Ibid 91). Moreover, the LDS view the BOM as a "third testament" which gives the Americas a "new and pure Christianity" free from the historical "creeds and conflicts" that have marked "Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism" (Shipps 2015: 8). Thus, rather than being a "schismatic group" which has broken away from an "existing religious body" through disagreements over religious teachings/practices, the LDS may be viewed as a unique group that formed around a "charismatic figure *and* radical new religious claims" (Ibid 9-10).

While writing the BOM, Joseph Smith started questioning how priesthood authority from God could be gained for performing Christian baptism and other ordinances (Ballard 1993/2006: 52-53; Millet 1998: 9-10). The LDS believe that in 1829, Smith and Oliver Cowdery, Smith's BOM scribe, were praying next to the Susquehanna River near Harmony, Pennsylvania, when they were visited by John the Baptist who laid his hands on their heads to ordain them into the Aaronic priesthood, giving them the power to call others to repentance and baptise them into the same priesthood (Ballard 1993/2006: 53-54; Millet 1998: 10). Cowdery also appears in the opening pages of the BOM as one of three witnesses who claim to have seen the book, written on metallic plates, being held by an angel from heaven. Moreover, the LDS believe that a few weeks after John the Baptist's visit, the apostles Peter, James, and John visited Smith and Cowdery to confer the Melchizedek priesthood on them, giving them the gift of the Holy Ghost and the power to confirm people as members of Christ's Church on Earth (Ballard 1993/2006: 55; Millet 1998: 10; Bryant et al 2014: 758). This higher priesthood allowed Smith and his followers to perform all the "ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ", and gave Smith the authority to restore the Church of Jesus Christ on Earth (Ballard 1993/2006: 55).

After finishing the BOM, Joseph Smith established the Church of Christ in Fayette, New York in 1830 with him being its first prophet leader, and it being renamed the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1838 (Bloom 1992/2006: 79; Millet 1998: 10). Early LDS missionaries established congregations around New York state and Pennsylvania, and by 1831, the LDS had two main centres in Kirtland, Ohio and Independence, Missouri (Millet 1998: 10-11). While the early LDS “came together in Ohio and Missouri”, Smith’s “prophet and church president” role “became increasingly visible” (Shipps 2015: 9). Smith, his wife Emma, and many of his “extended family” left New York state for Ohio in January 1831 with members of his “new church” following them (Ibid 11). In Kirtland, “reverence” for the BOM and “devotion to a living prophet set” the early LDS “apart from” their neighbours (Ibid 12). Conflicts in Missouri and Ohio led the LDS to settle near Commerce, Illinois, next to the Mississippi River, in the late 1830s, where they built up a new city, Nauvoo, in the early/mid-1840s (Millet 1998: 11; Bryant et al 2014: 760; Shipps 2015: 15-16). During this period, the LDS Church grew to about 30,000 members and started practising polygamous marriage (Bloom 1992/2006: 79). Plural marriage “was denied publicly” with “its theology” not being “taught to new converts” which resulted in two kinds of LDS religiosity: a “public version” of “primitive Christianity” for the “uninitiated”, and a hidden, “esoteric version” which included polygamy and exaltation, the belief that committed LDS may enter the “kind of existence that God enjoys” (Bryant et al 2014: 760). At this time, LDS missionaries were sent abroad with many especially British converts emigrating to America (Millet 1998: 11; Bryant et al 2014: 760).

Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were murdered in Carthage, Illinois in 1844, as many locals feared LDS political power and polygamous culture (Millet 1998: 11; Bloom 1992/2006: 79). Six weeks later in early August 1844, the Quorum of the Twelve leader, Brigham Young, became the new LDS leader, being known as “President Young” rather than “the Prophet Brigham” during “his long tenure” in charge, because Joseph Smith was the “once and forever Mormon prophet” (Givens 2007: xi-xii). None of Smith’s successors “approach the scope of his creative energy as a thinker”, “system builder”, “revelator” or scripture writer (Ibid xii). The BOM (1830) “is longer than the Quran or the New Testament”; almost all of the D&C’s (1835) 138 sections are written by Smith; and the POGP (1851/1880) is “entirely a product of his writings, translations, and revelations” (Ibid). Between 1846 and 1847, Brigham Young led the LDS trek from Nauvoo to what is now Salt Lake City and Utah (Millet 1998: 11; Bloom 1992/2006: 79; Shipps 1987: 59-60, 2015: 17). Bryant et al (2014: 761) explain that Young “needed converts to colonize” a “new Mormon kingdom” covering a

“western corridor of North America from Canada to Mexico”, so missionary activity “expanded throughout North America and Europe” and was introduced to “Australia, Africa, the Middle East, the Pacific Islands, and elsewhere”. Young’s “tenure” as LDS leader massively exceeded that of Smith, with Young colonising “over 300” towns/cities “compared to Joseph’s handful” and governing a “territory larger than Texas” and 130,000 LDS Church members “at his death” (Givens 2007: xii). While Smith “laid the foundations” of LDS religiosity, Young began shaping the “Mormon experience”, with these “twin pillars” providing the base and impetus for LDS “intellectual and cultural heritage” (Ibid xiii). During Young’s many years as prophet leader, the LDS enjoyed relative autonomy in their Utah homeland, but ongoing struggles with the US government over polygamy and LDS “theocratic power” led to them officially abandoning polygamy in 1890 and Utah becoming the 45th state of the USA in 1896 (Millet 1998: 11-12). After Wilford Woodruff (4th LDS Church President, 1889-1898) “called for the end of polygamy” in 1890, the “most publicly recognizable sign of Mormon difference” disappeared from LDS life (Givens 2007: xvi). Thus, the LDS stopped being “persecuted as an alien presence”, and were “increasingly tolerated” by mainstream American society as they started assimilating into it (Bryant et al 2014: 762). Alongside this, LDS Church leaders started stressing the importance of members attending worship services, practising the WOW, and paying tithing (Ibid 763).

From early on, Joseph Smith’s religious revelations stressed the need to carry the LDS message “worldwide”, with missionaries bringing converts back to “Illinois and then Utah” from England especially in the late 1830s and 1840s and Scandinavia, other European countries, and Hawaii and other Pacific Islands in the 1850s (Grow 2015: 62). Early LDS converts from “North Atlantic” European countries were culturally “assimilable into” 19th century America, but the LDS did not “heavily” recruit from the big “Irish, Italian, and Eastern European immigrations” there (van Beek 2016: 73). Through transporting many foreign converts to LDS heartlands in the USA, the LDS became an “ethnically heterogenous” group there, but had a “perpetually weak periphery” in the countries that early missionaries visited (Grow 2015: 62). In the 1890s, LDS Church leaders started encouraging converts to stay in their own countries, and after building temples outside the USA in the 1950s, the LDS started becoming an international phenomenon (Ibid). After the 1929-1939 Great Depression, the LDS gained converts through spreading “eastward” in the USA (Bryant et al 2014: 763). During the 20th and 21st centuries, LDS growth/expansion has occurred throughout many parts of the world (Millet 1998: 12; Bloom 1992/ 2006: 88). LDS numbers increased from 26,000 when Joseph Smith died in 1844 to 115,000 when Brigham Young

died in 1877; 500,000 in 1919; two million in 1963; four million in 1979; eight million in 1991; and 11 million at the start of the 21st century (Davies, D.J. 2003: 8). The “half-century” after the 2nd World War involved spectacular “growth in numbers of individual and family converts” (Shipps 2015: 20). Through a “wave of pro-American sentiment” and “insistent missionary techniques”, the LDS expanded into Catholic countries during the “first decades” after the 2nd World War (Decoo 2015: 543). Accelerated LDS growth in the late 20th century was mainly brought about through rapid expansion in South America (Davies, D.J. 2003: 8).

In contrast, van Beek (2016: 73) points towards the recruitment of Afro-Americans having been “extremely limited due to” the LDS Church’s pre-1978 “racial restrictions”. Black LDS were denied “access to priesthood and temple rites after 1852” when Brigham Young associated black people with the “seed” of Cain, and the LDS “missionary program” did not proselytise many black people (Mauss 2003: 213-216). Turner (2012) explains that Young thought that black people were “cursed with black skin as punishment for Cain’s murder of his brother”, Abel, in the Book of Genesis, and that some LDS “leaders” after Young believed that the “pre-existent spirits of black people had sinned” in pre-mortality through “supporting Lucifer in his rebellion against God”. For Mauss (2003: 218-219), many LDS leaders and members in the 1950s/1960s had believed that “priesthood restrictions” were Church business “not subject to national policy or criticism”, while the LDS and “other Americans” held “remarkably similar” views concerning “blacks and civil rights” in what would now be viewed as a “racist society”. While other Churches never recruited many blacks for their seminaries, the LDS still stood out as none could be seen in their much bigger male, lay priesthood (Ibid 220-221). As the LDS First Presidency decision allowing all worthy LDS men to become priests was made in 1978, this reassured members of its “divine origin” through it not being made in the 1960s when the LDS were under heavy pressure from the American civil rights movement to make such a change (Ibid 231, 236). Mauss (2003: 236) explains that the 1978 change was prompted by “two kinds of *internal* pressure”, from the “missionary imperative” to spread the LDS faith “throughout the world”, and the LDS having “inadequate scriptural and canonical basis for connecting modern black Africans to an obscure ancient lineage once denied the priesthood”. The “only passage” from LDS scripture which mentions any specific racial “lineage” being “ineligible for the priesthood” is the Book of Abraham 1: 26-27 in the POGP (Ibid 238). While discussing “the origin of ancient Egypt”, Abraham describes the pharaohs as “having descended from Ham, a lineage ‘cursed as pertaining to the priesthood’” (Ibid). Moreover, no LDS scripture “connects the lineage of the pharaohs to black Africans in general” (Ibid). All this was significant for Brazil, “the most

racially mixed nation in the Western Hemisphere” (Ibid 237). Through the 1978 change being made “just weeks before the dedication” of the São Paulo Temple, this negated the need for the LDS to assess the eligibility of priesthood and temple access for many people from mixed racial backgrounds (Ibid).

During the 1970s, the LDS established a “presence” in “Iron Curtain” countries including Poland and East Germany where Freiberg Temple was built in 1985 (Decoo 2015: 544). The “crumbling of communist regimes” in Central/Eastern Europe “a few years later” opened the way for “pioneering missionary work”, but through being viewed as “part of a menacing invasion of alien cults”, the LDS had to face the “power of reinstated national” Churches and resurgent “nationalistic feelings” (Ibid). Most post-communist governments in Central/Eastern Europe drew up “restrictive legislation to impede the spread of nonindigenous religions” (Ibid). However, through “carefully acting within the law”, the LDS “function fairly normally in eastern European countries”, although “economic challenges” often “encourage” young converts/members to emigrate to the USA (Ibid). As already mentioned, nearing the end of my research, the LDS Church has over 16.5 million members worldwide (<https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/facts-and-statistics> accessed 9-05-20). Moreover, Stark (2005: 141) predicts that through accelerated international growth and non-US members now outnumbering US ones, the LDS may number anywhere between nearly 64 and 267 million by 2080.

Many academics find it difficult to determine whether the LDS are Christian, post-Christian, or non-Christian. Shipps (1987) believes that they represent a new religious tradition born out of Christianity similar to how the latter rose out of ancient Judaism. For Davies, D.J. (2013: 2), the LDS are “self-defining Christians” who derive their “identity from the life and influence of Jesus”. Some similarities between mainstream Christianity and the LDS include the belief that people need to be baptised and confirmed to become part of Christ’s Church on Earth; having communion services that commemorate/recall Christ’s Last Supper; referring to Jesus as the saviour of mankind; and valuing heterosexual marriage. Another similarity concerns having sacred religious rites. The Catholic and Orthodox Churches have seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, penance/confession, holy communion, matrimony, priesthood, and the last rites) to impart God’s grace (virtuous influence) on a person’s soul. By comparison, the LDS Church has (sacrament-type) ordinances, lower ones performed in chapels and higher ones inside temples, which sometimes resemble and other times completely differ from Catholic/Orthodox sacraments. LDS chapel and temple ordinances are discussed in detail later in this section.

