The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal is published annually by The John Whitmer Historical Association. Neither the journal nor the association has official connection with any religious or educational institution. Copyright for articles and book reviews published in this issue of The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal is usually held jointly between the author and the association.

The John Whitmer Historical Association members receive the Journal. Periodical postage is paid at Independence, Missouri. Membership is open to any interested person at $20.00 U.S. funds for one year. Back issues of volumes 4 through 22 are available for sale. For more information, visit the Web site at www.jwha.info.

The John Whitmer Historical Association’s purposes are to create and encourage interest in latter-day Saint history, especially the history of Community of Christ, promote communication, research, and publication in the field of latter-day Saint history, and provide a vehicle for the dissemination of scholarly research to people interested in latter-day Saint history.

Some articles appearing in this journal may be abstracted and indexed in Historical Abstracts and America: History and Life published by ABC-CLIO. The Journal is a member of the Conference of Historical Journals.

Copies of articles in this journal may be made for teaching and research purpose free of charge and without securing permission, as permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the United States Copyright Law. For all other purposes, permission must be obtained from the author. Please contact The John Whitmer Historical Association for further information.

Papers for consideration will be peer reviewed on an annual basis and should be submitted in typed, double-spaced, electronic or print format using the most current Chicago Manual of Style format.

Cover photo: Charles Blancher Thompson (1814–1895), unknown year, unknown photographer. Used with permission. See article about Thompson on pages 149 to 164 in this journal.

© 2003 The John Whitmer Historical Association
Printed in the United States of America
ISSN for Library of Congress 0739-7852
The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal
2003

Editorial Staff
Jessie L. Embry, book review editor
Joni Wilson, editor

Board of Editors
Shelby Barnes
Barbara Bernauer
Paul M. Edwards
Bill Shepard
Ruth Ann Wood

Officers
Biloiné Young, president 2003
Mark A. Scherer, president elect 2004
Mike Riggs, past president 2002
Norman Bernauer 2001–2003

Board of Directors
Margie Miller, 2001–2003
Jeanne Murphey, 2002–2004
Joyce Shireman, 2002–2004
William Shepard, 2003–2005
Paul M. Edwards, 2003–2005
Endowment Fund Chair

Nominating Committee 2003
Barbara Bernauer, chair
Richard Howard
Lach Mackay
Michael Marquardt
Bob Wallace

Membership Committee 2001–2003
Norman L. Bernauer, chair

Monograph Editor 2002–2004
Clare Vlahos
# Contents
## Volume 23—2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benign Voyeur: Twenty-four Years of Third-party Observations</td>
<td>Michael S. Riggs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Ever-changing Community of Christ Church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nauvoo on My Mind</td>
<td>Robert Bruce Flanders</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ Comes to Jackson County:</td>
<td>Mario S. De Pillis</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mormon City of Zion and Its Consequences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Quest for Traces of a Peace Gene in Restoration History</td>
<td>Richard P. Howard</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Illicit Intercourse,&quot; Plural Marriage, and the</td>
<td>Gary James Bergera</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nauvoo Stake High Council, 1840–1844</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing at Mormon Nauvoo</td>
<td>Bill Shepard</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Tale of Two Mormons</td>
<td>M. Guy Bishop</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Temple Lot Case: Fraud in God’s Vineyard</td>
<td>S. Patrick Baggette II</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Cultivate the Gifts of Music and of Song&quot;:</td>
<td>Richard Clothier</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hymnals of the Reorganization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles B. Thompson: Harbinger of Zion or Master of Humbuggery?</td>
<td>Junia Braby</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Book Reviews

The Angel Acronym: A Mystery Introducing Toom Taggart
Paul M. Edwards
Reviewed by Norma Anne Holik ................................. 181

Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows
Will Bagley
Reviewed by Henry H. Goldman ................................. 182

Brigham Young’s Homes
Edited by Colleen Whitley with contributions from Sandra Dawn Brimhall
Reviewed by Susanna Morrill ........................................ 183

By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion
Terryl L. Givens
American Apocrypha: More Essays on the Book of Mormon
Brent Lee Metcalf and Dan Vogel, editors
Reviewed by William D. Russell ................................. 184

Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith
Gary James Bergera
Reviewed by M. Guy Bishop ........................................ 188

An Insider’s View of Mormon Origins
Grant H. Palmer
Reviewed by Robert A. Gunderson ................................. 189

Joseph Smith: A Penguin Life
Robert V. Remini
Reviewed by Newell G. Bringhamst ................................ 191

Mormon History
Ronald W. Walker, David J. Whittaker, and James B. Allen
Reviewed by Craig L. Foster ........................................ 192

Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise
Glen M. Leonard
Reviewed by Roger D. Launius ................................... 165

One Side by Himself: The Life and Times of Lewis Barney 1808–1894
Ronald O. Barney
Reviewed by M. Guy Bishop ........................................ 194
Michael S. Riggs
JWHA president, 2001–2002
Photo courtesy of the author.
Benign Voyeur: Twenty-four Years of Third-party Observations
On the Ever-changing Community of Christ Church

Michael S. Riggs

One of Thomas Starr King's favorite Lyceum lectures in the 1850s was titled, "The Laws of Disorder." Wendell Phillips, a close associate of the famous Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, having spoken the week before King in a town in New Hampshire, was asked to name his lecturing fee. Phillips (as was his habit) replied, "If my topic may be Anti-Slavery I will come for nothing and pay my own expenses. If 'The Lost Arts' or any other of my literary addresses is demanded I shall have to lecture for F.A.M.E.; as Dr. [Edwin H.] Chapin has put it; that is 'Fifty-And-My-Expenses!'"

Decidedly, they would have him give The Lost Arts presentation. In accordance with his usual manner, Phillips invited those that were interested to stay afterward and hear him speak against slavery. This offended the pro-slavery people in attendance, which would in turn cause hard feelings for the whole week. Therefore, before introducing Thomas Starr King, the chairperson of the Lyceum told the crowd he regretted that permission had been given by the committee to allow Mr. Phillips to speak on anti-slavery. At once, the abolitionists started to hoot and howl their disapproval at his comments. "Do not misunderstand me," he pleaded, "it is not that I personally objected to Mr. Phillips' remarks. Quite the contrary, I assure you, quite the contrary!" At this, the pro-slavery faction became outraged and shouted their jeers at him for the insult. The chairperson had completely lost control of the house with his voice becoming inaudible. He simply sat down without introducing that night's speaker, Thomas Starr King.

Mr. King had been sitting, amused by the scene taking place in front of him. At length, he rose and moved to the front of the stage. In a commanding voice he bellowed, "Ladies and gentlemen! My name is Thomas Starr King. I have come from Boston to read you a lecture to-night on 'The Laws of Disorder.' I am sure you will agree that this is a very opportune time for me to begin." The audience broke into laughter, applauded, and settled down to enjoy the evening's discourse. After hearing my address tonight, you may likewise think my presentation is The Laws of Disorder!

When I became president elect of the John Whitmer Historical Association (JWHA) two years ago, I knew the expected day would come when I was to present a presidential address. Choosing a topic to speak on was not too difficult, given the occasion, my personal background, and most importantly, the audience I would be addressing. While unabashedly autobiographical, I intend to convey a message of joy and concern to my Community of Christ friends as a friend... an outsider's perspective of your movement.

Even though I am not a member of your faith, I offer the insight of one who, over the last twenty-four years, has truly come to love your people. With the possible exception of tonight, I have come to feel comfortable when I am among you. While I am not a believer in the di-

---

1 JWHA presidential address delivered at the thirtieth annual meeting of the John Whitmer Historical Association at Nauvoo, Illinois, on 28 September 2002.
vine origins of your Church, I am an advocate of many of the more secular goals of your organization. I have long relished the stimulation received standing on the sidelines all these years, witnessing the ever-changing evolution of the Community of Christ.

I can truly say the bulk of my schooling in religious tolerance has come through my informal associations with Community of Christ members dating back to the late 1970s when I met Roy Cheville (possibly the topic of another paper altogether). My comments tonight are based largely on recollections of encounters I have had in casual settings and also from the experience of working toward a master of arts in religion (MAR) degree (a program primarily designed for Community of Christ ministers). This presentation addresses three subjects. First, the working through and not around the deconstruction of sacred myths. Second, the idealistic quest the Community of Christ has embarked on to become a peace church. Third, thoughts on removing what I see as vestiges of unnecessary barriers to inclusiveness and pluralism within the movement.

Let me begin my comments by providing some autobiographical information to set the context for my later observations.

**Getting Here from There**

I do not wish to dwell too much on my own past. I am, of course, influenced by my life experiences and a significant part of my life (fourteen of forty-three years) were spent as a member of the Utah-based, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I prefer to think of myself, however, as I am now... a secular humanist and a Unitarian Universalist. You know what you get when you cross an ex-Mormon with a Unitarian, don’t you? A person who goes door to door preaching for no apparent reason! In his seminal work, The Kingdom of God in America, theologian Richard Niebuhr described Unitarian doctrine thus, “God without wrath brought man without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.” I’m not sure many Unitarians would still define their theology that way, but it does sound very similar to the description of beliefs belonging to a few of my Community of Christ friends!

In the early 1990s, business travel often took me to the Boston area. During extended weekend trips there, I was able to collect a treasure trove of genealogical information. After digging long enough I discovered that along with tens of thousands of others who make the effort, I am a Mayflower descendant. I have since read that LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley and I share the same Mayflower ancestry! Ironically, our common progenitor, Stephen Hopkins, was a strange source of strength to me as I decided to leave Mormonism. Hopkins, I learned, was not a Puritan, but one of the “strangers” who came on the voyage in hopes of obtaining land and wealth in the new world. During this transitional period of my life I came to strongly identify with the role of being a stranger dwelling among Saints. My often outspoken sympathies for the importance of integrity existing in what I still consider “honest historical research” increasingly met with direct opposition of organizational expectations to sustain actions taken by LDS leaders (and upheld by lay members) against historians, feminists, and intellectuals. By late 1993, it was no longer tenable for me to continue to affirm my place in the movement I had struggled so fervently to join only fourteen years earlier.

For many, leaving the LDS Church is indeed a very difficult act, knowing that you leave

---

behind cherished friends you fear will not be able to get past seeing you as an apostate. It is considerably burdensome for those "born under the covenant." For them, the dread of leaving the Mormon Church is almost impossible, for they know the hurt and shame that such an act will inflict on their extended family. For my wife and I (both converts to the faith), the transition out of Mormonism was relatively easy once the agony of the decision was made to go ahead and leave. In juxtaposition to our "lifer" friends in the LDS Church, our families wondered what in the world took us so long. It is a bit ironic, but also justly fitting, that given how difficult it was for my wife and me to join the fold, it was so simple to leave. Whereas it is easy for those born into the movement to join, likewise it is almost impossible for them to depart.

I would add that I have worked very hard to foster friendly relationships with the LDS members I frequently come across, both through historical settings (such as tonight), casual contact, and professional encounters. I am not on a mission to draw happy people away from what helps make their lives meaningful. Additionally, I also am no longer a believer. To be an honest person I cannot be Mormon, but that is my personal choice. While I direct my comments tonight primarily toward Community of Christ members, I do not intend to offend LDS listeners who are unfamiliar with me and have yet to understand I am not a threat to their Church.

For my wife and me, contemplating life after Mormonism was a bit unsettling. The LDS Church had always been the basis of our relationship. My wife's prime concern was deciding where we would go to Church. "Our children need to attend church somewhere," she insisted. The answer for me (but ultimately not my entire family) arrived while doing research on early Mormonism in the context of its place in the New England theological landscape. I continuously ran across references to Universalism and Unitarianism. Consequently I became increasingly curious about these two countercultural movements that, similar to Mormonism, ran so blatantly afoul of orthodox Christianity. I was struck by the notion that (particularly Unitarianism) has long been a safe haven for free thinkers. In leaving Mormonism I needed to sort out what I did and did not believe theologically. I needed to be free to contemplate ideas. For me, working through those issues in the non-creedal, supportive environment I found within the Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregations I attended was beneficial. Early on, I remember being challenged by a statement from a UU minister in southern California who questioned, "You can have doctrines, but you have to ask yourself, what good really comes from them?" That was a real eye-opening moment for me. As progressive as I had presupposed myself to be, I suddenly came to the realization that I never truly was wholly open-minded before. At a picnic I attended a year later as a member of the Honolulu, Hawaii, Unitarian Church, my minister, knowing that I had been LDS, asked me, what he believed to be a serious question. "Mike, do you think Joseph Smith might have channeled the Book of Mormon?" Curiously, he was more open to the possibility of a supernatural explanation for Joseph Smith's production of the book than I was, but I simply smiled, and said, "Maybe."

Within a relatively brief period, I was amazed to find I no longer accepted core Mormon beliefs as truth. Even though I did not initially leave the LDS Church over doctrinal issues, once I withdrew from regular activity in the movement I rapidly redirected my view in an attempt to distinguish the "forest from the trees." I came to realize that allowances I once made for Joseph Smith's behavior I would not rationally make for other religious figures such as David Koresh, leader of the Branch Davidians, or Oregon's Bhagwan Shri Rashnesh. In all
fairness I found myself reasoning that I needed to apply the same rigor in the re-examination of my beliefs in Christianity as I have with Mormonism. In the end, those too were left wanting. My quest for the historical Jesus and Joseph left me a non-believer in traditional myths, yet I remained an ardent student, fascinated by the sociological circumstances that spawned these two movements.

Deconstruction of once sacred myths is a painful process on a personal and institutional level, as the Community of Christ has courageously learned. Nevertheless, I would argue that it is necessary to strive for intellectual honesty regardless of the required sacrifices made. I do not want to leave the impression, however, that I think all valid inquiries will result in the conclusions I have reached. If there are ultimately no eternal truths, that is very well. I can resign myself to that possibility being the most probable outcome. But since the great unknown is still yet unknown, I am forced to admit the quest for alternate understandings is a worthy endeavor.

Why the Deconstruction of Sacred Myths Is Necessary for Intellectual Honesty

From the time I was a young boy, my aunts, uncles, and father recounted fantastic stories about their grandfather Higgins, born Dwight Noble Higgins in 1863 in Orwell, Vermont. As a young man, Dwight moved first to Montana where he lived near and befriended the Lakota Sioux Indians, who had only a few years before wiped out General George Armstrong Custer's troops at the Battle of Little Big Horn. Later Higgins moved to a remote logging camp in western Idaho, where he ran a tavern and operated a ferry. In the latter part of his life, great-grandpa Higgins relocated to southern California, thus traversing from one coast of the United States to the other. As told by my relatives, during the years he lived in Idaho, Dwight Noble Higgins owned a pet bear. I heard many wonderful stories about the bear. One story was how he liked to drink beer and put his paw on the shoulders of great-grandpa's tavern customers, getting them to buy him a tall frosty one. Once a man came by the ferry and wanted to buy the bear for his traveling circus. Reluctantly, Dwight sold his friend to the man and even helped him chain the bear into a wagon. A few days later, however, the bear returned on its own to the ferry having escaped from the circus. Another tale recounted how my great-grandfather became very ill, so ill in fact, that he could not care for the bear and it was on the verge of starvation. Some of the town's folk decided to put the bear down to keep it from dying a slow, painful death. Just as they were going into the pen where the bear was kept and taking aim, Dwight Noble Higgins managed to get himself up and outside just in time to stop the mercy killing with the cry, "Please don't shoot my friend."

I grew up enjoying these compelling family stories very much and took delight in passing them down to my children. Several years ago (1996), one of my aunts, who had told me these stories, asked me if I would drive her down to Leisure World (a retirement community in southern California). She wanted to visit her 103-year-old aunt (my great-aunt) Marion Higgins, the widow of Dwight Noble Higgins's oldest son. I said, "Sure," and was excited to do so as I had heard that aunt Marion still had a very "sharp" memory. It was a genealogist's dream to talk to a family member 103 years old! I carefully prepared a list of questions I wanted to ask her about my great-grandparents, whom she had lived near both in Idaho and then later in southern California. She answered all my questions thoroughly and provided some very interesting insights from a daughter-in-law's point of view about having married into the Higgins family. The last question on my list was, "Aunt Marion, what can you tell me about Grandpa Higgins's pet bear?" She paused and looked at me with a confused expression,
then uttered to my complete shock, "What bear? I don’t remember any bear." All attempts at jogging any memory of her father-in-law’s pet bear (a hard thing to forget) were unsuccessful.

