Purity and Parallels
Taylor G. Petrey

in Standing Apart: Mormon Historical Consciousness and the Concept of Apostasy

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This chapter questions the LDS notion that the original purity and unity of the apostolic church were replaced by contaminated variety, in light of current scholarly evidence that the opposite trajectory occurred: that is, the initial complex diversities of early Christian communities generated increasing anxiety over unity. It proposes that Latter-day Saints could more profitably study early Christian communities in terms of hybridity and the performance of identity rather than by searching for anachronistic parallels. The office of the apostle offers a case study of how words and concepts shifted over the history of Christianity. It suggests that a hermeneutical approach would encourage ethical awareness in representing early Christianity.