Both the LDS and mainstream Christians focus on the central figure of Jesus Christ. The BOM introduces an “essentially Protestant Jesus” through its central “ideas of sin, atonement, repentance, faith, obedience, and prophecy” (Davies, D.J. 2013: 8). However, LDS and mainstream Christian concepts of Jesus differ, because LDS religiosity contains “pre-birth appearances of Jesus” (Ibid 176). For the LDS, Jesus is both the first pre-mortal, spirit child offspring of God the Father, and Jehovah, the “prime divine agent of the Old Testament”, the world’s creator on behalf of God the Father (Ibid 68). Givens (2007: xvi) highlights a tension between the LDS viewing mainstream Christians as the “inheritors of a great apostasy”, and feeling “the sting of being excluded from” the mainstream “Christendom” that they reject and believe they correct. Millet (1998: 187-200) points towards the LDS being theologically distinct from mainstream Christians in three key areas: rejecting a traditional Christian understanding of the Trinity; believing in human pre-mortality; and performing baptisms on behalf of dead souls.

The LDS believe in a Godhead of three separate beings (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) that share a common purpose rather than the mainstream Christian Trinity doctrine of three coequal beings sharing one, undivided essence/substance (Millet 1998: 188-189; Gaskill 2008: 43-44; Davies, D.J. 2003: 76). For Paulsen and Boyd (2015: 253), the LDS are “Social Trinitarians” who believe in “three distinct persons” that are “perfectly united in will, action, thought, and love”. Holland (2015: 150) describes the mainstream Trinity teaching serving “to reconcile the monotheism” of the Old Testament with “references to three deities” in the New Testament, while the LDS attempt to harmonise the BOM identifying “Jesus as both Father and Son with more modern revelations” which emphasise his “separate identity as Son”.

For the LDS, people can become divine/perfect like God the Father through engaging in a Plan of Salvation (POS) that covers pre-mortality, Earth life, and post-mortality (Millet 1998: 192-193). This “essential scheme”/“grand narrative” of faith informs all others, similar to how the Trinity dominates “mainstream Christian theology” (Davies, D.J. 2013: 8). However, the two schemes offer different views of Jesus’ role in human salvation (Ibid). The LDS view of Jesus being “the Christ”, the literal son of a “heavenly father”, gains its “distinctive” meaning from the POS “narrative”, and “not, as in Classical Christianity”, from viewing Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as one intertwined deity (Ibid 9). For the LDS, Jesus’ “divine ‘sonship’” is “shaped” at a pre-mortal “heavenly council” where his “divine Father and an antagonistic Lucifer” debate “the best” POS “for human destiny” (Ibid 57). This “divine conclave” deliberates over the Earth’s “creation and humanity’s salvation”, and provides a “rationale” for Christ’s “scheme of atonement” on Earth (Ibid). Through his birth, life, suffering, death,

and resurrection on Earth, Jesus establishes “the Kingdom of God” as an “act of atonement” for people’s “sins” which ensures the “resurrection of all people” (Ibid 9).

In the BOM, the POS is viewed in terms of people attaining “redemption” from sin through Christ’s atonement, and developing faith by freely turning disobedience into “faithful repentant obedience” while listening to “prophet-preachers” (Davies, D.J. 2013: 58). After the BOM, Joseph Smith added an “enlarged” vision of “priesthood power and covenant rites as bases for LDS heavenly exaltation” (Ibid). At this stage, Jesus’ “role” in the POS seems “to diminish”, as people become more completely responsible for “their place in eternity” through being obedient to God within the LDS Church’s “organization and sacred ordinances” (Ibid 9). However, the “importance of kinship and family life” and genealogical research for LDS “society” has resulted in “the idea of Jesus” as an “Elder Brother” being perpetuated in LDS circles (Ibid 4).

In their POS, the LDS believe that God the Father is an exalted/perfected man of flesh and blood (Millet 1998: 188; Bloom 1992/2006: 89, 97; Davies, D.J. 2003: 74). Hence, they view him as a “gloriously embodied person” or “embodied God” (Paulsen and Boyd 2015: 252). In LDS theology, people can become perfect through attaining “progressive maturation” like God the Father and their older brother, Jesus (Davies, D.J. 2013: 73). Bloom (1992/2006: 95) believes that Joseph Smith’s POS and vision of human exaltation represents a return to the “anthropomorphic” God and “theomorphic” people in the early books of the Bible. Smith and the early LDS believed that godhood had to be sought through polygamous marriage that continued in the afterlife where, like God the Father, each LDS man and his wives begot “spirit children” to populate “later universes” (Ibid: 101-107, 125, 128). Not long before his death, while speaking at the funeral of a friend called King Follett, Smith introduced the ideas that “God was once a man” and people “can become gods” (Shipps 2015: 17). The LDS believe that after death, men/women who have received temple marriage for time and eternity “will continue to give birth to spirit children”, and at some “unspecified” time, “will become gods” ruling over “their own kingdoms” (Ibid). Through believing in “embodied deities”, especially a “Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother”, the ultimate goal of committed LDS is to develop an “immortal, perfected, human body which can continue to procreate and work” in the afterlife (Hangen 2015: 211). While mainstream Christians distinguish between God being a divine entity who has always existed and humans being God’s creation made from non-divine substance, the LDS view God and people as being made from the same divine substance, God in exalted form, humans in embryonic form (Davies, D.J. 2003: 80; Givens

2007: xv). Thus, the LDS notion of plural godhood clashes with the mainstream Christian belief that God is an infinitely higher being than humans.

The LDS also believe that Jesus and the Holy Ghost “derive their divinity from God the Father”, being “spiritually begotten” of him “long before” human life began on Earth; that Jesus is the “spiritual and bodily offspring” of God the Father; and that the latter and his Goddess wife are the celestial parents of one big “human family” (Paulsen and Boyd 2015: 249). The idea of God the Father and a Goddess wife producing the body/soul of Jesus in pre-mortality may be blasphemous for mainstream Christians, because they view Jesus as being co-eternal with God the Father. For the LDS, humans are the spirit ““offspring”” of God the Father “in some genetic or quasi-genetic sense”, and spirits are “materially embodied persons, humanlike in form, though invisible to ordinary human perception” (Paulsen and Boyd 2015: 249-250). Unlike mainstream Christians, the LDS believe that God the Father organised the Earth “from chaos, not from nothing”, with “His active agent”, a pre-mortal Jesus, creating Earth and other “worlds without number” (Ibid 250). They also believe that “divine persons” engage in a life of “unending growth and progress” and that God the Father is “eternally” improving in “knowledge and power”, and reject a mainstream Christian belief that “divine perfection” is a “state of static completeness” (Ibid 255). For Paulsen and Boyd (2015: 247), LDS notions of godhood can be defended through reference to the four books of LDS scripture. While the impersonal God of mainstream Christian “philosophers” is “all-supreme, all-controlling, all-determining” and “wholly other, immaterial, immutable”, without suffering, and outside time/space, the “God of the Bible” and “Mormonism” is an ever-changing, flesh-laden, “not all-controlling or all-determining” human figure who endows people with free agency so they can bring about “morally significant outcomes” (Ibid 246).

After the LDS officially ended polygamous marriage in 1890, their pre-mortality doctrine and baptism of the dead temple rite became more significant (Bloom 1992/2006: 119). The LDS believe that before human conception on Earth, people’s souls exist with God where they start making choices and morally developing (Ballard 1993/2006: 68; Millet 1998: 195). For the LDS, long before the Earth was created, people existed as God’s “spirit children” inheriting his heavenly “attributes” in embryonic form and starting to pursue perfection/godhood with varying degrees of success (Ballard 1993/2006: 67-68). They believe that through God being aware that his spirit children could only continue their progress towards godhood by becoming mortal, a plan was made to put this into practice on Earth (Ibid 68-69). Moreover, the LDS point towards a pre-mortal Jesus, the greatest of God’s spirit children, volunteering to visit Earth to live a perfect life and willingly suffer for people’s sins to show

them how they could return to their heavenly origins (Ballard: 1993/2006: 70; Davies, D.J. 2003: 4).

For the LDS, women are of “divine heritage” made in the image of a “Heavenly Mother”, while men are modelled on her celestial husband, God the Father (Hudson 2015: 350). The LDS believe that “human souls are eternally sexed” so faithful LDS married couples can continue procreating in the afterlife, and that only heterosexual marriage “can create” a state of “godhood”, because God has defined marriage as “inherently heterosexual” (Ibid 350-351). In their Adam/Eve story, the LDS “do not believe Eve sinned” or “was punished for her role in taking the fruit” (Ibid 352). The LDS do not view “the Fall” as a “tragedy” which introduced original sin to the world, but as a “great blessing foreordained by God” that allows humans to engage in a pre-mortality, Earth life, post-mortality cycle where they can “progress” towards their “divine destiny to become like” their “Heavenly Parents” (Ibid 353). Moreover, the LDS “celebrate” Eve as “the Mother of All Living”, as “the Fall” led to women being able to bear children, “one of the greatest blessings God” has given to humanity (Ibid 354-355).

An LDS vision of heterosexual interdependency views male and female partners as “equal” helpmates with different but complementary parental roles (Hudson 2015: 355-356). The priesthood is a “man’s apprenticeship to become a Heavenly Father”, while a woman’s “apprenticeship” to become a “Heavenly Mother” involves “pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation” (Ibid 358). The LDS believe that “women should seek education” and receive “spiritual gifts and talents” in “equal measure” to men (Ibid 359). Moreover, LDS men/women must conceive children “within the bonds” of heterosexual marriage to start moving towards god/goddess status in the POS (Ibid 360).

While mainstream Christians have churches/cathedrals accessible to everyone, the LDS have chapels open to everyone and temples that only worthy practising LDS can enter (Ballard 1993/2006: 61; Davies, D.J. 2003: 133). In 1961, the LDS had 12 temples and 20 in 1981, but by mid-2015, they had 144 (Faulconer 2015: 196). While formal, ritualised worship “has rapidly declined in the West, it has rapidly increased” among the LDS through their temple expansion around the world (Ibid). The LDS offer atonement/repentance (salvation from sin) through people receiving baptism/confirmation and attending Sunday Sacrament meetings at their chapels, plus exaltation through committed LDS performing baptism and confirmation rites for dead souls, and receiving eternal marriage and the endowment for themselves and dead souls inside temples (Davies, D.J. 2003: 4-6, 104-105). The Aaronic priesthood runs LDS chapel life, while the Melchizedek priesthood has additional authority to

organise temple rites (Ibid 176-177). For the LDS, the family forms the “basis of exaltation”, as temple-goers discover their family trees to conduct temple rites for deceased ancestors (Ibid 172). However, in non-American mission fields, the LDS have many members who commemorate the atonement of Jesus in chapels, but few who pursue exaltation for themselves and dead relatives inside temples (Ibid 133-134).

The LDS “temple rite” has become “divided into” four separate parts, because “it would take several hours” to perform at one time (Faulconer 2015: 196). First, “baptism for the remission of sins” and confirmation for the “gift of the Holy Ghost” are done for dead people, especially relatives, often by “adolescents” too young to “perform the other parts” of the temple rite, with adults often being the “officiators” (Ibid). For the LDS, dead souls can accept or reject baptisms done on their behalf and can choose whether to be taught the LDS gospel in the post-mortal world or not (Millet 1998: 200; Bloom 1992/2006: 122). The LDS believe that baptism of the dead was practised by the early Christian Church, because the apostle Paul mentions it in 1 Corinthians 15: 29 (Millet 1998: 197; Bloom 1992/2006: 119). Joseph Smith’s baptism of the dead vision is inspired by Malachi 4: 5-6 from the Old Testament, where Malachi speaks about God sending the prophet Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and vice-versa (Bloom 1992/2006: 120-121; Davies, D.J. 2003: 204-205). The LDS believe that Elijah appeared quoting Malachi’s prophecy during a Kirtland Temple dedication ceremony in Ohio in 1836, telling Smith and Oliver Cowdery that they were about to receive the keys of a new religious dispensation from God (Bloom 1992/2006: 120-121). In response, Smith viewed baptism of the dead as the means through which the hearts of the fathers and their children could be turned towards each other, with living LDS being able to start moving towards godhood through providing this means of salvation for dead relatives (Bloom 1992/2006: 121; Davies, D.J. 2003: 206-207). Smith’s notion of baptisms being done for dead people resolves a problem of many people having died without hearing the LDS gospel between Jesus/his original apostles’ time on Earth and Smith’s restoration of Christ’s Church in 1830 (Bloom 1992/2006: 121).