Suddenly a flash of insight came to me... a significant moment of clarity. I transformed in an instant from Mike Riggs, the youngster who was so eager to hear family stories, to Michael S. Riggs, the social scientist that should have known better than to uncritically accept an unverified oral tradition. As I thought more about it, I remembered other stories I was told about Dwight Noble Higgins. Such as those pertaining to his love for his grandchildren, how he liked to tell them stories, and joke around with them when they were children. As young children, my father and his siblings innocently believed the bear stories their grandfather had told them to be true. As they grew to be adults, they simply passed them on to the next generation. Thus, the myth was in danger of surviving down the line. This is a classic example of a "myth of innocence." It was not told to harm anyone. Its intent was to amuse grandchildren by teaching them friendship and loyalty. Understanding such stories as myth does not have to devalue the lesson being taught. Knowingly portraying fiction as fact cheapens the validity and actually detracts from the moral of the story.

To illustrate this point using a more academic example, Historian Michael P. Winship wrote in his recent book, *Seers of God,* the notion that the Puritans viewed themselves on an errand in the wilderness to build a City on a Hill, introduced into scholarly circles by Perry Miller, has been revised and now considered a myth. This powerful myth born in the early nineteenth century became, along with the American Revolution, a socially binding construct for legitimizing what citizens saw as destiny in the formation of the United States. The myth of Puritans seeing themselves as partakers in a divine mission in the new world was adopted by the early Latter-day Saints, who similarly viewed their own saga. Revising our understanding of history when necessary is a vital part of undertaking sound social science. That the work of a great scholar such as Perry Miller can be challenged is a healthy sign that our science continues to progress. It should not be viewed as an indictment of his ability, but only the era in which he lived. We all know that those who follow us will likewise refute “facts” that we now hold as bulletproof. Some of us, of course, will wait much longer than others for that experience, of this I am sure!

In discussing his approach to the subject of the Christian canon of scripture, Robert W. Funk (founder of the Jesus Seminar) said, “Our oaths of office as critical scholars and historians require that we investigate and weigh every document, every artifact, in reaching particular historical judgments. As historians, we are interested in the wide variety and complexity of the whole early Christian movement, rather than merely in one narrow, prescriptive account.”

I would apply Funk’s axiom to the rigor we should all strive for in researching Mormon-Christian studies. As Funk reminded us, “The task of the serious scholar is to segregate fact from wishful thinking.” A key (and largely overlooked) element in utilizing all the material presented to us in our quest to understand the historical Joseph Smith requires us to examine the founder of Mormonism through the eyes of others and not just his early followers who

---


6 Ibid, 100.
choose to go west to Utah. The apostle Paul attracted the largest following of adherents, but to disregard the other competing movements, such as the very Jewish Jerusalem church led by James (the brother of Jesus), would be a major oversight. Joseph Smith was by all accounts a charismatic leader and attracted a wide array of followers. Those closest to him provided keen insights into his personality through their subsequent actions. For example, Alpheus Cutler, who was predisposed to a magic worldview as a proto-Mormon, later reflected and amplified what he experienced through Joseph's occult teachings. While we can see some carry over of folk magic beliefs among Utah Mormons, it was never to the degree experienced by the Cutlerites. To view Joseph Smith as a parent and husband, one must peer backward through the lens of the Reorganized Church. Indeed, there are many trajectories through post-1844 successor movements and other close contemporaries to provide valuable portals to the historical Joseph. Of course, filters must be applied so as not to distort the image, but that is all part of applying our skills as scholars... ever diligent to separate myth from history.

I am reminded of a story I heard about a Catholic adult Sunday school class where the teacher was struggling to convince her students that Jesus had in fact been Jewish. After some difficulty, heads finally began to nod and she felt she made her case. All of a sudden a concerned comment came from the back of the room, "Yes, well, Jesus might have been Jewish, but what about his mother?" It is very challenging, even for scholars, to be able to look beyond their pre-conceived ideas when interpreting the past. Completely new and confronting evidence can come to light, but our long-held ideas based on entrenched reasoning often limit us to sterile conclusions. In this vortex of arrogance even new data is made to conform to what we already "know" to be true. The hazard of an open mind is that it can indeed change when persuaded by better information.

The following is perhaps the most insensitive example I can think of in a Community of Christ historical context. I give it only for shock value toward illustrating my contention that entrenched ideas (which are breeding grounds for perpetuating scared myths) should be subject to periodic review and rigorous critical analysis. Consider for a moment the dichotomy of views of the two Smith cousins as they presided over their respective churches. Joseph Smith III contended that his father was a good man and a good man would not be involved with more than one woman at a time. His cousin, Joseph F. Smith, felt that his uncle was a good man because that is how good men behaved. Now let us turn that male-focused view on its head and ask a completely taboo question. What if, "poor Emma," as she is often described, was actually just one of those women that were attracted to "bad boys." Consider that Emma Smith willingly ran off and eloped with a money digger, a man her family clearly did not approve of, staying married to him despite his intimate involvement with numerous other women. Emma's only other romantic relationship was with a man who fathered a child outside their marriage. If, as one could argue, she was indeed two for two in picking "bad boys," maybe it was not coincidence after all. Now let me stress, I have not yet even convinced myself that this alternate thesis is valid, and I am quite certain not many of you are persuaded either. Nonetheless, I hope the point taken is that no scared myth (or historical figure) should be off limits to the critical thinking required in conducting serious scholarship.

---

8 Elder's Journal, Far West, Missouri (July 1838): 43. Response to questions ten and eleven.
The Quest to Become a Peace Church

Whether it was the terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001, or the senseless slaughter of non-Mormons at Mountain Meadows, Utah, on 11 September 1857—our abhorrence of violence should be the same—Taliban or Danite Band. Religious zealotry combined with self-imposed ignorance has long been and continues to be a major source for injustice and war in this world. These may be perilous times to voice this statement, but as a firm believer in peaceful non-resistance, I feel the only reasonable response to those who claim to hear the voice of God uttering instructions of violence is mental health treatment and high dosages of medication. World history demonstrates that as long as violence is an option in resolving disputes, it will be widely utilized. Therefore, elimination of the option of war is a necessity before peace can be fully realized. Our best hope for bringing that to pass is pervasive education.

Nearly four years before young Joseph Smith Jr. first began to speak to God, Henry Ware Sr., Hollis professor of divinity at Harvard, imparted the following advice to new ministers at the ordination service of Reverend Joseph Allen in Northborough, Massachusetts:

Zeal lighted into a flame by the passions, raised to a high degree of fanaticism, clouded with ignorance, and associated with obstinacy, may tend to the most deplorable consequences. Instead of an animating principle of most salutary influence, it may prove a wild fire, irresistible, uncontrollable, and of the most sweeping and desolating character. And activity may have other motives to call it forth and direct its exertions, than a sense of duty to God and the Saviour, or a pure and disinterested desire of doing good, and regard for the present and eternal interests of men. It may have no purer source and no better motive, than mere selfishness; the desire of preeminence, the love of power and influence. And where such is the case, however well directed it may happen to be, not only are the motive and intention entitled to but little praise, but here is also no security against its being perverted to the most pernicious purposes.9

Fellow Boston Unitarian, 1811 Harvard graduate, and noted nineteenth-century orator Edward Everett felt education was the best antidote to the flame of zeal problem posed by Professor Ware. In 1835, Everett said, "What but knowledge is to prevent us ... from being borne down and carried away, by the overwhelming tide of fanaticism and delusion, put in motion by the moon-struck impostors of the day?" Only at the lowest ebb of ignorance, according to Everett, was one "ready to receive Joe Smith as an inspired prophet."10

Whether or not one accepts the testimony of Joseph Smith's divine call to establish and lead a new religious movement, there is no question about his zeal for militarism.11 Even a cursory reading of early LDS journals and letters reveals Smith's followers were not converted from a pool of elite Harvard, Yale, much less, Andover graduates. Obviously, zeal and lack of education was a dangerous combination and predictably erupted into unfortunate vio-

---

10 Edward Everett, An Address Delivered before the Literary Societies of Amherst College August 25, 1835 (Boston: Russell, Shattuck, and Williams, 1835), 32. Riggs private library.
lent episodes at various times throughout the Mormon past. To their credit, the Community of Christ has been an avid supporter of educating its clergy. This ethic of affirming education from the top down has had a positive impact on the organization. Clearly, hawks still exist within the movement, but the doves are now gaining the majority.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, the Community of Christ boldly decided to break with tradition and proclaim thereafter to be in pursuit of peace. In response to canonized revelation and at great sacrifice, the Community of Christ constructed a wonderfully provocative Temple dedicated to its newly found mission of peace. Leading the charge is my friend and graduate school professor, Dr. Andrew Bolton, coordinator for peace and justice in the Community of Christ. I was privileged indeed to have taken Professor Bolton’s course on peace theology during my master’s program at Park University.

Initially one must understand that the only Christian movements to attain the status of peace church heretofore are the Society of Friends (Quakers) and descendants of Anabaptist traditions (principally Mennonites and Amish). Professor Bolton advocates emulation of key doctrinal components that make these groups successful peace churches, especially Anabaptist style communalism. In order to become a peace church, movements must adopt creedral confessions, thereby raising the belief in peaceful non-resistance to doctrinal status. While the Community of Christ still retains the process of canonization of inspired documents (revelations) approved by World Conference delegates at semi-annual gatherings, at the same time, it continues to affirm itself as a non-creedral religion. Therefore, even though the goal of peace has been officially proclaimed, the right to individual membership in the church is not contingent on acceptance of the concept per se. For those in the movement advocating peace church status, the only viable mechanism available is by persuasion of their fellow parishioners. To that end, Andrew Bolton argues creatively for salvaging the Book of Mormon as a peace document. Bolton contends by using III Nephi, chapter four, as a diving point, an Old and New Testament is metaphorically defined after the coming of Jesus to the Americas.

Without going into a long exegesis on why III Nephi (and the Book of Mormon in general) is a problematic peace document, let me offer just a few criticisms of this approach. Chapter nine of III Nephi (part of Bolton’s New Testament treatise) represents a reanimated Jesus speaking in the first person and quoting extremely troubling anti-peace rhetoric from Second Isaiah material. It was just Joseph Smith’s unfortunate place in history that he wrote the Book of Mormon before the methods of higher biblical criticism established that Second Isaiah was written after Smith had Lehi leave Jerusalem in 600 BCE. However, anachronisms are not a troubling point in Professor Bolton’s model as to the validity of the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Rather, it is the narrative for peace after the coming of Jesus that matters.

In verses 49 and 50, Jesus foretold a gathering from all directions of the Earth to be re-

---


Benign Voyeur: Twenty-four Years of Third-Party Observations
On the Ever-changing Community of Christ Church

deemed and that God would give them land (which belongs to other people) for an inheritance. In verse 51, the "I—it" proposition was introduced indicating that the gentiles may not repent. In apocalyptic literature, the wicked always stay wicked and, therefore, deserve everything awful that is going to befall them. Dehumanizing your enemies makes perpetrating violence against them much easier afterward. In verses 52 through 58, the new-world Jesus, quoting the words of Second Isaiah, predicts the utter destruction of the enemy. In true Danite fashion, it is the "true believers" in God who are expected to carry out this action in order to bring about a "New Jerusalem." How can these passages that portend a violent overthrow of non-members, including stealing their land and property, be consistent with the goals of establishing a modern peace tradition or even be a valid basis for its laudable principles?

For these and numerous other examples of violence contained in the Book of Mormon, I will suggest that the Community of Christ return to the path it has traversed for the last thirty or so years and let the book ultimately die a slow death. Attempts to reconstruct that which is almost entirely deconstructed only succeeds in confusion of your people and ultimately does more harm than good even in the presence of the best intentions. I therefore argue then, that advocating peace through persuasive logic is more desirable than recycling the symbols of deconstructed myths.

Professor Phillip Barlow shared with us, at the 2002 JWHA spring banquet, the importance of geography to the independent developments of the two Mormon movements. Following further reflection on Professor Barlow's insightful presentation it dawned on me how devastating it must have been for the RLDS to be stuck in the middle of America, left to answer for every "interesting" twist of new theology their cousins developed out west in Utah. In the nineteenth century, the RLDS Church was simply a small society comprised of those who just longed for acceptance by their neighbors. Unfortunately, it was sort of like being the parents of a habitual convict...even though it may not be your fault you have a disturbed child, you are still not going to make many friends. RLDS missionaries were unable to really focus on teaching outsiders their milder brand of Midwestern Mormon pseudo-Methodism because of the deliberate heterodox innovations of those safely tucked away in the Rocky Mountains. Much to the chagrin of the RLDS, Brigham Young seemed overly fond of preaching society-arousing sermons on topics such as the justice of blood atonement and the virtues of plural marriage. Yes, it was a hardship trekking the epic trail west, but think about the difficulties of staying behind...the RLDS received no glory for undergoing such a historic adventure, but nevertheless had to contend with the societal scorn held out for Mormonism.

It is apparent that the modern LDS Church has successfully transformed itself into a paragon of American patriotism. If the Community of Christ maintains its quest to become a peace church, it risks losing its long-fought battle for societal acceptance. Is the standing the Community of Christ garnered over the years within this dominate Western culture, which regularly supports violence and injustice around the world as viable options to protect corporate interests, worth keeping? I will bet that you advocate peace, as a principle, while insuring individualism remains jealously guarded. Even if, by doing so your popularity pales in comparison to other more conservative mainline denominations.

Thoughts on Priesthood and Other Barriers to Pluralism

In early 1983, my wife and I were busy preparing to move from the Kansas City area to southern California. Before departing, however, we decided it would be fun to play hooky
from our regular LDS Sunday services and visit other Restoration churches around the Independence area. Conveniently, the schedule worked out so we were able to attend services with the Cutlerites, Hedrickites, and Josephites all on the same Sunday. All three were interesting and I believe in retrospect, helpful in my evolution toward religious pluralism.

Our experience at Stone Church with the “Pulpit of the Prophets” was surprising and memorable. RLDS apostle Alan Tyree spoke, and his address centered on the then-new instructional program known as “Faith to Grow.” Here we were, a couple of Utah Mormons, listening to an RLDS apostle issue a stern mandate to his audience, declaring in no uncertain terms, they would have the “faith to grow.” My wife and I sat there, in that great old church amazed. “And they say Utah Church authorities are dictators!” As troubled as times were in the movement in 1983, in reality, we were witnessing events from within the eye of the storm. A year later, close friends in Independence called us in California and informed us the RLDS priesthood opened itself to include woman. We knew then that the back half of the hurricane was about to hit shore in full fury.

In an assignment during my MAR program for Sue McLaughlin’s History of Christian Thought II course, I wrote a reflective paper on the topic of women’s ordination based on the following quote from Barbara J. MacHaffie’s book, Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition.

A problematic assumption is the hierarchical view of reality which traditional Christianity has often adopted. One party is in a powerful position and the other is dependent or subordinate. God is over and above humanity, the priest is over and above lay people, Christianity is over and above other religions, men are over and above women. In contrast, feminist, theologians stress equality, reciprocity, and mutuality.16

I suggest in the case of the Community of Christ, MacHaffie’s statement be taken even further concerning a lay priesthood where some have it and others do not. Ordaining women was perhaps a positive step toward reducing the alienation of some female members, but I would have preferred to see the whole concept of lay ministry re-examined before it was decided to expand the pool of possible candidates. Shortly after the announcement that the RLDS Church would soon begin ordaining women priesthood members, former RLDS Church Archivist Madelon Brunson presented a paper at the Mormon History Association. She lamented that she had always looked at priesthood membership as joining a club, and she wasn’t sure that was a club she wanted to join.17

Even as an active Mormon elder at the time, I remember thinking she presented a valid point. By the end of my journey as a member of the LDS Church, I had virtually concluded that there really was not any clear reason to continue the tradition of a lay ministry, even if women were participants. As MacHaffie aptly pointed out in the above quote, a hierarchical model of leadership (whether patriarchal or not), is a barrier to “equality, reciprocity, and mutuality.” Congregations are better served when full democracy is exercised among the members. It is more empowering to serve out of one’s own convictions, not having to wait to be “called” on by the often politically motivated oracles of god. Lay priesthood is a barrier to inclusiveness, which the Community of Christ should attempt to stop perpetuating. Like the Book of Mormon, it too would best be phased out gradually through attrition.

