his men to undertake the criminal activities he later argued were the authorized actions of the whole community. Encouraged perhaps by the firmly stated intentions of leaders to meet force with force but apparently without their approval, Avard used his Danite and military positions to mold a covert renegade band to avenge anti-Mormon outrages. He succeeded because after weeks of responding to violence with strictly defensive measures, Avard was not alone in feeling that the time for forbearance had passed. Others of the time in late reminiscences recalled that clandestine meetings were held, which were subsequently reported to Joseph Smith, who then denounced Avard, removed him from his official command, and disbanded the maverick body. Though short-lived and unauthorized, this covert organization, thanks to Avard’s distorted and widely publicized testimony, usurped the former usage of “Danites,” and the once honorable appellation became a synonym for officially sanctioned secret lawlessness.

In contrast, when five hundred men in the Caldwell County (Mormon) militia later took the offensive in response to two months of unrelenting violence and depredations, there was nothing secretive about it. In mid-October, with supplies running low, they left defensive positions to forage and to punish enemies—a very public effort to improve security by preemptive forays. Two weeks later, facing increasing numbers of volunteers and a militia emboldened by the governor’s extermination order, they surrendered their arms in defeat.

The reality, then, behind the supposed secretive, lawless Danites of legend was this renegade band formed briefly in 1838 in the midst of war. There is no evidence of any such band later, and even in 1838, the Latter-day Saint community as a whole did not deserve blame for the unauthorized actions of a few. As Parley P. Pratt, an apostle, wrote to his family after hearing Avard’s court testimony, “They accuse us of things that never entered into our hearts.” From Liberty Jail on December 16, 1838, Joseph Smith summarized the situation as he then understood it: “We have learned also since we have been in prison that many false and pernicious things which were calculated to lead the saints far astray and to do great injury have been taught by Dr. Avard as coming from the Presidency . . . which the presidency never knew of being taught in the church by any body untill after they were made prisoners . . . the presidency were ignorant as well as innocent of these things” (PWJS, p. 380).

Unfortunately, in an age when Latter-day Saints were hated and persecuted, Avard’s story provided a ready explanation for anyone who wanted to believe the worst. The reality was far less sensational.

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DAVID J. WHITTAKER

DATING AND COURTSHIP

Members of the Church are somewhat distinctive in their dating and courtship practices, but they are also influenced by broader cultural patterns. In some cultures, parents still closely supervise courtship and arrange children’s marriages, but youth worldwide have increasing choices in dating and mate selection. For most young people in the United States outside the Church, dating begins at an early age (about age thirteen during the 1980s); it has no set pattern of progression, and is often informal and unsupervised. These contemporary dating patterns form a social context that influences somewhat the majority of LDS youth.

However, although courtship patterns change and vary across cultures, there is quite a conservative pattern for dating and courtship among Latter-day Saints in Western nations. It is expected that LDS youth will not begin dating until the age of sixteen. Serious, steady dating and marriage-oriented courtship are expected to be delayed longer, perhaps until after a mission for males and
after completing high school for females. A chaste courtship is expected to lead to a temple marriage, in which a couple make binding commitments to each other for all time and eternity.

Two doctrinally based principles guide the dating and courtship of LDS youth: first, because of the religious significance of marriage, virtually everyone who can is expected to marry; second, because of the spiritual and social importance of chastity, sexual relations must wait until after marriage.

Latter-day Saints place an unusually strong emphasis on marriage, believing that marriage is ordained of God (D&C 49:15) and is a prerequisite for obtaining the highest heavenly state after mortality (D&C 131:1–4; see Exaltation). Because of the belief that people should be married and the doctrine that they can maintain marital ties throughout eternity, Latter-day Saints take dating and courtship more seriously than those for whom marriage has less religious significance.

Latter-day Saints believe that premarital chastity is a scriptural commandment reaffirmed by current revelation. From the New Testament: “Flee fornication... He that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (1 Cor. 6:18). From a modern Church leader: “Chastity should be the dominant virtue among young people” (McKay, p. 458). LDS youth are also taught that they should not participate in sexual activities that often precede sexual intercourse: “Among the most common sexual sins our young people commit are necking and petting. Not only do these improper relations often lead to fornication, pregnancy, and abortions—all ugly sins—but in and of themselves they are pernicious evils, and it is often difficult for youth to distinguish where one ends and another begins” (Kimball, 1969, p. 65). Although Latter-day Saints consider sexual relationships outside of marriage to be sinful, sexual relations within marriage are not only right and proper but are considered sacred and beautiful (see sexuality).