After receiving proxy baptisms/confirmations, dead souls may progress towards godhood through having eternal marriage and the endowment done on their behalf by living LDS ancestors (Davies, D.J. 2003: 210). Before eternal marriage and endowment for the living or dead can take place, the participants receive an “initiatory ordinance”, being washed and anointed before receiving “the garment” (Faulconer 2015: 196). The initiates are washed with water and anointed with oil; given prayers/blessings; and clothed in garments covering the chest and lower body (Davies, D.J. 2003: 215). The temple garment symbolises the “coats of

skins” that Adam and Eve received “to cover their nakedness” when “driven” from the Garden of Eden, and offers “spiritual protection” through reminding temple-goers of the “covenants”/promises they make with God during “temple worship” (Faulconer 2015: 197).

The endowment is a “participatory enactment” of the LDS story of the “Creation, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the Fall, mortal life, resurrection, and entrance into God’s presence” (Faulconer 2015: 197). Hence, it covers “the creation of the world”, the “origin of humanity”, and people’s “divine destiny” (Ibid). The participants make vows entering into a “covenant with God”, and receive secret names while moving through a “symbolic veil” into the “celestial room” which represents “the highest heavenly realms” (Davies, D.J. 2003: 215). Moreover, Davies, D.J. (2003: 215) describes the husband receiving the rite through someone else playing the part of God, and the husband playing this role during his wife’s endowment, as she receives a name only known by her and her husband who will use it to find her in the afterlife. After “completing the endowment”, the participants enter the “celestial room”, a “bright” place designed for reverent “contemplation and meditation” (Faulconer 2015: 197). The endowment prepares temple-goers for the “conquest of death”, as they reach a higher path directed towards becoming “divine agents” in the afterlife (Davies, D.J. 2003: 215-216).

The LDS distinguish between spouses who receive eternal/temple marriage being sealed together for eternity by Melchizedek priests, and people married in LDS chapels, non-LDS churches, and secular ceremonies only being married for their Earth lives (Ballard 1993/2006: 62; Davies, D.J. 2003: 213-214). Eternal marriage formally completes the temple rite, unifying the spouses as an “eternal unit” (“new Adam” + “new Eve”), “potentially a king and queen in God’s kingdom” (Faulconer 2015: 198). The LDS believe that married temple-goers should have children and whole families must be sealed together in the temple so they can remain together as units in the afterlife (Ballard 1993/2006: 63; Davies, D.J. 2003: 214). Children born to temple-married parents are ““born in the covenant””, “sealed to their parents”, while children born outside the covenant may be “sealed to their parents in a ceremony” similar to eternal marriage (Faulconer 2015: 198-199).

For committed LDS members, temple work involves receiving “knowledge set apart from other kinds of knowledge” which cannot “be revealed to the uninitiated”, so they are “prohibited” from discussing the “temple ritual outside the temple, except in general terms” (Faulconer 2015: 199). While everybody inside the temple participates or officiates in the rites, no “spectators” are allowed because the LDS view the temple as “sacred space” reserved for worthy LDS who wear special clothing, do exclusive acts for themselves and dead people, and learn about divine things away from the world (Ibid 199-200). While mainstream

Christians receive abstract “theological knowledge” and understand salvation as “the removal of sin”, committed LDS believe that their temple life makes “divine life possible” through the “bodily” enactment of the POS (Ibid 200-201). Committed temple-goers may attain a higher identity which changes how they view “their lives and the world they live in”, as they make covenants which “bind” them to God, their Church, and “each other” (Ibid 203, 206).

In some respects, LDS chapel rites resemble mainstream Christian rites. While Catholics may complete a threefold process of receiving infant baptism, having their first confession/holy communion around the age of accountability (7-8 years old), and receiving the Holy Ghost during confirmation a few years later, LDS confirmation takes place shortly after baptism to make people members of the LDS Church and give them the “constant companionship” of the Holy Ghost (Gaskill 2008: 76-77). Catholic priests baptise babies through pouring water on their heads to pardon sin and make them spiritual members of the “Christian community”, while the LDS only baptise people when they are at least eight to make them members of Christ’s Church and remit their sins (Ibid 73-74). When newly-baptised LDS have their sins “washed away”, they promise to continue repenting for their sins and to keep God’s commandments (Ballard 1993/2006: 85-86). The LDS reject a “post-Biblical” act of pouring water over babies’ heads, only baptise by full immersion people of accountable age who know the difference between right and wrong, and reject a Catholic belief that baptism washes away original sin (Gaskill 2008: 75). For the LDS, people are not born sinful because Adam and Eve did not sin but freely chose to leave the Garden of Eden to experience the highs and lows of mortality, the second stage of the POS (Ballard 1993/2006: 82-83). The LDS believe that people are born good/innocent, not responsible for Adam and Eve’s “transgression”, and only become accountable for sin through choosing to do wrong actions as they grow older (Ibid 83). The “historic doctrine” of original sin, “conceived as the root cause of human alienation from God”, teaches that people inherit “guilt” and “vice” from the Fall, with the LDS rejecting this because “God does not hold one individual guilty for the actions of another” (Givens 2015: 261). Despite acknowledging that people are predisposed to sin, the LDS do not view this as a “condition following from a sinful Adamic heritage”, but as the result of people having “imperfectly developed wills” in a world “constructed” to offer “challenge, opposition, and temptation” (Ibid 262). Thus, the LDS believe that people are “born free of sin”/“guilt”, but “succumb to sinful influences” (Ibid).

The LDS and Catholic Churches have similar concepts of penance/repentance. The Catholic sacrament of confession involves a priest acting “on behalf of Jesus”, directing people to say an act of contrition prayer during confession and prayers afterwards to gain

forgiveness for sins and “to draw closer to God” (Gaskill 2008: 81). LDS repentance involves “serious sins” being confessed to a “priesthood leader” who lets the sinner know when he/she has “properly repented” to be forgiven by God (Ibid 82). This process may take place while local leaders interview and assess members for doing callings, entering the temple, going on missions, becoming Melchizedek priests etc. (Kidd/Kidd 1998: 84). Thus, LDS repentance may be more arduous than Catholic confession, as a person’s temple entrance, upcoming mission etc. may depend on it.

Regarding communion services, Catholics believe that during the consecration at Mass, bread and wine are changed into Christ’s body/blood with their appearances remaining the same, while the LDS have a Calvinist-type Protestant interpretation that the bread and water at Sunday Sacrament services only symbolise Christ’s body/blood through his real presence being restricted to heaven (Davies, D.J. 2003: 178). While many mainstream Christian congregations have mainly male, sometimes celibate, professionally-trained clergy, the LDS have all-male lay priests who are expected to know LDS scripture/teachings well and to do official callings in their local chapels (Ibid 180).

The LDS view the Bible, BOM, D&C and POGP as sacred scripture, while mainstream Christians only recognise the Bible as such (Ballard 1993/2006: 44-45; Gaskill 2008: 113; Millet 1998: 19; Davies, D.J. 2003: 43). Protestants mainly focus on the Bible, and the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, despite their “multifaceted faiths in holy writ, apostolic tradition, patriarchal leadership, and saintly mystics”, have not raised “any postprimitive statements to scriptural status” (Holland 2015: 149-150). Hence, mainstream Christian denominations have “consciously rejected” the idea of producing “ongoing streams” of religious “revelation” (Ibid 150). For the LDS, a “closed new Testament” may contain skilful writers, but it looks “ambiguous” and “prone to conflict” through being “frozen in time” (Ibid 153). The four books of LDS scripture have scriptural and canonical status, while First Presidency/Quorum of the Twelve member talks at General Conferences from Salt Lake City have scriptural but not necessarily canonical status (Gaskill 2008: 113). General Conference audiences believe that the “around thirty” speakers, including “fifteen living prophets” from the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, receive “inspiration in preparing their remarks”, so religious revelation is “felt” passing through them (Holland 2015: 152). Thus, LDS members are expected to engage with far more scripture than mainstream Christians who may rarely or never read the Bible.

As Joseph Smith “claimed divine authority to speak for God”, LDS Church leaders started compiling the revelations that he was receiving in 1831, with the first edition of the D&C

being published in 1835 (Millet 1998: 23). Nowadays, the book consists of 138 sections mainly made up of revelations received through Smith, and one official declaration from Wilford Woodruff (LDS Church President 1889-1898) about the LDS ending polygamy and another from Spencer W. Kimball (LDS Church President 1973-1985) about allowing men from all racial backgrounds to become LDS priests (Ibid 23-24). The D&C integrates two streams of religiosity: what the LDS believe in and how they put their beliefs into practice through making covenants with God (Davies, D.J. 2003: 9). The POGP dates back to 1851 when Quorum of the Twelve member and President of the British Mission, Franklin D. Richards, produced a collection of writings by Joseph Smith for British LDS who were short of LDS literature (Millet 1998: 24). In 1880, the LDS voted to accept the POGP as their fourth book of scripture, with it containing additional “doctrinal details” about the Creation, Adam and Eve, the Fall, other Old Testament figures (Enoch, Noah, Moses, and Abraham), and Jesus’ Mount Olives discourse from the Gospel of Matthew 24, all prompted by Smith’s study of the Bible; part of Smith’s 1838 *History of the Church*; and Smith’s 13 Articles of Faith (Ibid). Together, the D&C and POGP take LDS religiosity away from a BOM and mainstream Christian message of salvation based on “repentance, faith and baptism” towards a vision of people engaging in “covenant-making temple ritual” to seek divinity themselves (Davies, D.J. 2003: 34-35).

The LDS differ from non-evangelical mainstream Christians through sharing testimonies about their faith with fellow members, especially at Sunday Sacrament meetings on the first Sunday of each month. LDS testimonies may involve members becoming certain about LDS teachings/practices being true, and revealing this publicly to fellow members through which they may sense “sincerity of purpose” and the Holy Ghost influencing their lives (Davies, D.J. 2003: 179). Pre-baptismal testimonies may be prompted by LDS missionaries encouraging recruits to take up Moroni’s challenge from Moroni 10: 4-5 in the BOM, which invites the reader to ask God directly about the truth of the book (Ballard 1993/2006: 117-118; Shippis 1987: 28). While asking God about the BOM, recruits may start feeling uplifted, believing that the book is true through receiving an “inner sense of new conviction” (Davies, D.J. 2003: 62).

Finally, the LDS differ from Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and some Protestant denominations (e.g. Anglicans, Lutherans) through an absence of cross/crucifix symbolism in LDS chapels and temples. Reed (2011) believes that before the later 19th century, the LDS had little/no antipathy towards the mainstream Christian cross symbol. He points towards LDS women, including one of Brigham Young’s wives and some of his daughters, being

pictured wearing crosses, and “cross jewellery” being worn by some LDS women (Ibid). Thus, the LDS did not inherit a Protestant animosity towards the cross symbol nor an anti-Catholic ethos that was prevalent in early 19th century America (Ibid).

For Reed (2011), the early LDS never condemned the cross because Joseph Smith and other LDS were involved in folk magic and freemasonry which encouraged symbolic use of the cross, and pre-Columbus crosses were “found in archaeological remains”, which, for many LDS, provided “evidence confirming authenticity” of the BOM. Reed (2011) also points towards a Smith family parchment containing a three-cross symbol connected with folk magic and treasure-hunting, while other “magic parchments associated with the Smith family” are covered with crosses. He believes that LDS attitudes towards the cross symbol started to change at the end of the 19th century, as “new generations” of LDS turned away from folk magic and freemasonry (Ibid). This resulted in polarised attitudes towards the cross with Spencer W. Kimball (12th LDS Church President 1973-1985) having had mystical-type apparitions of the cross in early life, while David O’Mackay (9th LDS Church President 1951-1970) “institutionalised” its taboo position in LDS religiosity as an inappropriate “Catholic form of worship” (Ibid). From here, an LDS aversion to the mainstream Christian cross was perpetuated into the 21st century (Ibid). Gaskill (2013: 185) acknowledges that in Reed’s (2012) book, it is argued “rather convincingly” that LDS religiosity “has not always been uncomfortable” using “the cross as one of its symbols”. However, Gaskill (2013: 186) stresses that modern-day LDS “are not expressly forbidden” from using the cross in “personal devotions”, “religious art”, or jewellery. Moreover, he views Reed’s (2012: 37-60) third chapter claim that Joseph Smith and the early LDS used “the cross as a symbol” through being “heavily into folk magic and Freemasonry” as “heavily conjectural” (Ibid 186). For Gaskill (Ibid), the third chapter provides “evidence” that crosses were used in 19th century “Masonry and by some practioners of folk magic”, but fails to show that Smith “introduced the cross as a symbol into Mormonism” through such “influences”. The chapter also overlooks a fact that Smith “never used the cross as a symbol in his public discourse or liturgical rites” (Ibid). Thus, Gaskill (2013: 187) believes that Reed (2012) struggles to support his claim that “early LDS comfort with the symbol of the cross” was mainly down to Smith’s “comfort with folk magic or Masonry”.