My strongest joy and concern for my Community of Christ friends I have saved for the

---

end. An underlying struggle I perceive among you is a fear of theological ambiguity. This is a
natural extension of the liberalism that has fermented within your movement over the last
thirty years. I contend that a church with enough pluralism to be home to an existentialist like
Paul M. Edwards and a neo-orthodox theologian such as Tony Chvala-Smith is a major ac-
complishment. Considering the diversity in the theological spectrum of current Community of
Christ members, the results have been quite impressive.

My concern is that despite the success of achieving a very inclusive, non-creedal, modern
church, there is an undercurrent working against the progress made. Some of the forces for
regressive change are clearly overt. For example, while I was still in the MAR program, plans
were underway to establish the now functioning seminary through Graceland University. Re-
tired Community of Christ apostle Joe Serig shared with the MAR students his thoughts in
designing the new educational blueprint for Community of Christ appointees. According to
Joe, the purpose of the seminary was first for spiritual development and second for obtaining
knowledge. He described the old MAR program as providing a good sound overview of the-
ology without focusing on spiritual development. For Serig, knowledge without being episte-
mologically grounded was a weakness among ministers graduating from the MAR program.
We were informed that the new Community of Christ seminary needed to produce Commu-
nity of Christ ministers, not diversely opinionated theologians. The question then remains,
"Who defines which narrowly constructed theology is going to be used as the cookie cutter to
produce these future ministers?"

However, much to Joe Serig's distaste, thirty years of injecting progressively higher
education into the organization has given rise to the firm establishment of pluralism in at least
the mid- and high-level leadership positions. Furthermore, this has led to the filtering down to
a more responsive congregational level following the exodus of the movement's fundamental-
ists during the last two decades. However, despite this, feelings of guilt and remorse regarding
the non-embracement of a cohesive message that everyone can share as one in "the body of
Christ" still persists. I argue that this idea is a carry-over from earlier eras (never actually
achieved at anytime in the history of the church) and should be deconstructed. If the goal of
the seminary is to affirm the myth of homogeneous theological group cohesiveness, it will
fail. The barn door was propped open far too long ago and with a horse's natural instinct to
run free, there is little hope of them being corralled, despite their misguided guilt about having
been let out in the first place.

Does religious liberal pluralism attract mass membership to a church? Certainly not, but
the number of people in the pews does not necessarily reflect the actual health of a denomina-
tion. Yes, you have to bring in enough people to sustain the continuation of the movement, but
a scorecard with the most tallies is not the true measure of success. Providing a meaningful,
inclusive environment for those willing to be enjoined in the community should be the highest
goal set for the organization. Belonging to the group should be compelling enough without
having to resort to dogmatism and guilt to hold membership.

18 In a later conversation with Don Compier, dean, Community of Christ Seminary,
Graceland University, I was assured that the MAR is still being offered and the Serig vision
for the seminary has not prevailed. That this debate even took place, however, makes my
point that forces for regressive change are still a factor within the movement.
Conclusions

In deconstructing Mormonism’s myths, do not be too hard on the founders because of perceived historical shortcomings. It was, after all, a positive reform for Joseph Smith Jr. (among others) to have rebelled against the orthodoxy of his day by teaching his followers that poorer humans had more potential than the Calvinists of his time gave them credit for. The early Mormons accomplished some amazing feats because Joseph Smith convinced them they could go beyond themselves on their way to making grand history. It was advantageous for Joseph Smith III to rebel against his father’s rigid theology and introduce a more member-inclusive ethic within the RLDS Church. Seriously studying the history of any organization where we are personally attached can be frustrating because we want to see our hero’s actions reflect the values we now hold. Instead, we should marvel at the achievements they made in the steps they took toward where we are today and the trajectory they placed us on for a hopefully better future.

Because of their modern passion for individualism, I have strong doubts that my Community of Christ friends would ever establish a radical communalistic Anabaptist lifestyles within the context of anything close to the whole church. The entrenched realities of pluralism in the movement outweigh even the best, compelling appeals to a simpler, programmatic, and pious way of life. The traditions that once existed for the hope of a practical, large-scale, zionistic-based community have now become but a dim light in the institutional memory. Frankly, any energy spent on reconstructing old myths would be better spent being a force for good in a world hungry for a new mission to promulgate peace.

As a student in the MAR program at Park University, I saw the transformation of many students. Several of these well-meaning individuals came into the program as RLDS traditionalists and after a period of wailing and gnashing of teeth during a necessary deconstruction process, they came out Community of Christ. That is not to say they all ended up sharing the same beliefs, however, in the wake of rebuilding faith, they managed to latch onto a new understanding such as liberation, feminist, neo-orthodoxy, or process theology. I saw positive changes take place in many of my classmate’s lives as a result of deconstructing their long-held Mormon myths.

Vestiges of the “old time religion” remain in the back and foreground, such as the Book of Mormon and a hierarchical organizational structure that invokes the same titles of nobility carried over from the time of the movement’s founder. Awkwardly, this dilution of dogma has produced an environment of diverse theological pluralism within the modern Community of Christ. Those religiously open-minded enough to navigate the changing tides of theological supremacy in the 1980s and early 1990s within the church, survived the mass disaffection led by the movement’s more conservative dissenteres. This remnant of progressive liberals is now positioned to enter the new century with an even greater passion for inclusiveness, pluralism, and social justice as beacons of peace in the midst of an increasingly violent society. This is the epic journey this benign voyeur hopes his friends will undertake. I look forward with anticipation to assessing your progress during the next twenty-four years.
Nauvoo on My Mind*

Robert Bruce Flanders

Nauvoo, once again.

I tried to think of a humorous story or anecdote about Nauvoo to begin this address, the way speakers are supposed to do. Something funny about the place, or about its name—like the headline from the social page of a newspaper in another small Illinois town: "Normal Boy to Wed Oblong Girl"; or from the nuptials announcements of a newspaper in western Missouri: "Blue Eye Girl Marries Peculiar Boy." Weddings are good. How about naming the paper, "My Big, Fat, Plural, Nauvoo Weddings"? But I decided maybe not.

When I was first thinking about what I might say tonight, son Todd and I were reading together the political scientist Samuel Huntington's admonition, "Scholars who have nothing to say should keep quiet." I said it was advice I should certainly keep in mind while preparing to speak to historians of Mormonism. Todd replied, "Well, you haven't said anything for thirty-seven years. At least you've waited long enough!"

I thank the board of the JWHA for this invitation. It is a great honor and a privilege to be able to speak to you. I think I know why the invitation was extended. At the least I am a historical curiosity. Perhaps I might have something more to say about Nauvoo. I must tell you, however, that I no longer work in Mormon history and have not done so for a long time. What I offer is not so much new history as a kind of historical document drawn from my own life and times. What I can tell you is something about this sixth generation Latter-day Saint who left the RLDS Church at age fifty, and about the creation of the book that is a probable reason for my invitation to stand before you tonight.

Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi was published in 1965. In 1972 I was honored to be the first president of this association. Since then I have gradually absented myself from Mormon history. In 1978 I was invited to become president of the Mormon History Association, an invitation I declined. I absented myself from your fellowship as well, and I fell silent on the subject of Mormon history. It was as if I had already said enough. In that same year I withdrew de facto from the RLDS Church.

Since I retired in 1995, I have had time to turn back to the Mormon past in a new way: I have been trying to find out who I am and where I came from. My roots are deep among the Latter-day Saints. My life experience illustrates some of the religious difficulties that existed not only for me personally, but for the old RLDS Church as well in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century.

It is often assumed that I left the RLDS Church because my feelings were hurt. That is not the case; at least not in the ordinary sense. In reply to friendly questioning, I have said that I left for epistemological reasons. That statement deserves exploration. Epistemology has to do with the nature and sources of knowledge. A fundamental epistemological problem for me as a young man was that the RLDS would not face its own past. Indeed, the Church fictionalized that past. To do so was official policy as well as popular practice. Psychologist Walter Conway called the phenome-

* Sixth annual Sterling McMurrin Lecture, delivered at the John Whitmer Historical Association thirtieth annual meeting, Nauvoo, Illinois, 26 September 2002. This lecture was recorded on audiotape. Please access the JWHA Web site for ordering information: www.jwha.info. Robert Flanders is professor emeritus of history and of the Center for Ozark Studies, Southwest Missouri State University.
non “psychological blindness.” Walt was a good friend and fellow elder in the Church. I took note of his diagnosis; but I suspected it was also a rationalization and an excuse. He didn’t seem worried. I was more than worried. This in a Church that professed to believe “All Truth”? It seemed to me to be sheer hypocrisy.

What I did not yet understand was that since the 1860s the Church had been systematically painting itself into a corner where its history was concerned. After rejecting the polygamy doctrine, then the temple ceremonies, the entire Nauvoo history was progressively modified into the characteristic RLDS historical myth that those of my generation in the Church grew up with.

Let me tell you how I first got the inspiration to write about Nauvoo. In the 1950s when Sally and I were teaching at Graceland College, I heard Dr. Roy Cheville say more than once, “Utah began in Nauvoo.” Cheville was the religion professor and campus minister. I never heard him elaborate on that cryptic statement. I’m sure he knew—as I did not—what an explosive proposition it might be in the RLDS Church. Perhaps that is one reason he did not say more.

What did Cheville mean? Did not our Church, the RLDS, begin in Nauvoo? Utah began in Utah—didn’t it? Utah was a unique aberration of the Latter-day Saint movement. Nauvoo was really ours, not theirs—wasn’t it? My youthful perception of Nauvoo was an essential part of my denominational self-definition.

My mother’s family believed that polygamy was the essence of Utah Mormonism; and that polygamy began in Utah, not Nauvoo. Indeed, that was virtually all they knew, all they cared to know, about that church, those people, out there. The Utah Mormons had lied about what happened at Nauvoo; and in so doing they had tried to steal Nauvoo from us. In this matter, we of the RLDS needed always to be vigilant against lying Mormon propaganda. That “Utah began in Nauvoo” was a strange new idea to me; but its essential truth soon enough dawned on me.

Recently someone asked, “How was Kingdom on the Mississippi received by the rank and file of the RLDS Church?” I was surprised to have to admit that I wasn’t sure. How would one know such a thing? I had only bits and pieces. It may now be useful to look at a few of them. An elderly sister called me from Davis City, Iowa. I think she was a descendent of Warren Post, secretary to James J. Strang. She was angry—but, surprisingly, not at me. “Thank God someone finally told the truth about Nauvoo!” she yelled. “My grandfather was there, and he knew. They always said he was lying; but they were the liars!” An aunt of mine related a conversation with her older sister. “Have you read Bob’s book?” the younger sister inquired. The second aunt, perhaps not an unrepresentative RLDS, had probably never read any book, let alone a ponderous history. “Kid,” she replied, “all I want to know is this—is the book for the Church or against it?”

I had curious encounters with two official persons, one in 1965 a few months before the book appeared; and the other in 1966 a few months afterward. The first was with Harvey Grice, president of Graceland College. He asked to see me following the outdoor spring baccalaureate service. We went, of all places, out behind the powerhouse by the coal pile. In the gathering darkness of a quiet Sunday, he told me that he had received a telephone call from the First Presidency in Independence, asking him to “talk to me.” What had happened was that somehow word of my work had reached a women’s prayer circle, and one of those women had called Independence with the news that a Graceland professor had “gone over to the Mormons.” President Grice was both uncomfortable and bewildered. What was all this about? He offered neither reproof nor chastisement. A chemical engineer by profession, he couldn’t understand what I might have been up to. I got the impression that Independence was as uncomfortable as he. Still, my reaction was to be furious with that woman, who may have been both well- and ill-intentioned.

The second encounter with an official was in the spring of 1966, a few months after the book
was published. The phone rang one morning in my office at Graceland. It was Independence, this time a president of Seventy. Could we talk? Of course. When might he like to see me? Today, he replied. He would be there by afternoon. The first official response! I was delighted. I knew him slightly. He was my age; able, educated, somewhat cosmopolitan, a cultivated man, I thought. He had served in a foreign mission field.

My pleasure quickly turned to dismay. His intention was to impeach the book—particularly to find out if it was based on Mormon sources. On becoming convinced that such was not the case, he said “Now what are we supposed to tell our men out in Mormon country?” It was a rhetorical question, not really directed at me. Again I was angry. I wanted to shout at him, “How about telling them the truth for a change?” I did not realize until many years later that the answer was not that simple.

The answer was not that simple. In Kingdom on the Mississippi I had stumbled innocently onto a subject that was crucial to RLDS self-identity. It had to do with what had really happened at Nauvoo, and the train of circumstances that followed its demise. My youthful perception of Nauvoo was part of my denominational self-definition.

Victorian, sensationalizing America of the mid- and late-nineteenth century declared Mormon country a sink of immorality and treason. Most of the “Scattered Saints,” i.e., the Mormons who had not gone west and who were the core of the RLDS membership, entered heartily into popular stereotyping of the Mormons (though such anti-Brigham dissidents as James J. Strang and my ancestor Alpheus Cutler had themselves been polygamists). That blanket denunciation vastly oversimplified Mormonism.

I have come to the subject of my own growing up in religion, and of the religion I grew up in. What I knew about religion, especially what I knew of Latter-day Saintism, I learned as much in my family as in church. And what did I learn in my family? Biloine Whiting Young’s fine new book, Obscure Believers: The Mormon Schism of Alpheus Cutler, has helped me find out. My grandmother was born into a Cutlerite family. As such she was a daughter of those scattered Saints from the Nauvoo breakup. Born on the second-generation Minnesota frontier in 1882, she was the great-granddaughter of Alpheus Cutler, an anti-Brighamite who had been a high priest, a member of the Council of Fifty, and the Nauvoo Temple Master Mason. Grandmother’s parents had left the “Cutlerite Church,” as they termed it, and joined the Josephites, the RLDS. They rejected the secret temple endowments practiced by the Cutlerites. They ardently believed in Independence as Zion, the Word of Wisdom, miraculous healings, and the True Prophet.

In 1888, when she was six, Grandmother’s family moved to town, as legions of rural Americans of that generation were doing. Railroads were ending frontier isolation. The nation was becoming less rural and more urban. The Gentile neighbors in Otter Tail County who had similar intentions would probably have gone to Minneapolis, or St. Cloud, or even to the nearby county seat town of Fergus Falls. Instead, Grandmother’s people trekked some seven hundred miles in a covered wagon to Independence. The return to Independence was, for the mostly rural scattered Saints like my great-grandfather, more than just moving to town. It was the fulfillment of the divine intent for the true Saints. They believed that Nauvoo, the great kingdom on the Mississippi, should have happened in Independence—and would have, save for the evil Missourians. The RLDS return to Zion had a connection not only with Nauvoo but also with the first Saints’ arrival in western Missouri in 1831. All this was well understood in the RLDS Church of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. What we did not understand was how falsely we had always portrayed the Mormons to ourselves.

What my family knew about the Christian faith was extensively a Protestant heritage brought
with them by their forebears into the Latter-day Saint movement. David Brian Davis was right about the New England origins of Mormonism, beginning of course with the fact that so many Mormons were New Englanders. Our family's pietism was a New England pietism. Our anti-slave attitudes were New England attitudes. Our family's ambition, devotion to work, love of learning, ingrained feelings of guilt, sense of stewardship, standards of monogamous sexual morality, and many similar traits that I'm sure you are familiar with, were those of New England Puritans-cum-Yankees, which my ancestors once had been. Our deepest cultural traits were not distinctively Latter-day Saint, as we supposed them to be. My kin are still surprised when I point out how "New England Puritan" we really are.

I was born and raised in Independence. But I did not grow up thinking the same as the native Missouri kids. The so-called "uptown people" in Independence that my grandmother and mother found so contemptible were Virginians and Kentuckians in their cultural heritage. They had servants, if they could afford it. They talked with a provincial twang that my mother considered low-brow. They said "Missour- quê" so we said "Missour-ee." When Harry Truman became president, my grandmother sniffed, "Imagine that Bess Wallace in the White House!" My father was University of Kansas and Kansas State alum. I might have willingly gone to college in Kansas. I did go to college in Wisconsin, a New England-settled and New England-encultured state of the old Northwest Territory. I would never have gone to college at Mizzou.

All this is a typical New England Yankee predilection. It is typical of Yankee prejudice against the historic subculture below Mason's and Dixon's Line. It is a prejudice older than the American Revolution. It was my prejudice as well.

