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## *Can Mitt Romney Serve Two Masters?*

By Tricia Erickson

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Reviewed here by Marilyn M. Brannan, *IRN/USA News*

*I know this book will be a hard pill to swallow for some, including members of my own family who are still very much entrenched in the Mormon religion. I write this book with love for them, and with love for this great nation. . . . I believe that if you love someone, you owe it to guide him or her into the truth in order that he or she can truly be set free.*

Thus, author Tricia Erickson introduces her book, just off the press, *Can Mitt Romney Serve Two Masters?* Ms. Erickson, a former Mormon, grew up as the daughter of a bishop in the Mormon Church. She writes of the deprogramming she had to go through as an adult to free herself from what she describes as “lies, strange ceremonies and strategic misinformation that continues to be fed to all Mormons.” As a media and political consultant, she has spoken on numerous national television and radio shows on the subjects of Mormonism, Islam, and political image projection. She is President of her own company, Crisis Management, Incorporated.

In Part 1 of her book, Erickson presents a detailed account of the unsavory, early history of the Mormon Church. Then, using material from the writings of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, *The Book of Mormon*, the church’s *Doctrine and Covenants*, *History of the Church* and many other documents, Ms. Erickson demonstrates that Mormonism is not “just another Christian denomination.” She compares extensive doctrinal statements of the Mormon Church with Scripture from the Holy Bible. She presents the exact wording of secret oaths, covenants, and pledges (required of Mormons who attain a certain level in the hierarchy of Mormon leadership), along with bizarre temple rituals and beliefs. Erickson states the longstanding, racist position of the Mormon Church concerning the black race, largely unknown to the general public because it has been downplayed for political reasons.

In Part 2, Erickson documents how—and why—the Mormon Church (or the Church of Latter-Day Saints—LDS, as it is more often referred to) has developed a deceptive image that appeals to outsiders who put great importance on traditional family values and morality. It is in this part of her book (which she labels the “political portion”) that the author addresses the powerful determination of the Mormon Church to attain its goal of an earthly “kingdom” through the use of political power.

The author points out that developing and projecting an appealing image has required a great deal of money and a tightly controlled, extensive ground machine whose unquestioning loyalty is to the Mormon Church. Erickson writes, “*The LDS involvement in political issues has not been the result of principle or the desire to serve the American people, but rather political expediency.*” She describes in detail how the LDS has ingratiated itself with the Christian Right and through powerful connections in Washington and on a global level.

The lengthiest portion of the book deals with the cultivation of Mitt Romney as a political figure. Erickson writes, “The relationship between Mitt Romney and the LDS church is symbiotic. The LDS church needs Romney to aid in ushering in the kingdom on earth, while portraying the Mormon faith as a wholesome, mainstream religion. Romney needs the LDS church and its vast network to finance, support, and promote his political aspirations.”

### **Romney and the Olympics**

Nowhere was this symbiotic relationship more apparent than the Salt Lake City Olympics—the Greatest Show on Earth for the Mormon Church and Mitt Romney—funded in large part by the U.S. taxpayer.

Erickson lays out the complex and lucrative ties that were carefully cultivated, prior to the 2002 Games, between the LDS church and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Romney, a prominent Mormon with extensive ties with

the State of Utah, and a demonstrated ability to raise money and forge lucrative business alliances, was a natural choice to head up the 2002 Olympics.

Those games proved to be a launching pad for Romney's political rise. He is unabashed in boasting that the 2002 Olympics established his ability to successfully manage a multi-billion enterprise. That's the part the public is likely to remember. However, there is another side of the 2002 Olympics, as Erickson points out.

A major problem was the scandal of federal tax dollars used to highlight Salt Lake City and at the same time bolster Romney's national stature. *Sports Illustrated*, in an exhaustive article ("Snow Job," December 10, 2001), cited federal handouts that would total more for the 2002 Games than for all seven Olympic Games held in the U.S. since 1904 combined—in inflation-adjusted dollars.

Erickson states that private interests derived significant, long-term benefits from congressional giveaways directly connected with the Games—and that the Olympics were used to drain money from federal departments, agencies and offices—all the way from the Office of National Drug Control Policy to the Agriculture Department. Erickson's data show that federal spending averaged \$625,000 for each of the 2,400 athletes who competed, with not a penny going to the athletes.

Several pages of the book are devoted to describing lucrative deals, wasted funds, and profits to the politically connected, which—according to the author—ran the 2002 Olympics tab up to an estimated \$1.3 in American taxpayers' money. "In essence, the Salt Lake City Olympics was a boon for the Mormon Church as well as for Mitt Romney's political aspirations. All courtesy of you, the U.S. Taxpayer," she wrote.