1.2.2 Recruit to temple-goer transformation

For the LDS, baptism only represents the beginning of conversion, as new members must become worthy to perform temple rites. While Catholics are expected to attend Sunday Mass

once a week, in 1980, LDS “general authorities” instructed their members to attend Sacrament, Sunday School, and Priesthood/Relief Society meetings every Sunday, with each one lasting an hour (Shipps 2000: 269). In 2019, this was changed to having a one-hour Sunday Sacrament meeting every week, accompanied by a 50-minute Sunday School meeting one week and 50-minute Priesthood/Relief Society meeting the next week, with all these meetings being attended by members and recruits together (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/bc/content/ldsorg/general-conference/16435000FAQ.pdf?lang=eng> accessed 14-12-19).

For almost all my research, I attended LDS Sunday meetings before the 2019 changes. Kidd/Kidd (1998: 31-39) explain the structure of the LDS Sunday “three-hour meeting block” which existed before the changes. At Sunday Sacrament meetings, LDS members sing hymns, take the bread-and-water communion, and listen to missionary/member talks and opening/closing prayers. Recruits are encouraged to sing hymns and take communion too. At Testimony Sunday Sacrament meetings, members bear their testimonies about LDS teachings/practices, sometimes emphasising their personal experience, and fast for two meals beforehand giving the money they save to the LDS Church. Prior to the 2019 changes, separate Sunday School meetings existed for recruits/recent converts and established converts which immersed participants into LDS teachings. For the third hour, adult men went to a Priesthood meeting and adult women to a Relief Society meeting. Priesthood meetings contain hymns/prayers, deal with priesthood business (e.g. assigning new positions), and strengthen LDS men as family and quorum (formal priesthood) members. Relief Society meetings direct LDS women towards serving their local LDS community and strengthen them as individuals and family members. Recruits sometimes attend Priesthood/Relief Society meetings. On Testimony Sundays, the usual meetings are followed by a communal meal where missionaries/members and recruits socialise together. Recruits/converts may also attend LDS weekday meetings. Chapel Home Evenings are an adaptation of Family Home Evenings where LDS families spend quality time together, and usually include an opening hymn/prayer, lesson/sermon, fun-type games, closing prayer, and “refreshments” (Kidd/Kidd 1998: 181). Institute meetings are catechism-type classes that offer LDS scripture study to anybody interested (Ibid 40).

At least one month before baptism, recruits should start following the WOW from D&C section 89 which mainly involves not smoking and not drinking alcohol, tea or coffee (Davies, D.J. 2003: 181-182). As baptism draws nearer, a recruit must attend an interview with a local LDS leader. If a recruit passes through this interview, he/she can be baptised by a male missionary/member. To become temple-goers, males must join the Aaronic and

Melchizedek priesthoods (Kidd/Kidd 1998: 224-241). The LDS believe that membership of these priesthoods gives LDS men the authority to carry out religious duties in the name of God. In the Aaronic priesthood, boys usually become deacons at 12 which allows them to distribute the Sunday Sacrament; collect Testimony Sunday money (saved through fasting); speak at meetings; and look after chapel grounds. If worthy at 14, boys become teachers through which, alongside performing deacon tasks, they can prepare the communion table for Sunday Sacrament meetings, become home teachers (visiting and teaching fellow LDS), and be ushers at chapel events. Then, if worthy at 16, they can become priests which, alongside performing deacon/teacher duties, allows them to bless the Sunday Sacrament bread/water; baptise people; confer the Aaronic priesthood on others; and help with missionary work. In contrast, adult male converts can become Aaronic priests within a month of becoming LDS.

Worthy young LDS men become elders by joining the Melchizedek priesthood, named after the Old Testament high priest mentioned in a Catholic context in 1.1. The LDS believe that their Melchizedek priesthood is the same one that God gave to Adam; Jesus held and transmitted to his apostles on Earth; was taken away after the deaths of Jesus' original apostles; and was restored through the apostles Peter, James, and John visiting Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in 1829 (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/melchizedek-priesthood?lang=eng> accessed 3-07-20). Besides performing Aaronic priest duties, Melchizedek priests pass through higher offices and can enter the temple if they have a temple recommend card, usually assigned by a bishop, the male leader of a ward (small group of branches) and stake president, the male leader of a stake (a collection of wards). However, in LDS missions outside the USA, branch and Mission Presidents usually interview members to assess if they are worthy of entering the temple (<https://www.lds.org/manual/preparing-to-enter-the-holy-temple/preparing-to-enter-the-holy-temple?lang=eng> accessed 1-11-17). An elder can be ordained a high priest if he receives a high local or regional LDS leadership position (e.g. bishop or president) or becomes a patriarch who gives mystical blessings to members. When LDS men become Melchizedek priests, they make an oath with God, promising to advance his kingdom on Earth through learning the LDS gospel and serving him by helping to perfect other LDS members. Higher levels of the Melchizedek priesthood include The Seventy quorums (offices devoted to missionary work), the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and First Presidency.

Kidd/Kidd (1998: 82-88) discuss the role that a bishop in charge of a ward, or in the mission field, a branch president may perform, which includes leading other priests; interviewing the leaders of branch organisations; choosing two counselors/advisors; and

approving callings. He may also perform non-temple marriages; ensure all chapel ordinances (e.g. Sunday Sacrament blessings) are performed properly; plan and lead Sunday Sacrament meetings; and start Sunday Priesthood meetings. The president or his counselors should interview members to check if they are moral and faithful enough to attend the temple, male members to assess their worthiness for priesthood advancement, and young people and older couples about their suitability for serving missions. If a branch member is accused of committing serious criminal or immoral transgressions, the president may have to organise disciplinary councils to decide whether to take no action, or put him/her on probation or out of fellowship, and in extreme cases, excommunicate him/her. Finally, a branch president and his two counselors have to interview members to see if they have paid full tithing. The president's counselors often take care of less serious business, such as interviewing young Aaronic priests and female teenagers; supervising auxiliary meetings (e.g. Sunday School lessons); offering and extending branch callings as approved by the president; and leading meetings and branch life when the president is absent.

The Relief Society aims to develop female LDS members. Kidd/Kidd (1998: 102-104) explain how it works. During meetings, women receive religious and homemaking (cooking, craft-making, home finance etc.) lessons which encourage mutual co-operation. The Relief Society is lead by a president usually assisted by counselors who supervise the teachers and content of lessons, oversee the homemaking programme, and organise help for branch members who need it. As new male converts may find the Priesthood set-up intimidating, new female converts may be daunted by the hierarchical structure of the Relief Society.

LDS members are expected to undertake unpaid callings: leading Sunday meetings, teaching lessons, doing administrative/manual tasks etc. Kidd/Kidd (1998: 54-77) discuss how members are given and do branch callings. Local leaders may offer a member a calling after asking questions about his/her life, family, work, testimony/faith, and view of the local LDS community. Converts are given callings shortly after baptism to strengthen their commitment and integration inside an LDS community. As converts may feel intimidated by the tasks and time involved, callings can be turned down, but members are usually convinced of the benefits of carrying them out. After accepting a calling, a member has it sustained/approved by fellow members who raise their right hands in support of the nomination at a Sunday meeting. In a private meeting afterwards, a ward bishop or branch president puts his hands on the nominee's head to give him/her authority and a blessing from the Melchizedek priesthood to do the calling well. The nominee may then seek advice from local leaders, the person released from the position, and friends, or may look at training manuals to discover

his/her calling duties. A member usually first hears about being released from a calling through a private meeting with a bishop/president, where his/her experiences of the position are discussed, after which he/she is formally released at a Sunday meeting. However, in a small branch, a few established members may do multiple callings to keep the place running.

If viewed as worthy enough, converts may prepare to enter the temple. Kidd/Kidd (1998: 259-263) describe the temple entrance preparation process. A preparation class, which may take place over two months, involves studying temple-related texts, especially from the D&C/POGP. To enter a temple, male converts must receive the Melchizedek priesthood, with worthy men usually becoming elders 3-12 months after baptism. During temple recommend interviews, interviewees are asked questions about following LDS commandments, e.g. practising the law of chastity (no sex outside heterosexual marriage) and WOW, and their belief in LDS teachings. When viewed as worthy, the interviewee receives a recommend card to enter the temple for a year, after which the process needs to be repeated. Different kinds of temple recommend allow non-endowed members to do baptism of the dead; members to be endowed and receive eternal marriage; and endowed members to perform all temple ordinances for the dead.

Finally, Kidd/Kidd (1998: 195-197) discuss how LDS members do family history research in preparation for doing temple ordinances for dead relatives. First, they collect their dead relatives' names, being encouraged to complete at least four generations of family genealogy, starting with themselves and working back in time. To learn about this, members may attend classes or seek help at a family history centre linked to the LDS Church's store of genealogical records in Salt Lake City. After this, they can do temple ordinances for the dead family ancestors they have listed. Through doing baptism of the dead, temple-goers may feel a profound connection with deceased family members. To enter the temple, members must pay tithing, as the LDS believe this has been practised since Biblical times (Kidd/Kidd 1998: 219-221). The tithing rule may often involve members deciding if the 10% payment of their income needs to be made before or after tax, with local LDS leaders not prying into this. For many new converts, tithing will be a massive test of faith, with the LDS advising them to stop buying unnecessary things, and stressing that unexpected financial blessings may occur through paying tithing.

1.2.3 The Poland LDS Mission

Mehr's (2002) semi-official LDS account about the LDS entering Central/Eastern Europe examines how they gained a foothold in communist Poland in the 1970s/1980s and officially

established a Mission in 1990 to seek converts in post-communist Poland. The semi-official LDS account of the Deseret Church News writer, Stahle (2001), and official LDS accounts of the First Quorum of the Seventy member, Neuenschwander (1998); assistant editor of the official LDS *Ensign* magazine, Rollins (1982); and a News of the Church section article from *Ensign September 1989* address this purpose too.

The LDS gained legal recognition in Poland on May 26th 1977, becoming entitled to own property, conduct religious services, distribute literature, and answer questions, but not proselytise (Mehr 2002: 101-102). In late August 1977, President Kimball became the only serving LDS Church President to enter communist Europe, visiting Poland where he made Fryderyk Czerwiński the presiding elder, as Polish government policy required Church leaders to be Polish back then, and gave a “dedicatory prayer” in Ogród Saski Park (The Saxon Garden Park) in Warsaw for the LDS gospel to be accepted in Poland (Ibid 102-103). Between 1977 and 1979, an older American couple, Matthew/Marian Ciembronówicz (my Polish wife believes that Ciembronowicz/Ciembrónowicz may be more accurate), served as missionaries in Poland, travelling extensively to meet LDS members, and Elder Ciembronówicz baptised 14 converts (Ibid 103-104). In 1978, the LDS acquired their visitor centre on Nowy Świat Street in central Warsaw, where Poles could ask questions and obtain literature about the LDS (Ibid 104). Between 1975 and 1981, the Polish-born convert Maria Krolikowska (my wife believes that Królikowska may be more accurate) translated the BOM into Polish, with full editions appearing in 1981 (Mehr 2002: 100; Rollins 1982).