In the calendar of landmark years that divide past from future I should remark that I was born in 1930, the centennial year of the Latter-day Saints. I was a golden-haired boy, so to speak, marked from an early age for service to the Church—akin perhaps to the boys of Catholic families set apart for the priesthood. Apostle E. J. Gleazer Sr. once accosted me on the steps of the Church headquarters in Independence. He threw back his head, eyed me down his large nose, and thundered, "I've had light on you, boy!" Then he turned on his heel and walked away. Light on me! Naturally I would like to have heard some details; but I had no doubt there was light. I wanted to serve the Church.

My family was not surprised when at age twenty-one I was called to General Conference appointment, even before I had been ordained an elder. "Appointment" meant being appointed by the Church to full-time mission work "out in the field," as it was termed. The experience turned out to be a shock. I actually knew little of the Christian religion or of religion in general as a phenomenon of human culture. Of the Bible, I knew only that it foretold the Latter-day Saint Restoration. When I was an undergraduate at university, I had allowed myself a course titled "The Philosophy of Religion." It would be okay to do so, I reasoned, because it was philosophy, not religion. Anyway, in the end I did not understand it. My entire theological education consisted of reading The Angel Message, a set of missionary tracts given me by the stake president where I was assigned. I was also given a set of flip charts to use in cottage meetings that portrayed the Restoration story in Bible prophecy—"The Hoofs and Horns Story!" we appointee boys privately called it.

As a young unmarried missionary, I was often invited to dinner by the good Saints. At one of those dinners an adult son who had long since left the Church asked me what my job was. "I am a minister," I said, without thinking. He then asked, not unfriendly, "What is a minister in your church supposed to do?" Now I had known ministers in other denominations. I knew that I was not really a minister and probably never would be. I was caught up short and was deeply embarrassed. I left appointment after two years to return to school. The father of Sally's roommate, an RLDS
elder, declared that my returning to college was tantamount to my leaving the Church. I scoffed at the suggestion.

What happened to me as an appointee—and much happened, not all of it bad—was probably not typical of other young appointees. Of the large appointee classes of 1950 and 1951, most stayed on board. I think the Church was most unwise to send us out without adequate preparation—an error that was later corrected. It illustrates a disjunction between the generation of Church leaders of that time—men as old as my father or grandfather—and my generation. I was beginning to have expectations of professionalism in the Church, expectations that seemed to me to be shared by only a few. I began to expect professionalism in Church history, too.

Of course Utah began in Nauvoo. To say so is to state a historical truism, the simplest kind of cause and effect. Who could possibly doubt it? The RLDS, that’s who. “Utah,” “Utah Mormons,” “Mormonism,” were fundamental categories of RLDS thought and RLDS self-perception. We are not Mormons was our mantra. In RLDS-think there were two opposite sets of Latter-day Saints—the True Saints and the False Saints, the good brothers and the bad brothers, the fair face of the movement and the dark face. A typical conversation between an RLDS and a young LDS missionary elder (have we not all had such encounters?) might go something like this: LDS: “Oh, we have a lot in common, don’t we? Do you think the two churches will ever join together?” RLDS answer, not always fully articulated: “No, we don’t have a lot in common”; and “Never!”

The RLDS came to believe that the Mormons had stolen Nauvoo, so to speak, and had tried to make its bequest their heritage, when to do so was to make a gigantic historical lie. Let me say it out loud: the RLDS believed the LDS Church always to have lied about the past. Was not the story I told consonant with the story they had always told? Was not my story their story? Here is why carrying to its ultimate conclusion the observation that “Utah began in Nauvoo” was so explosive. Here is why, in my having written Kingdom on the Mississippi as I did, I was believed to have “gone over to the Mormons.” I knew instinctively that should I use any archival sources of the LDS Church, the RLDS would dismiss my work as merely another Mormon polemic.

I have dealt briefly with what it was to grow up RLDS-Cutlerite (to coin a term.) Let me return to the subject of my growing up in Independence. It was certainly a different experience than that of little Latter-day Saint boys wanting to grow up there one hundred years earlier.

When my grandmother’s family arrived forty-two years before my birth, they were in the first generation of Saints to return. They found a place profoundly different than that which had met the first Saints with bloodshed fifty-plus years earlier. The Civil War had ended slavery in the southern States, and a lot of other things as well. The role played by Independence as a principal town on the frontier was gone. Kansas City was now the burgeoning, railroad-driven gateway to the West. Jackson County had become an urban region. Religion was now more than just a matter of Southern Evangelicalism. By the 1880s, Roman and Orthodox Catholics, Episcopalians, both branches of Campbellites, Congregationalists, even Jews, were present. To the population of Virginians and Kentuckians had been added Yankees, Germans and Scandinavians, Scots, Welsh, the “Shanty Irish,” and English from the Celtic fringe. The presence of new people, the new diversity, helped moderate old anti-Mormon hostilities. Also, the new Josephite Saints came in over time as individual families, not like a foreign invasion as had occurred in the 1830s. The Latter-day Saint Zion now seemed more spiritualized than before, more akin to the Gentile notion of Zion. Joseph Smith III, the new Mormon leader, still resided in Iowa.

Changes were occurring in the RLDS population as well. Mass conversions to the ranks did not occur—anything but. However, families with different ethnic roots did appear. Larsens, Andersens, Jacobsens, and Hansens came from the Danish immigrant hearth of southwestern Iowa. Piep-
bergerdes, Swalls, Swails, and Grabskes came from the German immigrants some fifty miles north of Independence, along the Hannibal to St. Joseph Railroad. My father was born there, in the little railroad town of Stewartsville. He was not German; but his New England Yankee clan joined the Church, as had those Germans, because of the influence of early LDS-cum Josephites who had returned to the vicinity of old Mormon Far West. Williams, Jones, Sheehys, and Garvers came from among the Welsh coal miners of southern Iowa. It may be remembered that John Llewellyn Lewis, founder of the United Mine Workers, was born to an RLDS Welsh coal mining family in 1880 at Lucas, Iowa. My mother's father was Welsh—Mancel Thomas Williams. He looked like all the rest of those Welshmen: a stubby, stocky build, with a prominent nose.

After 1900, some RLDS men began the rise to the professional and managerial class. My father and my uncle-by-marriage were such men. R. O. Flanders was a college graduate who managed a foundry in Kansas City. He was widely known and respected, the same as if he had been Catholic or even Jewish. My uncle Howard Peter Andersen was an even better example. He was born in 1900 near Far West, the son of Danish Apostle Peter Andersen and Jacobina Jacobsen Andersen. He was fortunate as a youth to become the friend and protégé of the merchant king James Cash Penney. Penney came from Hamilton, another little north Missouri town. Uncle Pete was manager of the J. C. Penney store on the Courthouse Square in Independence for more than thirty years. As a Square merchant, he was a recognized community leader along with such Gentile merchants as the Bundschus and the Knoepkers. He was a prominent Scouter and as such a close friend of H. Roe Bartle, mayor of Kansas City. He drove a Packard, had the biggest house of anyone I knew, and bought a farm for his unemployed parents-in-law. All this was during the Depression years. On the Church side, he was ordained a high priest at age thirty-two, and was subsequently appointed to the Church-wide Standing High Council.

Of course the two presidents of the Church during most of the first half of the twentieth century commanded near-universal respect. Frederick Madison Smith was an imposing intellectual, the first person in the Church to earn a doctorate. His brother Israel Alexander was an attorney who served in the Missouri Constitutional Convention of 1945. These two laymen and two churchmen are illustrative of RLDS respectability and acceptance in the first half of the twentieth century.

Despite such changes, the historical-religious subculture of the RLDS remained much the same. For fifty years after the 1890s, Church leaders attempted to show through tortured reasoning that the infamous Temple Lot suit, which awarded a piece of the dedicated ground to Hedrickite claimants, actually proved the singular legitimacy of the RLDS. The romantic allure of communalism did not die, though no practical communal societies were established. The generation of Saints who had actually been at Nauvoo passed away, as did the generation of their children. So the way was open for Heman C. Smith's polemical four-volume History of the Church, and the romantic one-volume Story of the Church written by his daughter Inez Smith Davis, to become quasi-official historical gospel. The myth that Utah began in Utah was firmly in control.

Growing up in Independence, I benefited from not being derided or persecuted. I grew up much like other middle class kids in a Midwestern town. Except—I was never allowed to forget that I was not one of those kids. I was special. We were in the world but not of it. We were the True Saints of the Latter Day. All other religions were basically false. We alone were legitimate and had a direct line to heaven. I remember well how, later in college, I began to rebel against that point of view, began to think, I want to join the human race.

In 1989 the Mormon History Association held its annual meeting in Nauvoo. A panel of distinguished Mormon scholars discussed Kingdom on the Mississippi, and I was invited to anchor the panel. I had recently done a lecture cruise on the riverboat Mississippi Queen, and I took an analogy
from that experience. Nauvoo had been like the structure of a riverboat, I said. In the middle were the passengers, enjoying the cruise, anticipating that all would be well. Up top in the wheelhouse were the captain and the other officers, making sure that indeed all would be well. Then down in the hull of the boat were the engines and the rest of the machinery. All that stuff down below, hidden from view, made the boat work, made it go. Kingdom on the Mississippi was not about the passengers, I said, nor was it about the captain and his officers. It was about the engine room.

What I said there was true; but it was not the whole truth. The time was Sunday morning and the audience included a large number of LDS gathered from all over this part of the country. For their sakes (as well as my own) I hoped to duck responsibility for passing any adverse judgment on Joseph Smith, the prophet. In so doing I was a bit disingenuous. To continue the metaphor, I did not say that the captain was also the chief engineer, the principal person in that engine room. Nor did I say that a regiment of marines was on board, with him their colonel—and so on and on.

One thing more to say about that panel: Marvin Hill, a distinguished Brigham Young University historian, observed that the book was written entirely from public and published sources, and contained no private archival materials at all. He said that that was extraordinary, and he would have believed it could never have been done. I remember being surprised. How else would one write such a book, I wondered? My reaction was still characteristic RLDS thinking, even that many years later. In the 1960s, I too had believed the Mormon archives to be poisoned with untruths. When I finally learned that the exact opposite was the case, I was disturbed. What else of what I had always believed was equally untrue? The RLDS, I began to fear, had suffered a long night of self-deception.

My going among the Mormons in the post-Kingdom on the Mississippi years was key to my growing alienation from the RLDS Church of my forebears. Some have said, “Then why didn’t you join the Mormons?” I recall an occasion in the home of good Mormon friends in Orem, Utah. It was a Sunday evening, and I had been invited to speak to a gathering of high priests and wives. (I was somewhat startled by the refreshment served me: a tall glass of orange juice abundantly fortified with sugar.) The subject given me to talk about was the RLDS; what else? Afterward, a sister spoke to me most graciously, and said, “You seem to know so much about us. Why don’t you join us?” As kindly as I could, I said “Because I do not believe what you believe.” I did not add that, no matter my admiration for many of the Mormons I had come to know, there was much in the Mormon system, and in Mormon thought, that I found abhorrent.

In 1953 Sally and I married, and I entered graduate study at the University of Wisconsin, my alma mater. I was aware that doing so was, next only to the taking of a life companion in marriage, the crucial decision of my life. So it has proven to be. Though I will not take time to relate the story here, I will say that it resulted in part from one of the most dramatic spiritual experiences I have ever had.

History was my passion, and I wanted to make it my profession. I still wanted to serve the Church, so what better way than by contributing to its history? My master’s thesis was “The Mormons Who Did Not Go West: The Origins of the RLDS Church.” Church history hooked me. Perhaps because I knew so little about religion, I was drawn to the kingdom side of the Mormon story. Doubtless it was for that reason that Cheville saying “Utah began in Nauvoo” caught my attention. It was then that I read Leonard Arrington’s magisterial Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Mormons, 1850–1900. So that was “Utah!” Great Basin Kingdom began in earnest my inquiry about Nauvoo, though chronologically the two were reversed.

Back at the University of Wisconsin, I proposed two doctoral topics to my thesis professor Vernon Carstensen: a biography of Frederick Madison Smith, and Nauvoo. “No, no, no!” he said
to the first. "Biography is The Great Dismal Swamp of thesis writing. One never gets out alive!"
Then he said, "Nauvoo, eh? Now that could be a damned good story!" Carstensen was a historian
of agriculture who taught Western history. He knew about the Mormons in that context, and per-
haps it was he who put me onto Arrington. Carstensen insisted that at Wisconsin we didn't just
write dissertations, we wrote books. It was finally through his endorsement, and his friendship with
the historian Donald Jackson, then editor of the University of Illinois Press, that Kingdom on the
Mississippi was published so quickly.

My self-analysis is an academic analysis. An academic viewpoint is one that I hold; and it
probably distinguishes me somewhat from the kith and kin I hold dear. In recent years I have been
willing for the first time in decades to talk about religion in a family setting. Having now been a
member of a Protestant church for decades, I am better able to reflect on those conversations. They
have been only about religious experience, particularly miraculous healings and various spiritual
encounters. That's what my RLDS-cum Community of Christ kin want to talk about, at least to
me. They did not talk of worship, nor did they testify of the Christ, nor of the church in the world—
though they can surely do so. This sounds like criticism, but it is not intended to be such. It is only
to say that while their accounts demonstrated an intensity of feeling, the range of topics they ad-
dressed was limited, and were largely testimonial. Those conversations are, for me, reminders of
the religious culture in which I grew up.

In July 2000, I was visited by Lee Groberg, the Mormon filmmaker. Following his ambitious
documentary film on Joseph Smith the Mormon prophet, he was beginning work on a film about
Nauvoo. He had called to say he wanted to talk to me, and would fly into Springfield to do so. We
spent several hours together; and I must say it was perhaps the most stimulating conversation, and
certainly the most pleasant one, I have had on the subject of Nauvoo. Near the close of our conver-
sation—it was very late at night—I drew to a conclusion. "Nauvoo was a failure," I said. "Even by
Joseph Smith's own criteria, it was a failure." I had laid the groundwork for that statement; and I
thought I might dare say it. No matter. I never heard from him again, and it is probably just as well.
What an arrogant and naive fellow I was, to state so categorically that Nauvoo was a failure! For
Mormons, Nauvoo was, and remains, a triumph of mythic proportions. No better example than
Nauvoo could be found to illustrate to beginning graduate students in history how one's point of
view determines one's judgments about the historical record.

History is a civilizing and humanizing enterprise. I titled this paper "Nauvoo on My Mind."
So Nauvoo has been; and so it has continued to be. With Nauvoo, I began the long, often painful,
always exciting historical journey in my quest to one day, indeed, join the human race.
Christ Comes to Jackson County: 
The Mormon City of Zion and Its Consequences

Mario S. De Pillis

Jackson County, Missouri, was once the center of the universe—at least for a small and important group of people. For Mormons the story is a familiar one: according to Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, Jesus Christ would come again in the Last Days and would make his appearance in Independence, Missouri, which Smith, by revelation, had designated in July 1831 as the “city of Zion.” After designating “the land of Missouri . . . [as] the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion,” the revelation went on to set forth the basic land policy and the location of the temple: “Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the Center Place; and the spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse; wherefore, it is wisdom that the land should be purchased by the Saints; and also every tract lying westward, even unto the line running directly between Jew and Gentile.” (Doctrine and Covenants 57:1–7).

The Saints were to buy as much land as possible because it would become an “everlasting inheritance,” to be settled under the leadership of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The revelation commanded Sidney Gilbert, a business manager for the Church, to collect money and buy the land, while Bishop Edward Partridge, his colleague and superior, was to divide it up into individual inheritances. There was no time to lose because Christ would arrive at any hour, and his appearance would mark the violent beginning of a thousand years of peace. 

1 This article is an expansion of the fourth annual Sterling McMurrin Lecture delivered to the John Whitmer Historical Association, 24 September 2000. I am grateful to Lavina Fielding Anderson for reading the final version. I have used the word millennial rather than millenarian throughout this article because the difference between the two terms has never been clear, though the latter sounds better.

2 Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), Section 57:1–7. Hereafter cited in the text as Doctrine and Covenants by section and verse.