Like most of their non-Mormon peers in dating cultures, LDS youth date to have fun as they participate in social activities with other boys and girls. As plainly stated by prominent leaders of the Church, “It is natural to date. Every right-thinking young person has a native desire to become acquainted with the opposite sex, looking eventually to pairing off in honorable marriage” (Petersen, p. 37). “Dating has become the accepted form of social recreation for the purpose of getting acquainted before young people can safely have a serious interest in each other. Because the selection of a mate in life is so extremely important, we should intelligently seek the experiences which will help us to make that great decision” (Hunter, pp. 101–102). Typical of the advice given to LDS youth is the following counsel about dating:

Who? Only those whose standards are high, like your own.
Where? Clean places, decent places, proper places where you can be proud to be.
Why? Associating with others under wholesome circumstances helps develop friendships and permits you to learn about qualities and characteristics in others, to get to know them, to have fun together, to widen areas of choice, to achieve a wider and wiser vision of what one may seek in an eternal companion.
When? Not too young, not too often, not on school nights as a rule, not too expensively.
What? Fun things, wholesome things, good and useful things—things pleasing to you, to parents, to God.
How? With others, in groups, chaperoned when proper, appropriately dressed, cheerfully, courteously, modestly, wisely, prayerfully. And let parents know where you are, with whom, doing what, and when you will return. Have a happy time! (Hanks, pp. 134–35)

While dating and courtship patterns among LDS reflect broader societal patterns, there are several age-graded characteristics of dating and courtship in the Church that are special.

Age twelve is a line of demarcation in the life of a young member of the Church. At this age LDS boys and girls leave PRIMARY, the Church’s organization for children, and enter the YOUNG WOMEN and YOUNG MEN organizations. Here, young people participate, usually once a week, in gender-segregated activities designed with an adult adviser for their particular age group. Occasionally, joint activities are planned that include boys and girls together. These are structured and well-supervised social and religious activities that bring teenage boys and girls together to help them develop appropriate social relationships.

While the Church sponsors joint social activities, its leaders have strongly discouraged early dating. “Young men and women, not yet ready for marriage, should be friends with many others, but they should not engage in courting... Friendship, not courtship, should be the relationship of...
teenagers. . . . The change of this one pattern of social activities of our youth would immediately eliminate a majority of the sins of our young folks” (Kimball, 1986, pp. 287–88). Steady dating is further discouraged until youth are ready for courtship.

In the past, LDS youth were basically counseled not to begin dating, especially steady dating, until they were “old enough and mature enough” to consider marriage. During the 1970s the age of sixteen took on special significance in this regard when Spencer W. Kimball, as President of the Church, said: “When you get in the teen years, your social associations should still be a general acquaintance with both boys and girls. Any dating or pairing off in social contacts should be postponed until at least the age of 16 or older, and even then there should be much judgment used in the selections and in the seriousness” (Kimball, 1975, p. 4). As a consequence of this teaching, the age of sixteen has become the acceptable age when dating can begin.

Nineteen is an especially pivotal age in the social and religious life of late adolescent LDS youth. The males are expected to leave home for a two-year Church mission. Many young women upon reaching twenty-one will serve missions. Missionaries leave romantic relationships behind and are counseled not to worry about or telephone girlfriends or boyfriends. They are restricted from all dating activities during their missionary service. Although many boyfriend-girlfriend relationships do not last through the mission separation, the mission experience frequently brings a maturity that better prepares young men and women for eventual marriage.

Despite the postponing effect of missions on dating activities, LDS men tend to marry at an age younger than national averages, while LDS women marry at about the norm. Presumably, the value placed on marriage makes LDS youth less likely to postpone marriage for education and career advancement; they are certainly less likely to cohabit instead of marrying, and the customary pattern is to continue courting until the time of marriage (see SINGLE ADULTS). LDS prophets have consistently instructed young Mormon men that it is wrong to delay marriage unnecessarily (Benson; Kimball, 1975).

Because marrying a person of the same faith is important to Latter-day Saints, families that live away from the concentrations of Church popula-

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DAVID, KING

David, king of Israel, was the youngest of eight brothers, sons of Jesse (1 Sam. 16:6–12), a descendent of Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4:21–22) and an ancestor to Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:6–17; Luke 3:23–31). He was born at Bethlehem and died in Jerusalem c. 1015 B.C., after reigning over Judah for seven years and the united kingdom of Israel for an additional thirty-three (1 Kgs. 2:11). He was buried in the ancestral home, in Bethlehem (1 Kgs. 2:10). He was perhaps the greatest king of Israel, once called “a man after [God’s] own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14). Mormon interests in David have