By November 1981, the Nowy Świat visitor centre was “ready to be dedicated” for missionary service, but in December 1981, the Polish government imposed martial law and outlawed the Solidarity movement, so the centre had to wait to become fully operational (Mehr 2002: 104). After martial law ended in Poland in 1983, Eastern Europe became more accessible for the LDS, as in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev started reforming the Soviet communist system and an LDS Temple was opened in Freiberg, East Germany (Ibid 155). When Ezra Taft Benson became LDS Church President in 1985, entering Central/Eastern Europe became a more focused effort, with the Quorum of the Twelve member (and future Church President) Russell M. Nelson campaigning to get official Missions set up there (Ibid 155-157). In 1985, Hans B. Ringger started serving as a counselor in the Europe Area Presidency that managed LDS operations in Eastern European countries, and in 1989, he became the Europe Area President. Meanwhile, in 1987, Dennis Neuenschwander became President of the newly created Austria Vienna East Mission which sought to introduce young missionaries (YMs) into Central/Eastern European countries “as circumstances permitted”

(Ibid 157). This Mission disbanded in 1992 after helping to establish the LDS Church beyond the Iron Curtain (Ibid 238). After the Solidarity election victory in March 1989, a “revised law on religious liberty” was passed later that year which allowed foreigners to run religious congregations and opened the way for the Poland LDS Mission to be established (Ibid 172). Between 1983 and 1984, Walter Whipple, a Music Professor from Illinois, learned to make violins and speak Polish in Zakopane, southern Poland; met Polish LDS in Warsaw; and unconsciously trained to become Poland’s first Mission President, and between June 1984 and September 1985, an older American missionary couple, Stanisław and Gwendolyn Mazur, taught and baptised Polish converts in Poland (Ibid 109-110). Moreover, between 1985 and 1990, the Mazurs’ replacements, Juliusz and Dorothy Fussek from Salt Lake City, prepared the foundations of the Poland Mission through dealing with public officials and leading early LDS growth in Poland (Mehr 2002: 165; Stahle 2001).

Not long before the fall of communism, YMs started arriving in Poland. The first two, Matthew Binns and Sean Peterson, had to spend their first year of mission service in Chicago, waiting for the Polish government to grant them entry into Poland (Mehr 2002: 167-168). They arrived in Warsaw in January 1988 where at the Nowy Świat visitor centre, the Fusseks helped them to prepare for their first missionary discussions in Polish (Mehr 2002: 168-169; Stahle 2001). When the YMs and President Neuenschwander from the Austria Vienna East Mission met the Polish Minister of Religious Affairs, it was stressed that they could not proselytise, only answer people’s questions (Mehr 2002: 168). After this, the two YMs started receiving visitors, mainly curiosity-seekers and theology students, at Nowy Świat, occasionally visited investigators, and in April 1988, gained their first convert, Zaneta Świercz (my wife believes that Żaneta Świercz may be more accurate), the niece of a recent convert (Ibid 169-170). By July 1988, Elder Peterson was serving with a new companion, John Mitchell, in Wrocław alongside another older missionary couple, the Cieslaks (my wife believes that Cieślaks may be more accurate), while Elder Binns remained in Warsaw with the newly arrived Stephen Thomas (Ibid 171). All this led to 24 baptisms in 1988 and 38 in 1989, with greater numbers of missionaries arriving in Poland in 1989, many having been taught Polish by Walter Whipple at the Missionary Training Centre (MTC) in Provo, Utah (Ibid 172).

In the late 1980s, Urszula Adamska became the first LDS missionary from Poland. Her boyfriend had prompted her to read the Bible and BOM, but she had initially felt uneasy about leaving the Catholic Church behind (Mehr 2002: 170). However, after having uplifting feelings which confirmed her belief in LDS religiosity, she was prepared for baptism by the

Fusseks and became LDS in her early 20s in September 1987 (Ibid). By late summer 1988, she was helping YMs to speak with recruits in Warsaw, and in 1989, she was called to serve the Washington Seattle Mission in the USA (Ibid 170-171).

In 1990, Walter Whipple became the first LDS Mission President in Poland. After meeting Whipple at BYU in Provo, Utah in October 1989, Russell M. Nelson decided that Whipple's previous experience in Poland and Polish language skills made him an obvious choice for leading the Poland Mission (Mehr 2002: 172-173). By early 1991, the Polish government had eased its restrictions on religious proselytising, which allowed YMs to speak freely with people, with their number growing to almost 50 and LDS membership to about 300: roughly 100 converts joining between 1985 and 1989, 100 in 1990, and 100 in 1991 (Ibid 190-191). Back then, Polish LDS mainly resided in Warsaw (central Poland); Katowice, Łódź, and Wrocław (western Poland); and Bydgoszcz and Sopot in northern Poland (Ibid 191). As travel restrictions disappeared, 11 Polish members entered Freiberg Temple in May 1991, including Urszula Adamska who had, during her mission, helped create Polish texts for temple ceremonies (Ibid 191).

On June 15th 1989, around 200 people attended a ground-breaking ceremony led by Russell M. Nelson at the site of the future Wolska chapel in Warsaw (*Ensign September 1989*; Mehr 2002: 172). The Polish LDS Mission, centred in Warsaw, was officially created in July 1990, and the first meeting at the Wolska chapel was held in November 1990, with it being dedicated to serve the Polish people in June 1991 (Neuenschwander 1998; Mehr 2002: 191; Stahle 2001). Also in June 1991, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir performed in Warsaw while touring Central/Eastern Europe (Mehr 2002: 192). However, by the late 1990s, only 80-100 Poles were becoming LDS a year, and by the end of 2001, there were still only 1,200 LDS in Poland, as Poles found it difficult to break "traditional ties" with the Catholic Church and risked having conflicts with their families if they joined another religion (Ibid 288).

1.2.4 LDS missionaries

Having given a short history of the Poland LDS Mission, I will discuss LDS missionaries, because they are highly visible inside any LDS mission field, often pushing LDS recruitment/conversion forward as shown throughout this thesis. In late 2019, the LDS Church officially stated that it had over 65,000 missionaries spread over 399 missions in the world (www.newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/facts-and-statistics accessed 21-11-19). Back in the early 1960s, trainees, who had previously "received little training before entering the mission field", started undergoing "several weeks" of "language training" at LDS university sites in

Utah, Idaho, and Hawaii (Bryant et al 2014: 764). Moreover, in 1978, the MTC opened in Provo, Utah, near BYU, where all missionaries started undergoing a “uniform training experience” with long hours of study for “several weeks” before entering the “mission field” (Ibid). In late 2012, the LDS lowered the age for full-time missionaries, with YMMs starting their missions at 18 rather than 19, and YFMs at 19 rather than 21 (Neilson 2015: 188).

Through a well-coordinated mission structure, the LDS leadership in Salt Lake City “can decide where promising converts” may be found worldwide and “deploy” their missionaries “accordingly” (Ostling/Ostling 2007: 219). Smartly-dressed, usually retired, married couples make up about 7% of the missionary force worldwide, with them performing administrative or humanitarian roles in the mission field (Ostling/Ostling 2007: 208; Bryant et al 2014: 756). YMMs, who make up about 75% of all missionaries, are required to dress in suits/ties and YFMs, who make up around 18%, in dresses or blouses/skirts, as prescribed by an official missionary manual (Ostling/Ostling 2007: 207-208; Bryant et al 2014: 756). Despite many YMs coming from North America, more non-American missionaries are entering the international mission field (Ostling/Ostling 2007: 214).

In late 2019, the LDS Church officially stated that it had 11 MTCs in operation (www.newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/facts-and-statistics accessed 21-11-19). Before attending an MTC, young LDS may spend years saving up to fund their missions, building up excitement/idealism towards their future missionary work (Ostling/Ostling 2007: 218). YMs heading for non-English speaking destinations start learning foreign languages inside their MTCs, and build on this during their missions which are two years for YMMs and 18 months for YFMs (Ibid 208). Inside an MTC, trainees are taught missionary skills, e.g. how to pray continually; be friendly; speak naturally; remember recruit names; politely defend/promote LDS beliefs etc., but may learn little about the culture/history of their host countries (Ibid 216).

When a new missionary starts a mission, he/she works with a same-sex colleague who has usually been in the field for some time (Ostling/Ostling 2007: 210). While introducing people to LDS religiosity, YMs may encounter mockery and rejection, but may perform determined religious salesmen-type roles: turning first encounters into follow-up meetings through taking contact details off anybody who looks interested, and giving whiteboard presentations about their faith in busy city centre spots (Ibid 208-209, 213). Missionaries write official reports about their recruits, and if they visit a recruit in his/her home, they may try to recruit other family members too (Ibid 209, 216). To proselytise recruits, missionaries offer memorised talks, often in a foreign language, about Joseph Smith providing the BOM as additional

scripture to the Bible; LDS baptism; pre-mortality; baptism of the dead; developing eternal families in the afterlife; following the WOW/law of chastity; paying tithing; progressing towards godhood/exaltation through temple work etc. (Ibid 217-218).

1.2.5 The Catholic Church influencing politics in Poland

Sociologists of religion who discuss Poland often focus on a link between “religion and national identity”, and question whether the Catholic Church’s “public involvement” in socio-political issues blocks secularisation from becoming stronger in Poland or not (Marody and Mandes 2017: 231-232). To explore such issues, I will refer to Polish sociologists of religion and philosophers; a Polish commentator on Polish current affairs (Scislowska/Ścisłowska-Sakowicz 2014); an American commentator on Eastern European history/politics (Ramet 2017); and a Canadian Catholic philosopher of religion (Taylor 2007).

Mariański (2006: 86) points towards 95% of the Polish population being baptised Catholics, who, unlike many other Europeans, may still value traditional ties between religiosity, patriotism, and family. Similarly, Borowik (2017: 188) highlights that since the 2nd World War, 90-95% of “adult Poles” have declared themselves to be Catholic. Moreover, Polish Central Statistical Office figures for 2013 show over 33 million people being Roman Catholics; over 500,000 Orthodox Christians; nearly 130,000 Jehovah’s Witnesses; about 70,000 belonging to evangelical-type Protestant groups; over 60,000 being Lutherans; over 50,000 Eastern Rite Catholics; and just under 50,000 belonging to Old Catholic groups (Pasek 2017: 163-165). Thus, despite most Poles being Catholics, other Christian/Christian-derived groups do operate and proselytise in Poland.

During communist times, 23 religious denominations “operated officially in Poland” in 1948, with about 30 being registered in 1980, and 47 in 1988 (Pasek 2017: 163). After communism ended in 1989, new legal/political freedoms allowed all religious minorities “to work without any restrictions” (Ibid). Before 1989, being Catholic was viewed as a political orientation against the “communist regime” which wanted to keep religion away from the “public sphere” (Obirek in Harrison 2009). Despite religion not being visible in the media, it was a key part of family life, and Religion lessons at Polish schools often took place in Catholic churches (Ibid). Other Christian denominations (Baptists, Methodists etc.) were accepted by the communist authorities, as they provided competing versions of Christian belief which helped to discredit all denominational assertions of providing religious truth (Ibid). Despite this, most denominations “preserved autonomy and independence from political interference” (Ibid).

Ramet (2017: 4-6) believes that the Catholic Church's strong political position in Poland and influence on Polish national identity can be traced to several "sources":

- Distant memories of Catholic priests supporting "Polish insurrections against Russian rule in 1830-1831 and 1863-1864"
- Memories of the Catholic Church supporting Poles in the "post-war era", especially from the 1970s onwards
- Older Poles valuing "strict" conservative features of Catholicism
- Recent memories of John Paul II's reign as Pope (1978-2005)
- The Church in Poland being led by long-serving Cardinals of courage and "political acumen", e.g. Wyszyński (1948-1981), Glemp (1981-2006)
- "Catholic religious instruction" being introduced into Polish state schools in 1990
- The Church's active engagement in charity work and social activities.