3 I follow Mormon historiographical convention in citing the official current Church edition of the collection of revelations known as the Doctrine and Covenants; but the official edition does not include all known revelations and does not always reproduce the original manuscript texts. Historians are indebted to Lyndon W. Cook, H. Michael Marquardt, Scott H. Faulring, and Dean C. Jessee for their editions of original Smith writings and revelations. See Cook, The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith: A Historical and Biographical Commentary of the Doctrine and Covenants (Provo: Seventy’s Mission Bookstore, 1981); Marquardt, The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999); Faulring, editor, An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989); and Jessee, editor, The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984). By the year 2005, the bicentennial of the birth of Joseph Smith, the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute at Brigham Young University will have completed a critical, scholarly edition of the papers of Joseph Smith.
Historians and theologians see entirely too much logic in the allegedly clear-cut distinction between pre-millennialism (Christ would come soon, instantly ushering in a worldwide reign of peace, at the end of which Satan would be loosed for "a little season") and post-millennialism (Christ had already come, as for example, in his female "appearing" in the body of Mother Ann Lee, founder of the Shakers); but this paper concurs with scholars as varied as Grant Underwood and Fawn Brodie, who have both classified the early Mormons as pre-millenialists.4

That is familiar Mormon millennial doctrine. In its biblical language and origins, it resembled the teachings of any number of American millennial prophets of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To the Americans of 1830 the times seemed out of joint, and powerful millennial currents were sweeping the land. Many historians have dealt with this phenomenon, but few have provided detailed answers to the questions. How did they understand the millennium? What was their picture of what it should be? In addition, how did their millennial beliefs and actions shape subsequent Mormon communal life?

Like millennialists through the ages, the early Mormons were seeking religious truth, religious authority, and in some form or another, social justice. In the midst of religious and social discontent and injustice, whether perceived or real, millennial prophets have always warned that the end was near and (in the Christian tradition) have usually promised divine retribution for evildoers. There was some social and economic alienation among the Mormons, but they do not fit the narrow garment of sociological "deprivation theory," which usually emphasizes social distress. The early Mormons were not an oppressed or economically deprived underclass5; nor can one argue that the late 1820s was a uniquely intense moment of social and religious anomie—though subjectively for the Mormons it was.6

Smith the prophet, thereby raising the study of Mormon history to unprecedented levels of professional and historical analysis.


5 See Mario S. De Pillis, "The Social Sources of Mormonism," Church History 37 (March 1968): 50–79.

6 American deprivation theory found early expression in the work of anthropologists and sociologists of the 1930s and 1940s like Bernard Barber, who applied it to "primitive tribes." Such tribes found messianic figures in their own culture like the prophetic figures of Tecumseh (Shawnee) and Teedyuscung (Delaware), for whom the future golden age meant physical and cultural survival, as opposed to Christian millennialists like Smith, for whom the Messiah was Jesus Christ, a heavenly figure. Smith formed his people; he did not inherit them. See Barber, "Acculturation and Messianic Movements," American Sociological Review 6 (October 1941): 663–668.

The vast literature of deprivation theory brings little to an explanation of the social consequences of early Mormon millennialism. As Eugen Weber remarked, "Most social historians link apocalypticism with political crisis, social changes or material distress. But this does not tell us much. Change, pain, distress and insecurity are part of every age; so are hope, confusion, and sim-
Like most Americans, the Mormons were pre-millennialists, that is, at some future time Christ would come again, destroy the wicked, and establish a new kingdom that would last for a thousand years. Like their neighbors in western New York, the early Mormons awaited the Second Coming with more fear and trepidation than hope and joy. The prophet expressed the anxiety most powerfully in a revelation of September 1830:

1. Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, the great I AM . . . .
8. And ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect, for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts;
9. Wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father, that they shall be gathered in unto one place, upon the face of this land, to prepare their hearts, and be prepared in all things, against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked;
10. For the hour is nigh, and the day soon at hand, when the earth is ripe;
11. And all the proud, and they that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and I will burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that wickedness shall not be upon the earth;
12. For the hour is nigh, and that which was spoken by mine apostles must be fulfilled; for as they spoke so shall it come to pass;
13. For I will reveal myself from heaven with power and great glory, with all the hosts thereof, and dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years, and the wicked shall not stand . . . .
15. For a trump shall sound both long and loud, even as upon mount Sinai, and all the earth shall quake, and they shall come forth;
16. Yea, even the dead which died in me, to receive a crown of righteousness, and to be clothed upon, even as I am, to be with me, that we may be one.
17. But behold, I say unto you, that before this great day shall come, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall be turned into blood, and the stars shall fall from heaven;
18. And there shall be greater signs in heaven above, and the earth beneath; and there shall be weeping and wailing among the hosts of men; 

The tone of warning and woe was typical of other early Mormon revelations. Where did safety lie? For early Mormons, the answer was clear. By August 1831, the prophet had chosen the precise location of Zion: the new frontier town (a few log cabins) of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. Only gradually did God reveal what the Mormons should build there and what kind of society they should create. Finally, in early 1833 the prophet answered those two questions in the form of the vision of the plat of the city of
Zion, which included detailed instructions for the location, construction, and governance of the New Jerusalem, the city of Zion. (See Figure 1.) On 25 June 1833, he sent this extraordinary document to “the brethren in Zion.” The document included a hand-sketched plat of the city of Zion, together with a few closely packed paragraphs containing detailed instructions for the location of temples, public buildings, houses, and outlying farms.

Figure 1. Courtesy of the Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Joseph’s vision would shape many aspects of Mormon life and institutions in ways that have rarely been acknowledged. It would influence all future Mormon settlements and the communitarian aspects of Mormon group life in the Great Basin. Its effects can be traced

---

8 The original manuscript of the plat may be seen in the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City, Utah. I quote from the holograph text (photocopy in my possession). These instructions have been printed in the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Period I.
in such significant aspects of Mormon society as missionary zeal, land acquisition, the
Gathering, the primacy of religious authority, economic equality (as an ideal), and marital
relations.

Smith's plan for Jackson County accorded with the tenor of the times. Millennial
movements were sweeping through Jacksonian America, a country in social and political
upheaval. It is worth recalling that millennialist responses to times of troubles have not
always brought peace and good fellowship. At chaotic moments in the Middle Ages and the
Reformation, and again the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (notably at Jonestown in
1978 and Waco in 1993), millennial fervor sometimes blasted idealistic hopes, incited vio-
lence, fomented religious prejudice, and even led to mass suicides. But millennial move-
ments can sometimes serve as instruments of social cohesion, using God's threat to end the
world as a way of creating a new social order. The zionism of the early Mormons engen-

History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet by Himself, edited by Brigham H. Roberts, second edition,
revised (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1951 printing), 1:357-362. Unfortunately, the text accom-
panying the plat as presented in the History, like many other passages in that work, suffers from the
erroneous "corrections" made by later Church officials. This "corrected" text is reproduced in Appen-
dix A of the otherwise best discussion of the plat, Steve L. Olson, The Mormon Ideology of
Place: the Cosmic Symbolism of the City of Zion, 1830-1846 (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of
Geography, University of Chicago, 1999), published in the series "Dissertations in Latter-day Saint
History" (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Studies, 2002). Reliable editions of the writings
of the prophet, like those of Lyndon W. Cook, Scott H. Faulring, Dean C. Jessee, and H. Michael
Marquardt cited above do not cover the texts, supposedly revealed by God, dealing with details for
building the city of Zion. There are two reasons for this. First it is not clear which passages are
sacred revelation and which are administrative advice and building guidelines. (History of the
Church, 1:357ff.) Further confusing matters is the statement of the prophet on the same date on
which the textual part of the plat was sent: "We have received some revelations some short time
back, which you will obtain in due season" (Ibid., 1:363). Second, the persecution in Jackson
County had already commenced in April, and by July—when the gospel plan of the plat arrived in
Zion—the mobs had destroyed the printing establishment and tarred and feathered Bishop Edward
Partridge. Amazingly, the standard survey of the United Order does not deal with the problems of
the text of the plat: Leonard J. Harrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, Building the City of
God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons (1976), second edition (Urbana: Univer-
sity of Illinois Press, 1992). A dissertation that places the plat in its communitarian historical con-
text is Mario S. De Pillis, "The Development of Mormon Communitarianism, 1826-1846" (Ph.D.
dissertation, Department of History, Yale University, 1961).

For an excellent short summary of the Jacksonian outburst see Ernest R. Sandeen, The Roots
of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1830 (Chicago: University of
Chicago Press, 1970), chapter 2. Sandeen suggests that because of the simultaneity of pre-
millennial movements in Great Britain and the United States, perhaps broader trans-Atlantic causes
were at work than local discontent in each country (page 58). This narrow Anglophone view of
Protestantism mars Sandeen's analysis.

Catherine Wessinger, How the Millennium Comes Violently (New York: Seven Bridges
Press, 2000). For the relation of violence to Mormonism, see Grant Underwood, "Millenialism,
Persecution, and Violence: The Mormons," in Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical
Cases (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000).
dered its share of violence and a great deal of internal conflict among leading Saints, but in the long run, many effects were positive. 11

The Beautiful City of Zion

In contrast to the pre-millennialism of non-Mormon Christians, the doctrines taught by the prophet were practical and specific. His concept of the city of the New Jerusalem introduced two startling, pragmatic differences.

First, he borrowed an idea from the Old Testament, namely, "the Gathering," and gave it a detailed and concrete purpose. By his September 1830 revelation and subsequent edicts, Smith commanded his followers to migrate from the east to the New Jerusalem in Independence, Missouri, or in Mormon language, to "gather" in the Center Place of Zion. Here he promised to establish a carefully planned city, a city worthy to receive Christ.

Second, the prophet located the New Jerusalem or the "city of Zion" not in Palestine, nor at Smith's place of residence, nor (as with some millennialists) at some vague, unspecified place; rather, Mormonism was unique in specifying a particular place: Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. Moreover, the Center Place—Independence—replicated the official American policy of westward expansion and endorsed the universal belief in the god-given right of Americans to expand into land occupied or governed by other peoples.

Significantly, the Mormon city of Zion lay at the westernmost edge of legal settlement, right next to the Indian Territory. Another millennial spot, Adam-ondi-Ahman lay not far away near Spring Hill, Daviess County. It was here, Smith revealed, that Adam and his family had their ancient home (Doctrine and Covenants 78:15; 116; 107:53–56). And it would be here, Mormons believed, that Christ would make a special final appearance before all of humankind, presided over by Father Adam. 12 In short, western Missouri was holy millennial ground to the early Mormons—and remains fraught with millennial expectations for Mormons today. In the late twentieth century, the LDS Church bought about thirty-five hundred acres of land in northern Missouri, including the once thriving Mormon town site of Adam-ondi-Ahman, which had been destroyed and abandoned in the late 1830s. While partial explanations for such a purchase might be ordinary investment purposes or, even

11 Very few titles in the recent and continuing flood of books and articles on millennialism have much to offer in historical insight. The late Stephen Jay Gould, looked on the millennium as a kind of latter-day numerist, noting the arbitrariness of zero-laden dates and ignoring the revolutionary nature of millennial movements; see Questioning the Millennium: A Rationalist's Guide to a Precisely Arbitrary Countdown (New York: Harmony Books, 1997). Eugen Weber comes closer to the significance of the millennial concepts, but tries, unsuccessfully, to illuminate two thousand years (and especially the last six centuries in Europe) of apocalyptic thoughts and actions, all in 240 pages: Apocalypses, Prophecies, Cults, and Millennial Beliefs through the Ages (1999). An extremely influential older work is Norman Cohn’s The Pursuit of the Millennium; Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages (1957); revised and expanded (London: Maurice Temple Smith, Ltd., 1970) exerted great influence on British historians of the left like Christopher Hill, E. P. Thompson, and Eric Hobsbawm. The best general work is Damian Thompson, The End of Time (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1996).

more specifically the LDS Church's manifest interest in preserving historic sites, contemporary Mormons would unquestionably point to the site's millennial significance instead.

Intertwined with the holy was the secular. As soon as the Indians were driven out of their "Indian Territory," Independence became a fabled "jumping-off place" for the westward movement. The holy and the secular thus came together in the 1830s. Like most Americans, the Mormons assumed that it was their "Manifest Destiny" to settle the rest of North America between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean. Instructions explaining and elaborating the plat envisioned scores of new cities of Zion to be laid out westward from Independence. This millennial plan was imperial in scope, a religious embodiment of Manifest Destiny; and it provided a positive rationale for going west, even though persecution from their neighbors provided the immediate and highly negative impetus for the Mormon movement westward. Thus did sacred revelation and secular desire come together in 1831.

This comparison with the process of westward expansion is no mere analogy; for Smith's revelation of the plat of the city of Zion clearly required orderly expansion along the lines of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. When the original city had filled up to its planned maximum of 15,000 to 20,000, the Saints would expand by laying out additional cities westward—into what was still Indian Territory! These cities were meant to hold the entire population of Mormons gathering from all parts of the world in the last days.

On 25 June 1833, possibly to discourage any invidious comparisons of the sizes of individual inheritances, Joseph sent to Missouri detailed instructions, revealed to him in a vision, for the building the millennial city of Zion. The holy, millennial plat of the city of Zion has suffered much from secular interpretation. Mormon historians and non-Mormon historians and sociologists have wrenched it out of its religious context, usually as an early example of "city planning." This common, ahistorical interpretation of the plat of the city of Zion as city planning misrepresents the plat as a secular activity rather than a spiritual one. Clearly, the plat left a social mark on Mormon towns and cities; but its significance for Joseph Smith and his contemporaries was as an assertion of quasi-communal millennial aspirations. The city's motivation and concept were heavenly, not earthly. The revelation of 7 March 1831 commanding the eastern Saints to gather to Missouri states: "[The city] shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the Saints of the Most High God; and the glory of the Lord shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it; and it shall be called Zion" (Doctrine and Covenants 45:66-67). The grandeur of the projected city of Enoch made his activities in Kirtland, Ohio, seem paltry and ephemeral by comparison. The plat constituted the blueprint for such a perfect

---

city, the city of Zion, the spot on which Jesus Christ would soon descend and the end of the world would begin.

The plat envisaged nothing less than the subdivision of the entire trans-Mississippi west into one stupendous checkerboard of cities centering in, and spreading out from, Independence, Missouri. (See Figure 2.)

![Diagram of the Cities of Zion](image)

**ARRANGEMENT OF THE CITIES OF ZION**

The easternmost city is the Center Place, or City of Zion, at Independence, Missouri. Additional cities of Zion modelled on the one at Independence are shown as small cross-hatched squares. Every city, including the City of Zion, is one mile square and is surrounded by farmlands and woodlots. Along the north and south sides of each city is a strip twelve perches wide and a mile long reserved for stables and other farm buildings. This strip is not shown in the above drawing.

**Figure 2.** Used courtesy of Mario S. De Pillis.

The fact that in 1833 most of the trans-Mississippi west belonged to the British, the Mexicans, and the Indians was irrelevant. Just before his death in 1844, Smith was quite blunt about the vastness of his vision, redefining the term "Zion" in the most grandiose
terms. In a short sermon of 8 April 1844, he announced to a large congregation in Nauvoo that he had just received "a great, grand, and glorious revelation . . . in relation to the economy of the Church"—namely, that "the whole America is Zion where the mountain of the Lord’s House shall be, about the central part of N[orth] and South America as soon as the Temple is finished."14 In 1847, Brigham Young was perfectly heedless of the fact that he was leading his people to settle on Mexican territory, and although the Mormons were kinder to the Indians than other settlers were, they were not above taking possession of Indian lands.

The basic plan of each of these myriad cities clearly reveals the communitarian soul of early Mormonism. The plat provided for a city with a maximum population of 15,000 to 20,000 people. Each city would cover an area of 640 acres, or one square mile—a unit that seemed perfectly logical, for under its secular name of “section,” one square mile formed the basic unit of the official federal square survey of all of the public domain west of Pennsylvania. When each square city was laid off and supplied, the Saints were to “lay off another in the same way, and so fill up the world in these last days; and let every man live in the city for this is the city of Zion.”15

On the north and south sides of each city a strip of land 20 perches (330 feet) wide and one mile long would provide ample space for farm buildings, “so that no barns or stables will be in the city among the houses.”16 The land extending north and south beyond the strips up to the next square city would be farmland sufficient “to supply the whole plot [city].”17 Presumably, this farmland would be partitioned into small inheritances averaging about thirty acres in size.18 If sufficient land could not be laid off in the north and south without going too far from the city, more farmland could be laid off on the east and west.