### **The Plan to Win the Presidency**

The 2002 Games had barely ended when Romney launched his next political move, which would be part of his larger plan for the presidency. Erickson explains the difficulties for Romney in trying to win the governorship of liberal Massachusetts while projecting an image necessary to win the presidency. He would have to portray himself as a progressive Republican to win in Massachusetts; but once governor, Romney would then have to portray himself as a more conservative Republican to win the votes of the American people at large.

The Romney flip-flops would become his political strategy. He promised whatever was necessary at a particular moment and with a given constituency. In a section of her book that deals extensively with Romney's record, Erickson documents his constantly changing positions on important issues, including abortion, gay marriage, gun rights, healthcare, campaign finance reform, immigration, taxes, and minimum wage.

## **“The Wicked Web that Mark DeMoss Wove”**

This was a subtitle in a chapter that Erickson devoted to showing how an alarming number of “conservative, pro-life, pro-family” leaders “sold their souls out to Romney.” One of the chief instigators of deception, according to Erickson, was Mark DeMoss, a lawyer by trade and head of The DeMoss Group, which bills itself as the largest PR group serving Christian organizations. The DeMoss Foundation has given millions of dollars in grants to religious organizations every year, including Samaritan’s Purse, the Billy Graham Evangelical Association, Jay Sekulow’s American Center for Law and Justice, Chuck Colson’s Prison Fellowship Ministries and the Family Research Council, among others. If there is a single man who has a lot of clout with evangelical Christians, DeMoss is that man.

In October 2006, convinced that Mitt Romney was a leader who shared his values, DeMoss brought a group of evangelical leaders together, anticipating a concentrated discussion about Romney’s faith and theological views. That did not happen. Instead, Romney skirted the issue of Mormon religious teachings by employing a mini-speech that he would use a month later in an interview with Pat Robertson on the *700 Club*: “I think Americans want people of faith to lead their country. Generally they don’t care so much about the particular brand of faith if the people that they’re looking at have the same values they have. And people of my faith have the values of other great religions that are represented here in this country” (John J. Miller, “Evangelicals for Romney?” *National Review Online*, 18 Dec. 2006).

After that meeting, Erickson writes, DeMoss wrote a letter to 150 influential Christian leaders, urging them to support Romney. Erickson presents that letter, and attributes DeMoss’s support for Romney to apathy or to ignorance about Romney’s beliefs and his record. She dissects the letter, point by point, demonstrating fact-by-fact that DeMoss’s gushing support for Romney could not possibly have been based on research and understanding of Romney’s real beliefs or his record. One revealing comment by DeMoss toward the end of his letter raises serious questions about his level of understanding of Mitt Romney and the Mormon church: “*As a Southern Baptist evangelical and political conservative, I am convinced I have more in common with most Mormons than I do with a liberal Southern Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic, or a liberal from any other denomination or faith group.*”

## **“Romney Reinvents Himself Yet Again”**

In this chapter, Erickson offers a keen observation about a voting bloc that could be a powerful factor in 2012 if Romney wins the Republican nomination. The following statement from *Politico* sets it up:

“Among the selection of voters who said they voted for Obama but do not now approve of his performance as president, Romney is viewed most favorably of any of the other potential Republican challengers to Obama in 2012 (Andy Barr, “Poll: Ex-Obama Voters Like Romney,” *Politico*, July 15, 2010).

Erickson’s analysis: “It is easy to see why former Obama voters would support Romney. To Obama voters, Obama was anything they wanted him to be. There was no scrutiny of his ties to Jeremiah Wright and the Weather Underground, his Marxist philosophies or his scant state and Senate records. All Obama had to do was read smartly off a teleprompter, look good, and promise something different from George Bush.

“Now that the economy is in shambles and the country is on a fast track to socialism, these voters are looking for another image machine.

Romney can offer himself as an alternative to Obama, but he doesn’t have the mainstream media in his corner to gloss over his record; so in order to fool voters he has to once again reinvent himself.”

The author devotes the entire final chapter of her book to documenting the ways Mitt Romney has reinvented himself for political expediency, drawing on sources that range from the *Boston Globe* and *Politico* on the left, to the *Daily Caller* and *The Wall Street Journal* on the conservative side.

She ends by writing, “Romney is relying on the backlash against Barack Obama’s radical policies to propel him into the presidency. Ever the image master, like Obama, he is positioning himself as the white horse, the savior of the country. He is counting on the American electorate to ignore his record, flip-flops, and insatiable quest for the presidency that began with his father. Where Obama’s brand was hope and change and the anti-Bush, Romney’s is Mr. Fix It and the anti-Obama.

“The only question is: Will we be fooled again?”

*In reflecting recently on the electorate’s decision in ’08 to elect the current occupant of the White House, I was reminded for some reason of this bit of wisdom I had come across: “You don’t need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.”*

--Editor