Of course, many Polish schoolchildren, especially teenagers, will dislike being forced to learn Catholic teachings/practices at school (Ramet 2013: 6). For Obirek (2017: 48), the "longstanding tradition" of identifying Poland with Catholicism dates back to at least the partition of Poland into Austrian, Prussian/German, and Russian territory between 1795 and 1918. During the mid-19th century, the Catholic Church started to view secularisation as "depriving Poles of their national identity" (Marody and Mandes 2017: 232-233). Here, the Church became the centre of a Polish society long controlled by three foreign powers, with "social groups" being drawn to its offers of "strong bonds and trust" which allowed them "to operate in a largely hostile environment", so being Catholic became a sign of "Polish national identity" (Ibid 233). The latter was "reinforced" after the 2nd World War, as Poland became one of the most ethnically/religiously "homogeneous societies in the world", with the Catholic Church providing the "only space where objections to communist rule could be demonstrated" (Ibid). During the 1980s, the Catholic Church in Poland became more involved in politics through offering "institutional support to Solidarity", while John Paul II's outlook and teachings "legitimised the moral validity" of the latter (Ibid 234-235). Towards the end of communism in Poland, religious practice became "not only possible, but even desirable", as the mainly Catholic Solidarity winners replaced the "bad, evil system" of communism (Obirek in Harrison 2009). Thus, the Catholic Church became the most powerful public organisation and "moral authority", and attempted to control Polish people's sense of national identity (Ibid). In Poland, the Catholic Church is now sometimes viewed as an ideological

body that has inherited the role of controlling people from the communist authorities that preceded it (Ibid).

For Obirek (2017: 48), Polish identity based on Catholicism was “understandable” during the Church’s “ideological confrontation” with the communist state, but should have become redundant after 1989. However, Legutko (2018) and Oko (in Cichobłazińska 2013) point towards the present-day Catholic Church needing to protect Polish identity from deviant ideologies entering Poland from the West. After communism fell in Poland in 1989, “divisions” between “liberals and social democrats”, “conservatives”, and “nationalists” started to shape “political life”, as the communist ideology that “made these disparate people allies disappeared” (Legutko 2018). With “restored political agency”, the ideological battleground pitches “the left”, which views religion as a “stronghold of obscurantism”, against conservative opponents who defend the Catholic Church in Poland (Ibid). Legutko (2018) stresses that through Poland being an “overwhelmingly Catholic country”, being “conservative” has always involved a “close attachment” to Catholicism, even for non-religious people. While “conservative” and “centrist” political parties accept the “importance of religion in Polish history”, until recently, “left-wing parties” did not attack the Catholic Church/Christianity to avoid “political suicide” (Ibid). For Legutko (2018), Christianity may help preserve nation states, with Poland and Hungary representing a “conservative side” in the “major moral conflicts of today’s Western world” (e.g. concerning abortion and “same-sex marriage”), as their “consistently pro-life and pro-marriage” governments oppose “Western judicial elites” and their “revolutions” against traditional Christian morality. He also points towards Poland and Hungary being “criticized and bullied” in cultural imperialist fashion by American and European “politicians, journalists, academics, artists, film stars, and pop stars” (Ibid). However, Legutko (2018) emphasises that this Western ideological assault on Poland has been unsuccessful, as the presence of many Western ambassadors supporting “homosexual causes” in the Warsaw “Equality Parade” every year has not weakened “strong opposition to legalizing same-sex marriages”, and criticism from the “European Parliament” has not weakened Poland’s “anti-abortion stance”.

Borowik (2017: 202) points towards religious practice in Poland being caught in a tussle between features of traditional and modern societies. Catholic religious practice being handed down from generation to generation is a feature of a traditional society, while a loosening of social bonds and growth of religious diversity is “connected with” society being transformed towards “modernity and post-modernity” (Ibid 200-202). Regarding this, Legutko (2018) discusses progressive groups trying to give Poland a “new liberal-democratic identity”

through “submitting” it to the “enlightened rule” of “local elites and European institutions”, especially the EU. These groups want to give “Polish society” a “mental and social re-education” so it can join and imitate “modern civilization” (Ibid). For Legutko (2018), progressive groups try to eliminate other points of view, and when they lose power through popular votes, they never accept the “democratic results”. In Poland, such groups may use the word “*‘cham’*” (boorish peasant) to stereotype the PiS government and its supporters (Ibid). Moreover, Legutko (2018) highlights that a progressive elite has an “integrationist strategy” to dilute Eastern European identity through the “institutional and cultural framework of a united Europe” which allows European bureaucrats to control “major decisions” everywhere.

Finally, Legutko (2018) discusses how the Iron Curtain blocked Eastern Europeans from following the post-2nd World War changes that “dramatically restructured Western civilization”, with many Poles failing to see that Western civilisation has dissociated itself from its classical Greek roots and Christian history “as if from some burdensome impedimenta”. As a result, Polish conservatives have been shocked to discover that for many Western Europeans, Europe just means the EU and its PC values (Ibid). For Legutko (2018), EU/PC “elites” are trying to create a new European identity with a post-historical, post-national, and post-Christian/post-religious worldview. Thus, in contrast to progressive elites “who identify Europe” with the EU, Eastern European conservatives are now the “truest defenders” of historically-grounded “European identity” (Ibid).

Borowik (2017: 195) points towards Polish conservatives using the term “‘gender ideology’” (GI) to condemn a form of PC which threatens a “biological understanding of sex and the traditional division of family roles”, the “Polish homeland”, and general “humanity”. Regarding this, Oko (in Cichobłazińska 2013) distinguishes between philosophy being a search for goodness and truth and ideology being a “tool” to support personal interests “at the cost of” goodness/truth. GI works towards a “victory of opinions and satisfying of egoistic desires” through loud minority groups receiving benefits at the expense of mainstream society (Ibid). While the word “gender” is traditionally used to distinguish different aspects of grammar/vocabulary in language, the word “sex” is used to refer to the “biological sexes” (Ibid). In contrast, GI uses the word “gender” to teach that the human sexes are not defined or created biologically; that people are not born as “male or female sexes”; and that the latter are “created” culturally through “educational process” (Ibid).

For Oko (in Cichobłazińska 2013), the belief that people’s “sexual identity” derives from culture rather than nature opens the gate to all kinds of social engineering. He explains that left-wing social engineers live in a limited ideological space detached from the wider

metaphysical domain (supernatural order) of Christianity, and seek to enforce their own “special understanding” of reality upon people (Ibid). GI may be viewed as a “mutation” from traditional Marxists claiming to help “workers and peasants” while “seizing” power/authority for themselves, to contemporary Marxists seeking to help people who are “sexually different” while gaining “totalitarian authority” for themselves (Ibid). For Oko (in Cichobłazińska 2013), a negation of relationship with God has produced a “lower and purely physiological” realm of existence where human sexuality is detached from “love and responsibility”, and an unlimited search for “fulfilment and happiness” may result in “distorted” sexual lives. He points towards an assertive/aggressive gay culture promoting its “distorted lifestyle” as an alternative to heterosexuality, and extreme feminists, sometimes lesbians, preaching about freeing women from “motherhood, children, family and men” while referring to “harms and injustices” committed against women (Ibid). Thus, he believes that a “gender war” has been initiated against men in a spirit of revenge (Ibid).

Oko (in Cichobłazińska 2013) also stresses that a GI agenda has been imposed on society through GI supporters gaining control of the media, civil service, education system etc., similar to how this was done under communism. He believes that people may become “slaves” through GI promoters/supporters discrediting and destroying any media which expresses opposing views (Ibid). Moreover, he highlights that GI supporters attempt to make their brand of sexual education “compulsory for everybody”, even trying to enforce it on young children, as they believe it should supersede parents having the right to bring children up according to their specific culture and beliefs (Ibid). He explains that GI may stupefy people through maximising the value of sex and minimising the value of having children, as, through people becoming preoccupied with sex, they become easier to control (Ibid). He also emphasises that “gender ideologists” are prepared to imprison people for criticising their ideology, e.g. for acts of “homophobia”, which results in them being excluded “from any criticism”, while their opponents “can be insulted endlessly” (Ibid). Thus, Oko (in Cichobłazińska 2013) emphasises that without belief in God, GI supporters block themselves from being “subordinated to any criticism”, as they reject the order of nature “established by God” and create “new laws” as if Gods themselves.

Finally, Oko (in Cichobłazińska 2013) discusses how GI creates a social world where there is a “permanent war of everybody against everything”, as minority groups, which lack respect towards each other, compete for power and influence. While communism prompted “economic collapse”, GI may result in the “destruction of the family” and “demographic catastrophe” through mass abortion, with population voids being filled by Muslim immigrants

(Ibid). However, Oko (in Cichobłazińska 2013) believes that Poles have not been “stupefied” or “seduced” enough by GI, and that through being “weaker than God”, the “gender empire” will collapse, like its older ideological relative, communism did.

For Borowik (2017: 189), Poland’s EU entrance in 2004 was the time when Catholic forces in Poland started portraying Western Europe as a degenerate place that served up abortion, broken families, homosexuality etc., with its people accepting this through having good material conditions, entertainment, and a permissive sex culture. She also believes that this was when Western Europe started rivalling or superseding “the Soviet Union” as an “opponent” in Poland, as the Catholic Church continued its post-1989 role as a “guarantor of stability” and “political leader” (Ibid). Moreover, Borowik (2017: 195) points towards the Catholic Church now targeting “gender ideology” as its big enemy, as it fights against “attempts to legalise homosexual unions” and defends the “traditional family”, a “traditional biological understanding of sex”, and “traditional division of family roles”. For Szwed and Zielińska (2017: 117), an allegiance between “religion and politics” against “gender equality” in Poland limits “women’s opportunities in the public sphere” through reinforcing “traditional masculinities as a hegemonic cultural model”. Through examining the “official statements of Polish bishops” and “bishops’ statements” in mainly Catholic “mass media”, they assess how the Catholic Church in Poland “understands the concepts of sex and gender” and “postmodern transformations” regarding “lifestyles, human identity, family patterns, sexuality, and gender relations” (Ibid 119-120).

The Catholic Church “defines gender” in a “binary and complementary manner”, with manhood and womanhood being viewed as “unchangeable” in “nature”, as the “essence” of each stems from “their biological differences” (Szwed and Zielińska 2017: 120). The Church rarely mentions “cultural or historical transformations of gender constructions”, as it views “unchangeable” male and female sexual identities as being divinely designed “to fulfil each other”, and any transgression of these “assigned identities” as denying natural roles “given by God” (Ibid 120-121). Szwed and Zielińska (2017: 121) emphasise that the Church mainly views sexual identity in terms of men and women differing from each other through “nature and biology” rather than cultural constructon, and believes that this reality may get distorted through gender theory (GT) narrowing the differences between the sexes and attempting to make them exchangeable.

For Szwed and Zielińska (2017: 122), the Catholic Church reduces the “model of man and woman” to parental roles of sexually producing and “taking care of children”, so male and female roles are “ascribed to the private sphere”, with no mention of their “public roles in

society". The Church's family-centred "discourse on gender" is "strongly heteronormative", with homosexuality being viewed as disordered and homosexuals seen as the big beneficiaries of gender experimentation (Ibid). Through GT "questioning the natural model of masculinity and femininity", the Church views it as a "serious threat" to heterosexual marriage and family life which it has always defended/promoted (Ibid 123). The Church believes that at a "biological level", GT is an "alien" ideology which promotes "abortion, contraception, homosexual relations" etc., which, at a "socio-cultural" level, leads to a "demographic crisis" and "Christian values" being removed from the "public sphere" (Ibid 124).

Szwed and Zielińska (2017: 124) criticise the Catholic Church in Poland for presenting itself as the only religious organisation "entitled to protect Christian values in the public sphere". They stress that the Catholic Church's "majoritarian status" in Polish society leads to Christianity being "equated with Catholicism", and Poland being viewed as a "homogeneous community of Poles who are Catholics" (Ibid). Moreover, the Church promotes the idea that Catholics in Poland are in danger of being discriminated against through minority groups such as "feminists, non-heterosexuals", abortion supporters, GT "adherents" etc. trying to "pass laws" that support their "interests" (Ibid 125). It also views GT as an "external" ideology related to "leftist movements, feminism, and Marxism/Communism", which, supported by considerable financial resources and influential political lobbies, attempts to impose itself on "Polish society" (Ibid). Thus, the Church views the gender movement as the return/updating of "Poland's communist past", and promotes itself as a "natural and legitimate adversary" to it (Ibid).