Because each city contained 968 households, with perhaps about 700 of them engaged in farming, the farm area between the cities would have to contain, according to divine revelation, about thirty-six sections. By another mathematical coincidence—and one not even noted until 196119—thirty-six sections amounts to exactly one square township, and

14 Faulring, An American Prophet’s Record, 468.
15 “Truth will Prevail,” Times and Seasons (February 4, 1845): 786.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 As Ron Romig, archivist of the Community of Christ (formerly known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), Independence, Missouri, notes, surviving documentation is quite fragmentary. Mobs descended and destroyed many documents just as the process was getting under way. It is hard to say exactly how consecration and inheritance worked in the context of land-ownership patterns in Jackson County.

Originals of most of the available manuscript resources may be found at the LDS Family and Church Historical Department, Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, and include: consecration and inheritance forms for Titus Billings, Stephen Chase, Benjamin Eames, George W. Pitkin, Levi Jackson, Joseph Knight, Sanford Porter, and James Lee. Other documents, such as David Pettigrew’s Journal (ms., LDS Family and Church Historical Department, Archives) provide additional details of inheritance arrangements. See Arrington, Fox, and May, Building the City of God, 372. Farmer Titus Billings got twenty-seven acres. Joseph Knight was a craftsman and received three acres. Letter of Romig to the author, 12 May 2003.

19 Since 1961, when I first analyzed the plat in terms of the federal square survey, only one Mormon work of scholarship has admitted a secular connection—but only indirectly by alluding, in
one square township is the next higher unit above the section in the official land system of the United States government.

When spread out across the blank face of the West, the many cities of Zion assume a pattern not unlike the secular plan of the federal government of the United States. The prophet’s millennial community was imperial in scale, as was the Great American West it so closely reflected.

The internal arrangements of each city were equally remarkable. The vision, as expressed in the plat, required that each city be subdivided into 968 half-acre lots. There was to be only one house to a lot. Each house had to be built of brick and stone and stand 25 feet back from the street, thus leaving a small yard in front, as the instructions stated, “to be planted in a grove, according to the taste of the builder; the rest of the lot for gardens, &c.”

The streets were very wide—8 perches (132 feet). The long narrow residential lots were oriented north and south on one side of the street and east and west on the other side. Thus, no one street would have houses on both sides entirely through the street, and none of the houses faced one another. This arrangement of single households resembled the plan of the Harmony Society community of Economy, which despite the celibate system continued to build individual houses—unlike the equally celibate Shakers who built large dormitories. The Mormon system permitted a traditional, non-celibate, nuclear family to own a small piece of property equal in size to that of every neighbor.

Although the Mormons never built their New Jerusalem on the basis of the plat of the city of Zion, with its broad streets, generous gardens, brick houses, and centrally located temples, they never forgot it. Despite ceaseless persecution in Missouri, they almost succeeded in building cities based on the plat in Far West (1838). The brick houses and wide streets of Nauvoo (1839–1844) reflected the plat, which became a rough, secularized model for Mormon town building in the Great Basin.

The plat’s scale was prodigious. Joseph envisaged not a neat little Shaker village, but a millennial system of thousands of self-sufficient cities stretching from Jackson County to the Pacific Ocean. In short, Joseph Smith, sitting in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1833, invented Utah. This twenty-eight-year-old farm youth-cum-ecclesiastic could think and act globally. One standard Mormon study even speaks of Smith consciously pursuing “power in earthly political realms as a preliminary to eventual world domination.” His legacy is the surprising global outlook of the LDS Church and its mighty missionary effort. The globalism came in

---

21 For more detailed discussion and illustrations, see my “The Development of Mormon Communitarianism.”
22 Arrington, et al., *Building the City of God*, 5.
part from the imperial scope of the multiitudinous cities of Zion and in part from the perfer-
vivid preaching of the end of the world in the early 1830s.

Using the plans and ideas of the prophet, the Mormons would surely have built a beau-
tiful city in Jackson County; but ironically, the plat came too late. The anti-Mormons of
Missouri were already preparing to drive the Saints out of Jackson County. In a second
irony, the prophet continued to live in Ohio until he was forced out by death threats in Janu-
ary 1838. If Christ's arrival were imminent, why did he not join the Saints in Zion? I have
no answer to that question.

Although non-Mormon settlers were becoming increasingly hostile in 1831/1832, the
Mormons began to distribute "inheritances," mostly of land, to rich and poor alike. One of
the first permanent brick structures in Jackson County was the Mormon printing establish-
ment (1831-1833), and it was one of the first buildings destroyed by anti-Mormon mobs.

Thus, it was that one of the great sagas of American history had begun in October of
1830, when the prophet sent four leading Saints to the Independence area to preach to the
Indians. The emissaries of the gospel made no converts but did scout out the land. Exactly
three years later, in October 1833, when the Missourians made their first concerted and
successful attempt to expel the Mormons by bullets, arson, whippings, and rape, Mormon
millennial fervor was at its peak. Most historians and sociologists of religion would agree
that the fear and despair of beleaguered millennial groups intensifies their faith in the immi-
grant return of Christ and the destruction of their enemies. The persecution of the Mormons
has its own dark history, but it is worth noting that the first great wave of violence began in
the land of Zion at a moment of intense apocalyptic expectation.

By the fall of 1833, the Saints had fled from Jackson County. Religious prejudice, eco-
nomic jealousy, and political fears drove the non-Mormon settlers to increasing violence
culminating, at least symbolically, in the tarring and feathering of Bishop Edward Partridge,
whose duties had included distributing the egalitarian "inheritances" that constituted the
communal economic foundations. In choosing as their symbolic victim the mild-mannered
Partridge, the millennial distributor of lands, the anti-Mormons understood exactly the
communitarian essence of Zion.

Theological Implications and Social Consequences

In the middle of this three-year existence of the Mormon Zion in Jackson County, W.
W. Phelps began editing the first Mormon newspaper, the Evening and Morning Star. Pro-
claiming itself the journal of "these last days," the Star was the earliest and most revealing
public voice of Mormon millennial faith. The first sentence on the first page of the prospec-
tus read as follows: "As the forerunner of the night of the end and the messenger of the day
of redemption the Star will borrow its light from sacred sources, and be devoted to the reve-
lations of God as made known to his servants by the holy Ghost, at sundry times since the
creation of man, but more especially in these last days, for the restoration of the house of
Israel."

Phelps went on to point out that God's chosen people, the Jews, were, for their sins,
carried away captive into all countries, but that their prophets foretold the gathering of Is-

---

23 The prospectus for the Star, issued in February 1832 and signed by Phelps, is described and
dramatically summarized in the History of the Church, 1:259. It was reprinted in the Times and Seas-
sons 5 (1844): 609-611. The first issue of the Star came out in June 1832.
rael "from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea"—and also, as it turns out a few sentences later, from Kirtland, Ohio. Instantly Kirtland became Cush, and New York state is suddenly equated with Shinar, and without taking a breath for transition Phelps presents Joseph Smith as the successor to the prophets of the Old Testament. For Phelps, of course, the explanation lay in the publication of the Book of Mormon, which is "the fulness of the gospel to the Gentiles, according to the promises of old. As a result, we know that the blessing of Joseph is near at hand." Joseph Smith, wrote Phelps, is the firstling of his bullock and with his horns he

shall push the people together from the ends of the earth to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion: for in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees... of wines on the lees well refined.

... and the gathering of the house of Israel hath commenced upon the land of Zion; and that the church which is called the church of Christ, is an ensign to all nations, that the children of God are returning from their long dispersion, to possess the land of their inheritance, and reign with Christ a thousand years, while satan is bound.

I have quoted from the *Evening and Morning Star* and its prospectus because they set forth the tenets of early Mormonism—except perhaps the delicious wines on the lees.24

The first and most fundamental of all Mormon teachings is that the prophet of the Lord will bring authoritative truth: for "there can be but one [doctrines]," writes Phelps, and this truth will put an end to all corruption in the world, including the war of "sect against sect." In short, the Last Days will bring forth the truth.

Second, Joseph Smith, the prophet of God and the firstling of his bullock, has made it clearly known that the millennial kingdom has a location and a name. It is in Jackson County, and it is called "Zion."

Third, the millennium is imminent, and "the earth shall be transfigured, and return to the same beauty and goodness, as at the morn of creation, when the righteous shall rise, and flow together, to inherit the earth." That the Mormons would inherit the earth did not, of course, come as glad tidings to the ears of their Presbyterian and Baptist neighbors. But the Mormons were confident that in the Last Days they would indeed possess the earth—beginning with Missouri. They believed that a just, communal society worthy of the returning Messiah would blossom in Jackson County.

Fourth, the *Star* clearly articulated the doctrine of the Gathering of the Saints to Zion—although the Gathering had commenced a year before the appearance of the *Star*. Phelps’s prediction turned out to be true. The immense power of the bullock in pushing people from the ends of the earth to Mount Zion had begun to fill Jackson County with zealous Mormon converts, and if the Missourians had not attacked the settlement, its sixty-four-plus acres of rich prairie soil would certainly have nurtured the largest city of Missouri, welcoming, as did Nauvoo, hundreds of British, Scandinavian, and Eastern converts.

The command to gather to Zion remained one of the most powerful social engines of Mormonism. Until the Church abandoned it in the 1890s, the Gathering had energized

---

24 It wasn’t until a year later, on 27 February 1833, that the prophet issued the revelation outlawing wine and tobacco in Doctrine and Covenants 89. "The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ," is the first article on the first page of the first volume of the *Star*. Apparently written by Phelps, it summarizes the "rise of the Church of Christ in these last days," visions of the "first elder" Joseph Smith, and the rules of the Church.
Mormon land acquisition and settlement and brought much needed labor and capital to the Jackson County Zion and later to Nauvoo and the whole Great Basin. The early Church very creatively shifted the goal of the Gathering from the millennial Center Place of Jackson County to Nauvoo (1839–1845) and then to Utah (1847–1913). The goal of the Gathering changed from a targeted place—Jackson County—to any place that held a concentration of Mormons, ending up in Utah. As the pragmatic Brigham Young bluntly put it in 1860: “Where is Zion? Where the organization of the Church of God is.”

In Utah, Young played down Zion as a place, because the place had been lost in 1833. Joseph registered that loss, transmuting it into precious coin for the realm of the Saints: “the pure in heart.” On 2 August of that year Smith, having just received news of the fall of the real Zion, issued a revelation applying this spiritual metaphor for the first time: “Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn” (Doctrine and Covenants 97:21). Since that time all Latter-day Saints, including Young, have treasured the concept of an internalized Zion. Young said in the final sentence of a sermon on the “Funds of the Church” that he hoped that Zion would “dwell spiritually in every heart. Amen.”

As a pragmatic leader, Young had no choice but to play down the old Center Place in Jackson County. As noted above, Joseph Smith himself had begun the process of continually redefining “Zion.” Showing a better understanding of Smith’s intentions than later historians, Young adopted the prophet’s imperial view of Zion: “And what is Zion? In one sense Zion is the pure in heart. But is there a land that ever will be called Zion? Yes, brethren. What land is it? It is the land that the Lord gave to Jacob, who bequeathed it to his son Joseph, and his posterity, and they inhabit it, and that land is North and South America. That is Zion as to land, as to Territory, and location.”

25 For a citation of Utah as a temporary Zion see “Faithfulness and Apostasy, A Discourse by President Brigham Young, Delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, April 6, 1855,” Journal of Discourses 2:253: “When our Elders go out to preach the Gospel, they tell the people to gather to Zion. Where is it? It is at the City of the Great Salt Lake in the Valleys of the Mountains, in the settlements of Utah Territory—there is Zion now.”

26 Journal of Discourses 26 volumes (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–1886), 8:205. Hereinafter cited as JD. Young asked this question repeatedly in his discourses. Here is another example: “The Latter-day Saints gather together for the express purpose, they say, to establish Zion. Where is Zion? On the American continent. Where is the gathering place? For the present, in the mountains. What are you going there for? To help to build up Zion.” “Building Up Zion—Temperance in Eating and Drinking,” Discourse By President Brigham Young, Delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, 14 November 14 1869, Reported by John Grimshaw, JD 13:150.

27 Caps in original. On 23 July 1833, the Missourians forced the Mormons to sign an agreement to leave Jackson County.

28 “Funds of the Church,” Remarks by President Brigham Young, made in the Bowery, Salt Lake City, October 8, 1860, JD 8:205.

But there can be no doubt whatsoever about his actual religious belief. In his fervent millennialist heart he wanted to go back and meet Christ in the real Zion—Jackson County—for the last sentence of the will reads: "If I should live to go back with the Church to Jackson County, I wish to be buried there." He was not alone in his hunger for Zion. In the 1860s, other leaders also wished to return to the real Zion. Place and architecture, whether St. Peter's in Rome or the Muslim K'aaba in Mecca, have always contributed to the self-definition of religions traditions, new or old. Zion was similar to polygamy as a touchstone for the Mormon sense of peoplehood.

It took the Church leadership more than twenty years from 1891 to 1913 to bring the Gathering to a halt. By the time it ended, the Gathering had pushed tens of thousands of Easterners, as well as British and Scandinavian immigrants to Illinois and Utah. Despite the exodus of converts from northern Europe, that area (including Britain) has remained a bastion of European Mormonism (though conversion rates have remained essentially flat since the 1960s). Thus, the social consequences of Mormon millennialism, though often indirect, were enormous, shaping not just the ethnic makeup of the North American Church, but many social and economic patterns in the Intermountain West.

It was the Evening and Morning Star that expressed the most fundamental millennialist trait: zeal. Early Mormon zeal inspired the legendary Mormon missionary system. In the words of the prospectus: "Will God neglect to blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in his holy mountain; or refuse to pour out his Spirit upon all flesh what will serve him in truth. . . . No. . . . Therefore, in the fear of him, and to spread the truth among all nations, that a wicked world may know that Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, who shall come to Zion, will soon appear unto them who look for him."

Of several recent books on millennialism only one has noted the intimate connection between millennial faith and missionary work. The connection is logical: if the world is coming to an end, you must blow the trumpet in Zion "loud and long" and warn the world about it. The scriptures buttressed the historical logic of millennial missionizing, "And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14 NRSV). To this day groups like the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, and the Mormons continue to support a

---

30 See Young’s will as reprinted in Leonard J. Arrington, Brigham Young: American Moses (New York: Knopf, 1985), 400. The dualism about Zion, heart versus place, is quite clear here: "Where is the centre Stake of Zion? In Jackson County, Missouri. Were I to try to prevent you from going there, I could not do it. Can the wicked? No. Can the devils in hell? No, they cannot. Zion will be redeemed and built up, and the Saints will rejoice. This is the land of Zion; and who are Zion? The pure in heart are Zion; they have Zion within them. Purify yourselves, sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and have the Zion of God within you, and then you will rejoice more and more.” “Persecution—The Kingdom of God, &C,” Remarks by President Brigham Young, made in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, October 7, 1860, JD 8:196.

31 Erickson, 171.


33 Damian Thompson, The End of Time, 152.
zealous missionary programs that go back to their pre-millennialist beginnings, but of the three, only the Latter-day Saints have given up the fervor of their millennial springtime.

**Property, Sex, and Equality in the Last Days**

For centuries, millennialists and moralists of every stripe have tried to devise ways of controlling property and sex. The Mormons were no exception. In addition to Mormon millennialism's effects on missionary zeal, land acquisition, the Gathering, and the premise of religious authority, early Mormon millennial group life also expended much energy in the quest to regulate and sanctify these two sources of perennial human contention.

It is clear that Mormon millennialism shaped not only the doctrine, but also the social relations of the Mormon people. Young men (and increasingly since the 1920s young women) become missionaries for near-obligatory stints, now standardized at two years for men, eighteen months for women. Nowadays they spend little time preaching the end of the world—the mission goal assigned by W. W. Phelps back in 1831—but they do baptize many converts and, perhaps just as important, strengthen their own faith. The missionary experience has become a central Mormon social institution, cementing group loyalty. For decades afterward, former missionaries perpetuate the excitement of their missions at annual reunions organized according to their old mission boundaries.

Another doctrine of Zion, acquiring land for inheritances, became a Mormon habit for generations after the deaths of Gilbert and Partridge and the loss of Jackson County, but now in capitalist guise. Divested now of its original egalitarian millennial ideal, Church-sponsored land acquisition has persisted into the urbanized twenty-first century, but has now become a capitalist agricultural instrument of the Church. The pattern of agricultural enterprise has been changing since the 1980s, when, for example, the Church began divesting itself of most of its vast sugar beet, wheat, corn, and livestock farms in the Great Basin, and even of Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution, which left church control in the winter of 1999–2000. However, the Church still owns other lands, most notably the largest cattle ranch in Florida and large holdings in Hawaii. These agricultural enterprises are an outgrowth of the "Big Farms," which, by 1838, had taken the place of inheritances when the Saints fled from Jackson County to Caldwell and Clay Counties. They are associated with the Church Welfare system—the millennial "Enochian" program still administered by the Presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—the lineal bureaucratic descendant of Edward Partridge, the first Presiding Bishop of the Church. 34

---

34 The Church is extremely reluctant to release specific information about its economic holdings, since that is a traditional topic for muckraking. Nevertheless, diligent reporters have tried to provide data, for example, Robert Gottlieb and Peter Wiley, *America’s Saints: The Rise of Mormon Power* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1984), 55, 99–101, 105, et passim. Gottlieb and Wiley are more interested in financial, political, and corporate machinations than in documenting Church land holdings and manufacturing plants. A year later Anson Shupe and John Heinerman, published *The Mormon Corporate Empire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), which is chockablock with data on holdings: banking, insurance, mass media, farming, real estate, retail merchandising, and manufacturing.

Two books that are to some extent Church-friendly responses are Garth L. Mangum and Bruce D. Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty: A History of LDS Welfare, 1830–1990*, Publications in Mormon Studies, edited by Linda King Newell, volume 8 (Salt Lake City: University of
Millennialist prophets always tried to control greed for property by shaping communal and anti-capitalist institutions, in one form or another. Usually tying their pre-millennial societies to a restoration of primitive Christianity, they found scriptural support for holding "all things common" in Acts 2 and 4. The Mormons rejected the literal Christian communism of the Shakers as early as 1830 in Kirtland. In its stead, the prophet proposed "a more perfect law," a new economic system called the United Order of Enoch. Since about the 1950s, Mormon historians have preferred a less communitarian name: the "Law of Consecration and Stewardship."

The prophet announced the United Order in a revelation given in Kirtland on 9 February 1832 (Doctrine and Covenants 42). It commanded the Saints to go west to the New Jerusalem, where they had been promised they would receive the "land of your inheritance and for the inheritance of your children forever, while the earth shall stand, and ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:20).35

The Saints coming from the east would receive a small inheritance of land in exchange for giving up their money and valuable moveable property to the church, represented by Partridge. Annually, Partridge would examine the economic stewardship of each landholder and take whatever surplus his household did not need. In this charged atmosphere, Joseph Smith issued a series of revelations that would establish economic and social equality.

The principal revelation establishing the Order of Enoch echoes European secular socialism at the time, the notions of Cabet, Fourier, Marx, and Engels, as well as the passionate egalitarianism of the post-Revolutionary generation of Americans: From each according to his ability, to each according to his need. Or in the words of one revelation: "every man who has need may be amply supplied and receive according to his wants" (Doctrine and Covenants 42:33). During the millennial fervor of 1830 to 1834, the first Mormons believed that they could make any sacrifice for salvation, even giving up their own farms to the church. Marx hoped for the destruction of classes; Joseph Smith looked upward toward heaven, saying, from Ohio in March 1832: "For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things" (Doctrine and Covenants 78:6).
The second great temporal concern of prophets of the world’s end was the regulation of sexual activity and family structure. The norm then, as now, was chastity before marriage and monogamy in marriage. Compared with the wild experiments without benefit of religion of the late twentieth century, the prophets’ departures from the norm were relatively tame and even traditional. They also came up with only three variations on orthodox sexual relations, a meager number of choices, no doubt, for modern Americans inured to such radical experiments as open marriage, group sex, sado-masochism, bestiality, four-marriage, and the like.36

First, of course, there was polygamy, most notably that of the Mormons. Second, millennialists turned to various forms of free love, with the Oneida Community achieving the only lasting success; and third came celibacy, as exemplified by the Harmony Society and post-millennialist Shakers, who expected the whole world to “take up the cross” of celibacy. The Shakers bore their cross with admirable self-control, but the world chose to not follow them.

The millennialists were almost invariably communally minded, and they realized that individualistic forms of sexual behavior would destroy group solidarity. In his 1843 revelation introducing polygamy, the prophet issued a stark warning that new family structures threatened communal order and solidarity. Because, the revelation reads, all previous “covenants, oaths, vows, performances, connections, or expectations” were essentially dead, plural marriage could tear Mormon society apart. Not even Joseph’s wife, Emma, was safe: “For I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law” (Doctrine and Covenants 132:54). Joseph realized that the abrogation of previous covenants and vows could (and did) bring contention, disorder, even hatred. So the next verse insisted: “Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion” (Doctrine and Covenants 132:7–8).

There is not a single word in this “polygamy revelation” of 1843 about the Last Days. Pre-millennial doctrine could justify plural marriage, and plural marriage promised the special glory called “exaltation” in the afterlife. But the revelation did not resort to that justification. Surprisingly, it relied on a labored exegesis of Old Testament polygamy, majestically applying to the Mormons God’s promise to Abraham that his “seed” would be “as innumerable as the stars” (Doctrine and Covenants 132:30).

While pre-millennialism played no role in 1843, it must be remembered that the prophet may have already secretly entered the new order of marriage in 1835 with Fanny Alger, the first of about thirty plural wives.37 This was a moment when millennial fervor still ruled Mormon society.38 Alas, by 1843, a rationalizing doctrine and a spirit of here-

---

36 An indispensable comparative study of new sexual institutions of the three most important American communal groups of the early nineteenth century is Lawrence Foster, Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

37 There is an on-going debate of exactly how many plural wives there were—a question of considerable concern to members and ex-members of the Church.

38 Grant Underwood, “More Than an Index: The First Reference Guide to the Doctrine and Covenants as a Window into Early Mormonism,” BYU Studies 41 (2002): 125–126, finds that one of the most referenced themes, the last days, “plainly shows . . . the millenarian character of early Mormonism.”
and now had begun to take over, along with an extraordinary flowering of new teachings about the afterlife. The weakening role of the Last Days in the Mormon psyche was gradual. Between 3 August 1831, when the prophet laid the cornerstone of the temple at the center of the world and 27 June 1844, when he was assassinated, the Saints had lost much of their communitarian zeal: the inheritances of Independence became, in Nauvoo, house lots for sale at market prices.

As with the Shakers and Oneidas, as with Amana and the Harmony Society, so also with the Mormons: new property regulations came first and new sexual practices later. The abstract belief in the coming of the unseen Messiah led to two extremely concrete, human dreams of happiness, property in land and sexuality in community—not permanently and not with universal happiness, but in that early dawn of millennial fervor, the acquisition of property and the alteration of marital practices could and did succeed. It is a testament to malleability of human society.

Christ did not appear in Jackson County in 1831, and no angels were seen blowing trumpets in the skies above Independence. If the spirit of Christ inhabits Independence today, it is not there to destroy the wicked people of Missouri and the rest of the world. Sociological theorists have written reams about what happens when “when prophecy fails.” The answer is, “nothing much.” If a millennial sect has any decent institutional structure and able leadership, as did the Adventists, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the Mormons, then it will survive and even flourish. A brilliant leader, the prophet Joseph Smith nimbly avoided the Millerite mistake of predicting the exact date of the Second Coming, with one exception. On 6 April 1843, on the first day of the General Conference of the church, he stated that Christ would not come until he, Joseph Smith, was eighty-five years old, i.e., 1890. The following excerpt from his sermon shows how far the Saints’ sense of millennial urgency had receded in the thirteen years since the founding of Zion:

There are those of the rising generation who shall not taste death till Christ comes. I was once praying earnestly upon this subject [on Christmas Day, 1832] and a voice said unto me, “My son, if thou livest till thou art 85 years of age, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man.” I was left to draw my own conclusions concerning this and I took the liberty to conclude that if I did live till that time Jesus would make his appearance but I do not say whether he will make his appearance or I shall go where he is. I prophecy in the name of the Lord God, and let it be written, that the Son of Man will not come in the heavens till I am 85 years old, 48 years hence or about 1890.

Certainly the crowd listening to this sermon could not work up much trepidation about such a far-off event.

The prophet went on to discuss theories about the date of the apocalypse and noted that the Son of Man could not come until Judah returned, Jerusalem had been rebuilt (including the temple), the waters of the Dead Sea made sweet, and many “judgments” made manifest.

---


40 History of the Church, 5:336. I follow the text in Faulring, An American Prophet’s Record, 349, 340, which notes that “Jesus” in the original record became “He” in the History of the Church. For a shorter, earlier version of the same prediction of the prophet see Faulring, 340.
He expressed impatience at the “wondrous wise men... going about and braying like [an ass] crying O Lord, where is Joe Smith, Joe Smith?” As for William Miller, a “false prophet” who had predicted the end of the world only three days earlier, the prophet’s short journal entry merely notes that it was “Miller’s day of judgment.” In short, the Mormons never had to rationalize a Millerite “Great Disappointment.”

Millenialists and Violence

More interesting than the socio-political elements of Mormon success are the subsequent beliefs and practices of the Mormon people after their expulsion from Missouri in 1838–1839. What happened as the over-excited Latter Days gave way to quotidian Every-Days? What, in the millennialist turmoil of these years, helped define the subsequent social history of Mormonism up to this day? Was Zion a mere flash of gold in the pan of Jacksonian expectations? Nor must we overlook the larger social question: Why, unlike so many other millennial groups, did the Mormons manage to avoid violence against their enemies in New York, Ohio, and even in Missouri between 1831 and 1834? In general, millennial violence in history is a depressing tale of bloodshed, betrayed faith, and civil breakdown. Since the Middle Ages, governmental authorities have come down hard on millenialists. The great symbolic figure for northern European historians is the Anabaptist leader Thomas Müntzer (1489–1425), an advocate of quasi-communism who aimed to rid the world of all church and civil leaders. For their part, the targeted leaders lost no time in putting Müntzer to death and driving off his followers.

Münzer’s Dutch disciple, John of Leiden (c. 1509–1536), together with his new mentor, Johann Matthiesen (or Matthys), led a successful insurrection in the German city of Münster in 1534. Matthiesen established a theocratic “kingdom of Zion” based on communism, his own absolute dictatorship, and the torture or summary execution of “the godless.” When Matthys was killed in a sortie outside of town, John took over, introduced polygamy and a more thoroughgoing communism (which he did not apply to himself and his fifteen wives). In 1535 the prince-bishop who ruled over that part of Westphalia recaptured his town and had John and two associated leaders publicly tortured to death with red-hot irons and their bodies suspended from tower of the Lamberti church (St. Lambert’s) in the center of town. Historian Eugen Weber, who experienced the bombed-out Germany of 1945, as I did, writes movingly of seeing the three iron cages holding the remains of Anabaptists executed and left to rot four centuries before. The church had survived the bombing of its surrounding buildings, and the cages were still hanging in the tower. And thus it was that two versions of the thousand-year Reich, one proclaimed by the Anabaptists in the 1530s and the other by the Nazis 1930s, both ended their short lives in fire and death.

Thomas, John, Johann, and their English counterparts are hallmarks of our standard English-speaking, Protestant, liberal historiography. That historiography grossly distorts history, because radical millennialism goes back to at least the early eleventh century and

Footnotes:
41Faulring, An American Prophet’s Record, 350 (6 April 1843). The editors of the History of the Church, 5:337 excised this sentence and others, leaving an incomplete sense of the prophet’s state of mind on this subject in 1843.
42History of the Church, 5:324, 326; Faulring, An American Prophet’s Record, 340, 349.
43Weber, Apocalypses, 27.
forward to the latest murderous events in Uganda. Not only does that older historiographic

cal tradition make a cartoon of the history of Christianity, but it is also very selective.

Whose violence is better, that of the millennialists or that of the authorities? That of the
Reformation radicals like John of Leiden or that of modern radicals like David Koresh?

In the early years, the Mormons acted with surprising restraint against their tormenters. 
Even the prophet’s march west in a supposedly aggressive group called “Zion’s Camp” was 
an act more of fear than retribution. Joseph Smith does not fit the profile of European mil-

enialists, even though he, too, anticipated the Second Coming, introduced new economic 
and marital institutions, was imprisoned in the dark dungeon of Liberty Jail, and he, too, 
was killed, supposedly by a mob, but in reality with the secret collusion and moral approba-
tion of civil authorities. But Smith is not a liberal hero like the Müntzers and Leidens. His 
millennial society was almost as innocent and peaceful as that of the Harmony Society, 
Shakers, and Oneidas. The violence associated with Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, was 
the unexpected consequence of the Latter-day Saint delusion that they could establish a 
kingsdom of Zion in the same political and agrarian space as the non-Mormon settlers on the 
frontier. Their neighbors came mostly from the pugnacious culture of the Upper South and 
rivaled the Mormons in their hunger for land. A conflict with the predominantly New Eng-
land Mormons was inevitable. Non-Mormon resentment led directly to violence and incited 
the otherwise peaceful Mormons to retaliate with the Danites and the army of Zion.

There is no simple conflict between good and evil, as Catherine Wessinger’s notes in 
h her widely praised study of violent millennial groups. For millennialist violence to occur, 
she argues, the encounter between sects and “outside” society must be interactive. If civil 
authorities have theologically informed, kindly responses, an atmosphere for violence cannot 

not flourish. This premise is a preposterous one, applied to the murderous authorities of 
Missouri and Illinois in the 1830s. Wessinger tends toward the liberal view that mass mur-

der, mass suicide, and other forms of violence among the millennialists is an understandable 
reaction to perceived threats from the “outside” world and amenable to rational dialogue. 
This, it seems to me, improves only slightly on the old good versus evil explanations, but it 
is understandable because she was writing in the shadow of the federal government’s mis-

handling of the standoff in Waco, Texas, in 1993.

A similar simplistic dichotomy prevails among conservatives. Violent millennialists 
are evil cults to be exterminated, while mainline society is an absolute good that must be 

preserved at all costs. Right-wing Christians, who define themselves as cult experts and

44In short, Wessinger, How the Millennium Comes Violently, 57, believes that, while the heav-
ily armed Branch Davidians killed four federal agents and wounded twenty others, it was the fed-
eral agents and the federal courts who committed most of the violence in Waco, because they did not understand that the Branch Davidians could cooperate with government agents only on the basis of their own understanding of God’s word. See also Chapter 2 and the Foreword by Jayne Seminare Docherty, xi.

A less theory-laden summary of recent millennial violence, though also sociological, is Philip 

Lamy, Millennium Rage: Survivalists, White Supremacists, and the Doomsday Prophecy (New 

York: Plenum Press, 1996). For the most historically oriented and balanced accounts, see the works 
of Michael Barkun, particularly Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity 

deprogrammers, have almost demonized the word “cult.”\textsuperscript{45} The conservative view that prevailed in Waco cost the lives of seventy-four Branch Davidians, almost two centuries after nineteenth-century civil authorities manifested the same will to exterminate a radical sect like the Mormons. Contemporary historians and sociologists of social policy and “conflict resolution” probably overestimate the ability of civil authorities to prevent millennial violence. Certainly, government action or inaction could hardly have prevented Aum Shinrikyo from gassing the Tokyo subways (1995), the violent takeover of local government by the Montana Freemen (1994); nor the Freemen attacks by their allies on mixed-race couples, Jews, homosexuals, abortionists, and law-enforcement agents; nor the ritual murders of the Solar Temple, (1994, 1995, 1997) nor the mass suicide of 918 members of the Jones-town and their murder of five investigators (1978). Many of these groups had a deadly internal dynamic that was totally absent in the Mormon Zion. Moreover, the most important religious millennial movements of nineteenth-century America (the Shakers, Harmony society, Oneida Perfectionists, Millerites) were nonviolent.

Violence perpetrated by Mormons erupted in the Danite raids (1838) and Mountain Meadows (1857), but neither was directly connected with the doctrine and practice of Zion. Those episodes had more to do with what historian Robert Flanders sees as aggressive “paranationalism” combined with a feeling of separateness and defensiveness.\textsuperscript{46} Persecution of the Mormons had two general effects. First, it strengthened the Mormons as a group and even strengthened the status of their prophet. Second, it provoked Joseph Smith’s political megalomania, his presidential candidacy, and the creation of the Nauvoo Legion. The Mormons did not initiate hostilities—in fact, compared to the general picture of frontier violence, Mormon aggression was relatively mild—but their paranoid attitudes, however justified, did not promote local peace.