For Szwed and Zielińska (2017: 128), the Catholic Church demeans the idea of "gender" through not viewing it as a "scientific concept" but as an "ideology" with a "non-objective"/"distorted view" constructed in the "post-modern world". The Church uses the term gender ideology as a general construct to incorporate movements which it criticises, e.g. "feminists, sexual minorities", pro-abortion groups etc. (Ibid 129). The way the term gender ideology is used in Poland may mirror the way the terms political correctness, postmodernism, cultural Marxism, cultural radicalism etc. are used by some academics (e.g. Scruton and Peterson 2018; Gottfried 2020) and many people in the West to discuss a left-wing macro-ideology that may restrict and control people's freedom and behaviour. Szwed and Zielińska (2017: 129) believe that against a background of fear in Poland, the Catholic Church "presents itself as a hero" defending "endangered values" and traditional "communal forms of life", and protecting the Catholic majority's "civil rights". Hence, the Church seeks state legislation "consistent with Christian morality and Natural Law", and encourages Catholics to defend

“Christian values in the public sphere” (Ibid). The Church believes that “according to the Polish constitution, the state is obliged to protect” heterosexual marriage and family life “against any ideological threats”; support parental rights “to educate children according to their (religious or moral) convictions”; and recognise the “civil rights” of unborn children (Ibid 129-130).

In Poland, the link between Catholicism and Polish identity may be getting weaker, as, despite Catholic religious practice still being visible in social life, it less influences people’s identity (Mariani 2006: 88). A European Values Study (EVS) for the period 1990-2008 highlights that understanding/speaking Polish and having Polish citizenship are now more “important” aspects of “Polish identity” than Polish ethnicity or being Catholic (Marody and Mandes 217: 244-245). Using figures from the EVS study, Marody and Mandes (2017: 235) point towards a “significant decline” in affirmative responses to most questions concerning “individual religiosity” in Poland. The statistics show that while “believing in a personal God” is still the “foundation of Poles’ religiosity”, God has become “less important in their lives”, and less Poles gain “strength and security from religion” (Ibid). However, 65.1-78.5% of Poles still answer affirmatively to such issues, and despite small decreases in Poles believing in God, life after death, and sin, the figures still remain over 70% with belief in God being 96.1% in 2008 (Ibid 236-237). Moreover, the number of Poles who believe in hell rose from 40.8% in 1990 to 69.4% in 2008 (Ibid 237). Despite this, the figures show a dramatic decrease of trust in the Catholic Church being able to give “adequate answers” about “family life” difficulties (20.5% decrease) and “moral problems”/individual “needs” (12.8% decrease), although affirmative answers still lie just above 50%, while the number of people who did not trust the Catholic Church to give “adequate answers” about “social and political problems” went down from 38.3% to 31% (Ibid 238). All this was “accompanied by a decline” in religious practice, as attending Mass once a week dropped from above to below 50%, while once a month remained stable at just under 20%, once a year or less often increased to just over 20% from under 10%, and never attending remained stable at below 10% (Ibid 238-239). This highlights that a “falling frequency” of Poles attending Mass “does not translate into a significant increase” in the number “who never go to church” (Ibid 238). There was also imperceptible change in the percentage of people who viewed it as important to have and attend special religious services such as baptisms, marriages, and funerals (Ibid). All this suggests that while Poles are not “abandoning religion”, with the number of atheists and agnostics not increasing significantly, a “gradual weakening” in identifying with the Catholic Church is occurring (Ibid).

Marody and Mandes (2017: 240) also highlight how the “importance” of religion in Polish “lives” is declining, with it being less important than having friends nowadays. This “decline” is strongest in big cities with over 500,000 inhabitants, while in rural areas, there is a slower “pace of change” (Ibid). Higher educated, well-paid Poles often ascribe less importance to religion, as increasing numbers seek “strength”/“security” away from religion/the Catholic Church (Ibid). Marody and Mandes (2017: 240-241) explain that “modernisation” is prompting a “gradual liberation” of features of “private and social life from the normative influences of religion and the Church”. From the “EVS measurements”, religion is shown to have lost much “importance” in providing a “condition for a happy marriage” and values for “raising children”, and a stance for fighting against a rising justification of “abortion, euthanasia, divorce, and homosexuality” (Ibid 241). However, “trends reflecting” how modernisation undermines the importance of religion in Poland are of “fairly low intensity”, as many Poles still view “themselves as Roman Catholic” and “the number of non-believers” has remained at the “same low level” (Ibid 243).

Mariański (2006: 88) stresses that official Catholic views on marriage, pre-marital sex, and birth control now have much less influence on Poles, while greater individual freedom and cultural curiosity may prompt more Poles to explore non-Catholic religiosity/morality. Obirek (in Harrison 2009) points towards young Poles being uncomfortable with the Catholic Church voicing its teachings about human sexuality in the public sphere, and a wider context of the recent Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI having tried to enforce strict Catholic morality on people, and having failed to foster dialogue with a postmodern/post-ideological world and its relativist/subjectivist values. All this clashes with many younger Poles viewing religion as an irrelevance to their everyday lives, as they focus on imminent cultural, economic, environmental, and socio-political concerns (Ibid). Borowik (2017: 190) describes Poles “born after 1989”, who may have experienced the “openness of the world” through “working abroad”, entering “reproductive age” so future generations of Poles may have a freer approach to religious practice. For Obirek (in Harrison 2009), many everyday people may still discuss religious questions if they are approached in an “open and tolerant way”.

Some young Polish NRM/LDS converts may be hostile towards Catholic teachings, because they had Catholic religiosity enforced upon them by priests and parents in the past, when they can now freely choose and express their own beliefs (Obirek in Harrison 2009). Borowik’s (2006: 311) qualitative research gathers biographical narratives from young Poles who discuss their Catholic experience, Catholic Church personnel, and how the Catholic Church influences Polish society. Her study points towards a growing individualisation of

religious practice, with young Poles practising religion at a slightly lower level than general Polish society (Ibid 312). It highlights younger Poles praising the Catholic Church for being a cohesive factor in community life and containing some approachable, non-dogmatic people (Ibid 318-319). The late John Paul II is respected by young Poles attached to the Catholic Church and others not, but is viewed as a distant, abstract authority whose ideas do not influence their personal lives (Ibid 319). Borowik's (2006: 319-322) young Poles criticise the Catholic Church for not teaching its doctrines clearly and not relating them to real-life experience; its priests being materialistic/hypocritical and detached from ordinary life; and making them feel obliged to attend weekly Mass to avoid being stigmatised by others. Hence, her young Poles seem to feel that they are coerced into practising Catholicism (Ibid 321-322). Finally, they dislike receiving political sermons from priests, fail to find answers to their religious/moral questions, and resent not being treated as free-thinking individuals inside Catholic churches (Ibid 323-324). Mariański (2017: 217) points towards many "especially young" Poles being "convinced" that the Catholic Church "cannot respond" to "burning social, economic and political problems" and the "questions, hopes and fears of young people today". Thus, young "personal consciousness", constructed from many different influences, seems to be replacing "external authorities" as a means of evaluating Christian "dogma" and "ethics" (Ibid).

Obirek (in Harrison 2009) describes Catholic clergy and media in Poland feeling threatened by "multiculturalism" challenging Poland's mono-cultural identity. However, Pasek (2017: 162) highlights a 1938 census which shows that pre-war Poland had a multi-ethnic population, with about 65% of the people being Roman Catholic (Poles); 11.9% Eastern Orthodox (Belarusians and Russians); 10.4% Greek/Uniate Catholic (Ukrainians and Lemkos); 9.5% Jewish; and 2.5% Protestant (Germans). After the 1945 border changes and "communist takeover", the numbers of "religious minorities" decreased significantly through the "resettlement" of Germans and much "territory inhabited by the Orthodox" being cut off from Poland (Ibid 162-163). For Obirek (in Harrison 2009), Poland needs to return to something like its pre-2nd World War, multicultural design to stop nationalist ideologies from spreading in post-communist Eastern Europe, while extreme PC is unlikely to take root there through the Catholic Church keeping it in check. However, Mariański (2006: 81-82) points towards Catholic religiosity being forced to change/adapt as Poland becomes an increasingly pluralist, secular society through importing values from Western Europe. Religious practice in Poland is becoming privatised but not disappearing, as "slow (creeping) secularisation" offers individuals the opportunity to choose their own religion from many options (Ibid 83-

85). An emergent pluralist society is eroding institutionalised religiosity in Poland through offering many Western cultural trends which may prompt religious crises, especially among younger Poles (Ibid 84-85). Moreover, Poland is starting to follow a Western format where religiosity neither disappears nor remains stable, with many people viewing all or most religions as being relatively equal and none absolutely true (Ibid 89).

Since the start of post-communist Poland, the Catholic Church has been criticised for having priests attached to “material goods”; attempting “to recover privileges lost during the communist era”; interfering in “all areas” of “social and political life”; attempting to impose “conservative morality” on society; and “alleged or actual scandals” concerning Catholic clergy publicised by the media (Mariański 2017: 215). This criticism does not indict the Catholic Church’s “religious beliefs”, but its jostling for political power which has started to destroy its “moral credibility” as a “culture of cynicism and distrust” builds up against it (Ibid 215-216). The Catholic Church in Poland struggles to find the “right position and role in a pluralistic society”, as people’s trust in it is “weakened or even destroyed” by external forces and ideologies “hostile to the Church” and “internal forces” e.g. its own clergy (Ibid 216). To counter this, the Church should stop trying “to influence” people’s “electoral decisions” and not try to impose “top-down” moral rules on society, as such moves cause it “more harm than benefit” (Ibid 217). However, Mariański (2017: 18) does not call for the Church to be banished from “civil society”, as since the early 1990s, its socio-political influence has been exaggerated through a “dissemination of fear” against it becoming “fashionable in Poland”.

Scislowska (2014) believes that in a more secular, EU-influenced Poland, many Poles are losing their strength of adulation for John Paul II. She contrasts how his death in 2005 “triggered” massive collective “grief” in Poland, while his canonisation as a saint in 2014 was greeted with “little” excitement there (Ibid). Many Poles now view John Paul II as having been a wonderful person without paying attention to his Catholic theological outlook (Ibid). Obirek (2017: 43) points towards John Paul II being celebrated for supporting the Solidarity workers’ movement in Poland and, alongside former US President Reagan, helping to bring about “the collapse of Soviet communism”. However, Obirek (2017: 45) believes that John Paul II attempted to govern Catholic civil society in an “authoritarian and centralist” manner reminiscent of Pope Pius XII (1939-1958). More than 10 years after John Paul II’s death, his “vision” of the Catholic Church influencing the “public sphere” is still present in most “Polish public debate” about moral/social issues, as, after his beatification in 2011 and canonisation in 2014, he has become the most important moral/religious authority in Poland (Ibid 41-42, 45). For Obirek (2017: 47), “Polish society” had been “eager to accept” social pluralism as a

“logical result of the political transformation” which followed the end of communism in 1989, but while visiting Poland during his (1978-2005) pontificate, John Paul II enforced “his vision of the Church” which led to “Polish Catholicism” influencing political life there. The latter involves Catholic clergy expressing “conservative” attitudes towards “modernity”, and Catholic journalists and other professionals opposing “pluralism”, with religion becoming a “polarising element” in Polish society (Ibid 49). Obirek (Ibid) laments that alongside the Catholic Church failing to implement a “dialogical spirit” desired by the 2nd Vatican Council, in Poland, “a number of texts published by John Paul II” have become the “most decisive guidelines” for influencing Polish socio-political life for the Catholic Church and Polish politicians.

Obirek (2017: 49-50) believes that the legacy of John Paul II has a “polarising” effect on Polish society, with his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia In Europa* (2003) shaping the “attitude” of the Catholic “hierarchy” and some “Catholic media” towards “European integration”/Poland’s EU integration. In this work, John Paul II laments that Europe’s Christian heritage has been undermined through increasing agnosticism and religious indifference, modern people living with little/no regard for God, and the traditional concept of heterosexual marriage being attacked (Ibid 50). John Paul II’s concept of a modern-day ““culture of death”” first appeared in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), where it is associated with falling European birth rates, and has been used by Catholic circles in “Polish public debate” to “stigmatise modern culture” (Ibid 51). However, Leszczyńska (2017: 61, 64) highlights that since 1997, when a group of Polish bishops visited “EU commissioners” in Brussels, Catholic archbishop/bishop statements have often viewed Poland’s “European integration and membership” in EU “structures” in terms of moral/economic “costs and benefits”. The views of Catholic priests in Poland become clear when seeing how they discuss the “main threats and opportunities” of EU membership/European integration in “Church documents” and “statements” in “Catholic magazines” during the 1990s and up to Poland joining the EU in 2004 (Ibid 62). The “main threats” discussed between 1997 and 2004 concern “consumerism, widespread abortion, sex education, birth control, and euthanasia that were associated with the EU at the time”; “national identity”; and “national sovereignty” (Ibid). The main opportunities identified regard “consumer protection” through “EU regulations”, “peace in Europe”, and “Poland’s economic development” (Ibid).

Finally, Grabowska’s (2017: 275) statistical analysis of Polish electoral behaviour between 1989 and 2015 highlights that “religiosity (church attendance)” increased the “likelihood of participation in elections” and influenced how people voted. Between 1989 and

2001, the main competing parties were left-leaning “post-communist” and conservative-type “post-Solidarity sides” (Ibid). From 2005 onwards, the competition has been between weakened left-leaning parties supported by people from different social classes who distance themselves “from the Church”; PO who represent a political “middleground” of “urban middle class” people with “varied attitudes” towards religion; and PiS who represent conservative-type religious and “non-affluent” people (Ibid 275-276). For Grabowska (2017: 276), such voting patterns will not disappear quickly, although this may depend on whether PO preserves its middle-ground outlook or distances itself from “religion”/“the Church” to gain new voters from left-leaning parties.

1.2.6 The wider social world influencing religious conversion in Poland

In post-communist Poland, many new religious groups started appearing after a 1989 religious freedom bill, ratified in 1997 to allow parents to decide what religion their children should follow, introduced legal equality for all Christian denominations and religious associations (Pasek 2006: 181-182). However, despite growing secularism in Poland, the Catholic Church still strongly influences the wider social world. The Polish authorities have a concordat/agreement with the Vatican that officially recognises the higher position of the Catholic Church in Polish culture/history (Pasek 2006: 181; Zielińska 2006: 212). This concordat, “agreed in 1993” and officially ratified in 1998, ensures religious education throughout the Polish school system and “extended state recognition to marriage” in a Catholic church, and gives the Catholic Church “privileged status” (Obirek 2017: 48). In 2004, 15 other Churches or religious associations had less powerful concordats through being historically established and having sizeable numbers of followers in Poland, while the Registry of the Religious Belief Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs contained a list of 144 additional Churches and religious associations (Pasek 2006: 181-182). Similarly, in 2014, alongside the Catholic Church concordat, 14 Churches/religious associations had “separate statutes”; 158 Churches/religious associations were officially listed with “the Ministry of Administration and Digitalization”; and some “faith communities” lay “outside” the Ministry registry (Pasek 2017: 161). Zielińska (2006: 213) stresses that such arrangements maintain different levels of religious status, which may violate an “equality of religions” legal principle in Poland.

For Pasek (2006: 190), NRMs are viewed with suspicion in Poland because of their small numbers and most people knowing little or nothing about them. In “traditional societies” where one religion dominates, NRM members may arouse some “excitement and admiration”

prompting others to join them (Libiszowska-Żółtkowska 2006: 195). However, when changing religious identity, NRM converts may feel stigmatised through being viewed as traitors by a homogenous society (Ibid). Well-established religions in Central/Eastern Europe are often viewed as institutions that strengthen national identity, and minority religions as foreign threats to traditional society, with well-established religions sometimes campaigning against them (Zielińska 2006: 210, 215). Pasek (2006: 183) highlights that the 1997 ratification of the 1989 Polish religious freedom bill called for closer state monitoring of registered NRMs. Zielińska (2006: 213) discusses a 1997 Interdepartmental Council on NRMs assessing the threat of NRM activities and giving advice to the Polish Prime Minister. Moreover, an Interdepartmental Team wrote a *Report on Some Phenomena in the Activity of Sects in Poland* (Wiktor and Mikrut 2000) which accused NRMs of “psychic manipulation” despite little evidence that much of this happened in 1990s Poland (Pasek 2006: 183-184). This report also accused NRMs of using “love-bombing”, “thought control”, and reward-and-punishment techniques to attract weak-minded converts, and lamented them being able to join the Registry of Churches (Zielińska 2006: 213-214). Pasek (2006: 185-186) points towards Polish courts often restricting the definition of religious associations to a “Judeo-Christian understanding”, and public concern prompting the police to visit and question NRMs in Poland during the late 1990s/early 2000s. Zielińska (2006: 215-216) discusses Catholic-influenced “anti-cult information centers” accusing NRMs of brainwashing vulnerable recruits in the 1990s; victim organisations reinforcing this view in the media; and Catholic press publications condemning NRMs for posing a threat to individuals, wider society, the Church, and a rational scientific outlook on life, without recognising that people may join NRMs through free conscious decisions. For Pasek (2006: 184), the forms of NRM manipulation above occur throughout all areas of social life, e.g. in “politics or advertising”.

Pasek (2006: 187-191) discusses NRMs in Poland in the 1990s/early 2000s being sometimes “denied permission to build their own facilities”, or not being able to rent land or property from local government authorities to hold their religious activities. Zielińska (2006: 218-219) believes that NRMs may sometimes have problems renting land/property through administrative bodies consulting local Catholic authorities for their advice on the matter. Pasek (2006: 190-191) describes conservative political parties linked to the Catholic Church being suspicious of NRMs, and viewing any attempt at weakening Poland’s concordat with the Catholic Church as an attack on the latter. However, Zielińska (2006: 215, 217) points towards some Catholic media/publications having milder stances towards NRMs, e.g. the official Vatican report *Sects and New Religious Movements: A Pastoral Challenge* (Arinze

1991) which views them as a source of reflection on Catholic proselytising process rather than a threat. Still, Polish research/study findings suggest that while some Poles who support religious freedom may view NRMs indifferently, others, including academics, view them as small “self-contained” groups that control recruits through “manipulative techniques” (Zielińska 2006: 217-218). The latter outlook becomes stronger the more an NRM is detached from mainstream Christianity, as Polish society shies away from accepting greater religious pluralism (Ibid 219-220).

A person’s “religious sensitivity” may push him/her to search for more satisfying beliefs/values (Libiszowska-Żółtkowska 2006: 197). Religious recruitment may occur through NRM members passing on religious content to people which may prompt them to review their own faith and change or extend their religious convictions (Ibid 196). People have different levels of religious interest, and while Catholic priests are often too busy to engage with people who seek to associate their identity with their religion, NRM representatives such as LDS missionaries have more time and inclination to discuss and develop a person’s religious interiority (Obirek in Harrison 2009). Catholic lay people often do not address God directly nor discuss religious ideas together, as they are restricted to formal religious experience in which priestly mediators block them from inner spiritual exploration (Ibid). Borowik (2017: 190-191) explains that “religious socialisation” begins at an early age in Polish families where “prayer, kneeling, participation in church services” etc. become automated as routines and instincts governed by “social control and self-control”. This results in religion being viewed as “something self-evident”, not to be asked/questioned about, so “being religious in Poland, and being a Catholic” are routines like “brushing one’s teeth” (Ibid 191). However, rank-and-file Catholics with an average/ordinary faith are more likely to join the LDS or other religions than doctrinally aware ones (Obirek in Harrison 2009). While many Catholics may not read the Bible, the LDS may encourage people to read the Bible and BOM which may attract people who seek to construct their identity on scripture (Ibid).

NRM converts may experience tension between a sense of betraying family/friends and a feeling of joining something more rewarding/uplifting (Libiszowska-Żółtkowska 2006: 197). Catholic family/friends may try to bring NRM converts back to Catholicism through accusing them of betraying Polish culture, although they may become resigned to a convert’s new choice of religion in time (Ibid 200). Lack of family support may push converts to become dependent on their new religious community, and to avoid conflict, they may practise old and new religions together, playing different roles for family/friends and new religious group (Ibid). However, when a convert starts developing religious commitment and satisfying

relationships with NRM members, his/her identity may start changing through him/her separating his/her life story into Catholic and post-Catholic episodes (Ibid 198-199). While developing a new identity, NRM converts may criticise their previous religion, viewing their pre-conversion life as an unsatisfying time before finding fulfilment with a new religion (Ibid 199). In contrast, some NRM converts may not judge their pre-conversion lives harshly, viewing their conversion as an extension of previous “religious experience”, as they find a more fulfilling way of satisfying religious and social needs (Ibid 196). If conversion is smooth “like falling in love”, a convert’s previous Catholic biography may be viewed as a useful learning curve, helping him/her to find greater truth with another religion (Obirek in Harrison 2009). Nevertheless, converts may worry about “squandering” their past lives, fearing that their new religious interest may not last (Libiszowska-Żółtkowska 2006: 199). Still, some converts cope with a painful sense of breaking away from the past through seeing an exciting life emerging from their new religious identity (Ibid).

Many ideas in sections 1.2.5-1.2.6 seem to assume that most people in modern-day Western societies value secularisation. In contrast, Taylor (2007) discusses how secularisation can make people feel uneasy about the modern world. He describes “modern Western” states being “free” from pre-modern political organisation which centred on “some faith in, adherence to God”; Churches now being mainly “separate from political structures”, with religious practice being “largely a private matter”; and people often engaging “in politics without ever encountering God” (Ibid 1). A big feature of secularisation involves public space, as, where once religion “was interwoven with everything else”, social life has now been “emptied of God” in many Western societies (Ibid 2). As a result, Western religious belief and practice is declining with many “people turning away from God, and no longer” attending churches, although some may contrast modern, secular times unfavourably with “earlier ages of faith and piety” (Ibid). The USA presents a unique case, because, despite being one of the first “societies to separate Church and State”, it is the “Western society with the highest statistics for religious belief and practice” (Ibid). However, in most Western countries, secularisation has moved “society” away from “unchallenged”, “unproblematic”, and acceptable “belief in God” to a position where having religious faith is not an easy option “to embrace” (Ibid 3).

Since the mid-19th century, having Christian beliefs has become an “embattled option” in the West, as secularisation has pushed people to a situation where having faith, even for staunch believers, is reduced to being just one “possibility among others” (Taylor 2007: 3) . Through many alternative worldviews being promoted in the West, it may be difficult for

people “to sustain” religious faith, with them feeling peer/societal pressure “to give it up” while mourning “its loss” (Ibid). In Western societies, non-religious outlooks have become “default” options, as people often view them as being more credible than religious beliefs (Ibid 12). A “presumption of unbelief” has “achieved hegemony” in “crucial” environments and ideological state apparatus (academic and social institutions, the media etc.), where it directs many people to become non-believers, even when they are searching for “fullness” of being (Ibid 13-14). However, some people in Western societies may be unsatisfied with the unbelief blueprints of secularisation, seeking fullness of being through exploring religious options.

1.3 Thesis structure

In chapter 2, the literature review introduces theories/ideas from Western sociologists of religion about religious recruitment/conversion and (semi-) official LDS writers and independent scholars about LDS recruitment/conversion. All these theories/ideas shed light on my four main research issues: how the wider Polish social world; a person’s pre-LDS background; LDS religious training; and LDS interaction may help or hinder Polish LDS recruitment/conversion. In chapter 3, I discuss the qualitative research methods/techniques that I used to investigate and interpret how Polish converts move towards LDS baptism and become different types of LDS converts, and how LTIs refrain from becoming LDS. Regarding the Warsaw LDS field where I did my research, in chapter 4, I mainly describe events that take place and different participants who co-exist inside the two Warsaw branches.

During chapters 5-8, I report on themes/topics relating to my four main research issues which emerged from my data; relate these findings back to theories/ideas from chapters 1-2; and discuss how my findings illuminated my understanding of the main issues. I start weaving things together in chapter 9 through comparing/contrasting the opinions of the different Polish LDS convert and LTI groups on the most significant findings from my research. Here, my data interpretation moves away from describing many themes/topics to more strictly defining central principles at play during Polish LDS recruitment/conversion. In chapter 10, I increasingly refer to my own insights gained from working inside the Warsaw LDS field and living in Warsaw, which helps me to build up a final overview/interpretation of Polish LDS recruitment/conversion.