Missouri’s Governor Lilburn Boggs, who issued an “extermination order” against the Mormons in 1838, would have rejected mediation and conflict resolution as resolutely as the FBI 155 years later. His order made violence against the Mormons an official government policy and no one said “Nay.”\textsuperscript{47}

The Twenty-first Century and Beyond

Have the Latter-day Saints retained a strong millennial faith? Certainly not since the 1890s. There were millennial echoes in the famous moral revivals of the 1850s and in the sporadic expressions of various general authorities, but consciousness of the latter days faded with the abandonment of the doctrine of the gathering. By the 1890s, it had become a rhetorical device. B. H. Robert’s sermon on “The Testimony of Wrath” (1893) contains hardly any wrath—just exhortations to do missionary work and temple work in the last

\textsuperscript{45}The acceptable scholarly term for most of the last decade has been New Religious Movements (NRMs).


\textsuperscript{47}See James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, \textit{The Story of the Latter-day Saints} (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company/Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1976), chapters 3–4.
The last days was becoming a rhetorical device, much as Zion came to mean a pious feeling of the "pure in heart," (Doctrine and Covenants 97:21)—discussed above.49

A lingering influence of the concept of Zion on modern Mormonism has the church’s vast and profitable possessions in publishing and real estate. They are direct descendants of the United Order of Enoch, providing land and capital needed to support scores of new temples, radio and television stations, agricultural enterprises, and an expanding church welfare program that now serves the needy of the world as well as the poor among the Saints. The fact that today’s prominent Mormons like the Marriotts, Romneys, and Ashtons are super capitalists does not counter their economic roots in the early millennial, egalitarian United Order.

Another lingering influence of Zion on Mormonism may be seen in the continuing emphasis on education. As part of the need in the latter days to preach truth and light to the entire world, both the Evening and Morning Star and the Doctrine and Covenants emphasized education. In June 1832, the Evening and Morning Star warned British Saints that, because of the imminent descent of Christ, schools were desperately needed to bring up the children “in the way of holiness,” for they must not only learn how to perform worldly tasks, but also to prepare “the second coming of the Savior . . . for the Sabbath of creation.”50 Joseph Smith’s 1833 aphorism, “The glory of God is intelligence” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:36), is the motto of the church’s flagship Brigham Young University with its two satellite campuses, one in Idaho and one in Hawaii. The prophet further defined intelligence, as “light and truth” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:36), ironically the motto of Yale University.

For early Mormons it meant primarily education in millennial doctrine and personal holiness. As the Saints accommodated to the secular world, intelligence came to mean the cultivation of mind. In consequence, the church’s educational achievements on the Utah frontier were extraordinary, and Mormons have one of the highest rates of educational achievement in the country. One can trace a line between the prophet’s statement and the fact that Mormon women have the highest number of Ph.D.’s of any group except Jews.51 I assure you this result is not because Mormonism is a matriarchal, feminist religion.

Yet another lingering influence of Zion is tithing, a direct substitution in 1838 of the United Order’s law of consecration and stewardship. Tithing remains strong in the face of the contemporary American mania for consuming. It has become a test of loyalty and marks Mormon boundaries more strongly than the Word of Wisdom.

48B. H. Roberts, Weber Stake Conference, 16 July 1893, in Collected Discourses Delivered by President Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others, compiled and edited by Brian H. Stuy, three volumes (Burbank, California: BHS Publishing, 1989), 3:18. Stuy asserts that many Saints believed that the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple on 6 April 1893 “represented the beginning of the Millennial Era, an era that would witness the Saints’ return to Jackson County, and the advent of the Savior (ix).” If so, this expectation passed quickly. Dan Erickson, “As a Thief in the Night,” 226–229, also sees millennial expectations fading during the 1890s under pressure to accommodate to the modern world.

49 In the section on “Theological Implications and Social Consequences.”

50Evening and Morning Star 1 (June 1832): 7–8.

The Community of Christ (since 6 April 2001 of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) has redefined itself as a liberal church, a “peace church,” no longer primarily dependent on Mormon scriptures. Located in Independence, Missouri, on the plat of the city of Zion, it has long since abandoned the millennial meaning of Zion as the center place. Richard P. Howard, the esteemed former RLDS Church Historian, characterizes “an identity paradigm shift within the RLDS Church,” and one of its markers is that “Zion is coming to have a different meaning for RLDS people: i.e., the corporate witness of the church in communities around the world, in which the church acts to transform oppressive structures, institutions, and systems into channels of God’s grace and justice for all.”

Yet, surprisingly, the old Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints preached the Gathering to the Center Place of Independence till the 1970s. In the sermons and talks of the most prominent “traveling minister” of the period 1930–1960, Ray Whiting (1893–1984), and in the preaching of many other ministers, the Gathering was the dominant theme. Up until about 1950 “a physical gathering of the Saints to Jackson Count was a major goal” among pious members of the RLDS Church.

This was but a thin echo of the millennial cry. A decade later, in 1968, leading RLDS historian Robert Flanders delivered a bold speech before the general authorities of the RLDS Church and punctured its last pretensions to the Gathering. The RLDS Church, he said, faced a fundamental dilemma. “How,” he asked, “can one have the gospel of Restoration without a doctrine of the kingdom and the Gathering?” The essence of the Gathering, he argued, was the communitarianism and collectivism of the early Mormon millennialists and that was all gone; “the kingdom” had come to represent authoritarianism. The RLDS Church met this challenge of a lost kingdom and a lost Gathering by becoming the Community of Christ, a new church. Instead of preaching a gathering to Independence, Missouri, the new church began dispersing in peace and friendship to “communities around the world” (in Howard’s words quoted above).

For the Community of Christ, at least, Zion had become the world.

Resounding Songs of Zion: The Past and Future of Friendship

Returning now to the beginning, to very first issue of the first Mormon newspaper, I would like to point out that the Star printed several of the earliest Mormon hymns, hymns that mark the beginning of Mormon hymnody, probably the greatest corpus of hymns and music ever developed in the United States. (Shaker hymnody is also quite impressive.) What is also noteworthy is that these early Mormon hymns, unlike the hundreds written in the 1830s, emphasized the latter days, the millennium, the “Rock of Enoch,” the City of Zion, the vision of Daniel, the thousand years of peace. The Saints took delight in the contempt of their fellow Americans, because they knew the end was near:

---

53 Email letter to the author from Ray Whiting’s daughter, Billie Young, 25 Sept 2000. It is interesting to note that after the Cutlerites (another Mormon offshoot) left Minnesota, they resettled in what was for them still the Center Place—Independence, Missouri.
Old formal professors [goes one stanza] are crying "delusion,"
And high-minded hypocrites say, "‘Tis delusion,"
While grace is poured out in a blessed effusion,
And saints are rejoicing to see priest-craft fall.  

This millennial attitude was part of the general Christian tradition. The early Mormons thought themselves radical, but until the Holy Spirit descended on the Kirtland Temple in 1836, they were surprisingly orthodox. They expressed their millennial doctrine in the familiar terms of mainline Western Christianity:

The rays that shine from Zion’s hill,
Shall lighten every land;
Her King shall reign a thousand years,
And all the world command.  

The wicked will, of course be crushed, and peace will descend on the world:
No war shall rage, no hostile band
Disturb those peaceful years;
To plowshares men shall beat their swords,
To pruning hooks their spears.  

We all recognize the rhetoric. To the historian, the dreams seem unrealistic; to the secular rationalist, they seem ludicrous; to latter-day Mormons they are a noble memory; to the Community of Christ a new goal.

It is worth concluding on a note of nobility from still another hymn:
In one sweet symphony of praise,
The Jews and Gentiles shall unite;
And infidelity, o’er come,
Return again to endless night.
From east to west, from north to south,
The Savior’s kingdom shall extend,
And every man in every place
Shall meet a brother and a friend.  

---

55 "Hymns, selected and prepared for the Church of Christ, in these last days," Evening and Morning Star 1 (June 1832): 8, First Line: “What fair one is this, in the wilderness trav’ling.”
56 Ibid., First Line: “On mountaintops the mount of God.”
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., First Line: “The time is nigh, that happy time.”
The Quest for Traces of a Peace Gene in Restoration History

Richard P. Howard*

Introduction

I did not know Dr. Sterling McMurrin intimately. Our contacts were limited to three or four face-to-face visits and several on the telephone during my years as RLDS Church historian. His writings have meant much to me, especially in the context of my prolonged, and largely unsuccessful, efforts to fashion a usable methodology of history for the RLDS membership. I still recall the value of his essay “Religion and the Denial of History,” from which I take this excerpt:

To understand religion means to see it in its historical character and to recognize that it is in countless ways involved in the process of history. But here lies the great difficulty, because to take religion seriously as a historical phenomenon is to implicate it genuinely in the relativities of human circumstance. This compromises religion by denying its precious absoluteness, thereby threatening the commitments of orthodoxy. As a consequence, the defenders of traditional religion frequently distort or deny history as a means of avoiding its implications, and on metaphysical grounds they may even deny the ultimate reality of time itself to insure that process and change are in some strange way illusory. —Sunstone volume 7/2 (March–April 1982):49; See also Religion, Reason, and Truth; Historical Essays in the Philosophy of Religion (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1982):144.

The issue: to understand the historical character of religion, is especially in sharp focus these days, in light of the efforts of RLDS Church leaders to fashion new directions, a new name, and a new self-identity for the Reorganization. One of the urgent calls to RLDS people is to honor their history while creating a future that bears little resemblance to past RLDS realities. For example, the RLDS people have been called to become a peace church. A colleague one day said to me of that calling, “Peace church? It’ll never happen. We cannot possibly be something we’ve never been before!” That reminds me of John Quincy Adams’ memorable line in the scene before the U.S. Supreme Court in the movie Amistad: “We are who we were!”

Nonetheless, the RLDS Church has that calling, arising in part from the content of Section 156 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Many people today speak of “before Section 156” and “after Section 156.” This document offered three types of instruction, the response to which has begun to have an impact on the RLDS landscape: (1) standards of priesthood ministry, (2) the ordination of women, and (3) the purposes of the Temple. It is with that third instruction that this paper is largely concerned.

Section 156:5 begins with words that look to inform the Reorganization’s journey on into the twenty-first century: “The Temple shall be dedicated to the pursuit of peace. It shall be for reconciliation and for healing of the spirit.” This purpose for the RLDS Temple is disjunctive with former concepts of the Temple in Restoration history. Section 156 said other things about the purpose of the Temple that linked directly back to the 1830s. For example, Kirtland’s House of the Lord emphasized, similarly to Section 156, education of ministry for mission, and the renewal of faith and commitment in worship. The Kirtland Temple theology, however, had accentuated the end times theme, while Section 156 does not allude to that at all. Nor do the endowment rituals of the Kirtland Temple find an

* Historian Emeritus of the RLDS Church, now Community of Christ. This third Sterling McMurrin Lecture was given in September 1999 at Lake Doniphan, Missouri, at the annual John Whitmer Historical Association meeting.
The call to build a Temple dedicated to peace, reconciliation, and healing of the human spirit may, however, have some rootage in the soil of Restoration history. I believe that there has been present in our sub-culture from its inception, a cultural peace gene—to use the term as a metaphor—an intention towards peace, harmony, and justice. The “generic” pathway from then to now has not been uniformly strong, clear, and straight in this regard. At times, the “peace gene” has been recessive, almost invisible, submerged in a flood of persecution and reaction, contentions over church polity and doctrine, internal schism, and other preoccupations. One cannot begin to understand the Latter Day Saint past without reference to all of that conflict. I submit, however, that a “cultural gene,” driving RLDS people gradually, ultimately, to become peacemakers, so that the “peace gene” is showing signs of becoming a dominant, rather than a recessive, trait of our movement. But first, let us begin with the conflict and the paranoia—the opening years in which the peace gene struggled for visibility and force.

Peace with the Enemy?

The first year of Mormon New York experiences projected the early Saints in two opposing directions. First was a climate of constant and increasing conflict, both internal and external. The escalation of these conflicts quickly turned into violence and bloodshed. One related manifestation of this process was a paranoia among Mormon leaders that deepened the alienation of Mormons from the larger social order, and sometimes created mistrust and division within the church body itself.

The second direction was towards an ultimate ideal—building up the “peaceable kingdom of God” on earth, Zion. The saints’ devotion to this grand objective planted within and among them a thirst for peace. Their invincible conviction was that in reaching their goal their household of faith would find a peace that surpassed all human understanding.

Those early saints, however, lived in a threatening climate of outward hostility that gave them the self-image of being under siege. The enemy was “at the doors,” so they were told. Their chief spokesman, the young prophet Joseph Smith, voiced his fears through the vehicle of revelation. He frequently reminded them, through his prophetic utterances, of their essentially “us and them” stance in their world. When Joseph and his followers looked outward they saw the enemy. Soon there emerged a strategic value of the enemy as a rallying point around which to focus their energies, hopes fears, and mission. Listen now to the story of the saints and their enemies.

About a year before the church was officially organized Joseph spoke to his scribe Oliver Cowdery through revelation (Section 8:2), affirming that Oliver’s own revelatory gift would deliver him from “destruction at the hands of his enemies.” In July 1830 Joseph Smith (Section 23:1) reminded the elders that God’s power had delivered Joseph from his enemies, from the power of Satan.

The next month Joseph and some of his fellow leaders discussed the source of the Communion wine for use at the Lord’s Table. By way of revelation—Section 26:1—they were told not to use wine produced by their enemies—meaning anyone outside their fellowship—but to make it fresh, using their own people and resources. Near the end of 1830 Joseph Smith called for the New York saints to move to the Kirtland, Ohio, area. Sidney Rigdon’s newly converted communal groups there offered them a safe haven for gathering—an escape from their persecuting enemies in New York. News had also leaked out about Joseph’s recent revelations on the Genesis text of the King James Version of the Bible. He and Rigdon were cautioned in Section 37:1 to postpone further work on the biblical revision, due to the threat of “the enemy,” until after the move to Ohio.

The year 1831 opened with some of the New York saints’ doubting the wisdom of moving to Ohio. Joseph again commanded them (Section 38:6–7) to go to Ohio, to escape the destructive forces.
of the enemy, combined against them "in the secret chambers" and seeking to take their lives. In Ohio, they would eventually change the world; no power on earth would be able to subvert God's purpose in them.

By early February 1831 Joseph Smith and his family were in Kirtland. The young prophet commissioned a dozen elders by revelation in Section 42:2-4, to build up new churches in the Western Reserve of Ohio. Soon another commandment (Section 44:1-2) directed expansion of this missionary force. If ministers would assemble from all parts of the church into the Kirtland area, to be sent forth to preach and baptize, they would utterly defeat the power of the church's enemies to destroy them.

In March 1831 Joseph warned his people through revelation about publicizing his recently resumed biblical revision. The enemies of the church were not to know of this work until it should be finished. Only then, said Section 45:15, would the church's enemies—and indeed all the nations—stand in fear and awe of the Lord, whose coming would strike terror and fear in the hearts of the enemies of the faithful, who were to build up the kingdom of God.

In June 1831 more than a score of high priests were ordained, the corps of elders had grown, and the church's impending colonization of western Missouri was in sharp focus. Fourteen teams of two elders each were now being commissioned to go to Missouri. In revelatory language of Section 52:9d-f, the new city, some nine hundred miles westward, was described as ultimately to become the inheritance of the Saints, although presently it is the "land of your enemies."

Newel Knight and his Colesville, New York, colony of saints arrived in Thompson, near Kirtland, Ohio, in May 1831. They were to settle and develop lands consecrated to the church bishop by Lemon Copley and Ezra Thayer. They had just begun settling in when Copley and Thayer reneged on their consecrations, withdrew from the church, and became its enemies. The Colesville saints, now with no place to gather, in June 1831 were sent as a body by revelation to Missouri. The terms of Section 54:2a were clear: "Go to now and flee the land, lest your enemies come upon you."

As the church established dozens of small branches in Ohio, and as word spread of Joseph's progress on the bible revision, the resistance to the new religion grew. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon in late November 1831, were commissioned for a brief season to join battle against the enemies of the church, in a concerted preaching campaign. The objective was stated in the revelatory command of Section 71:2c-g: "Wherefore, confound your enemies; call upon them to meet you, both in public and in private." The promise was that no force or weapon used against them should prosper. Those speaking against them would in due time be confounded.

In August 1833 news of the growing violence between the Missourians and the Saints Joseph Smith at Kirtland. He gave inspired direction to the church on how the Saints were to respond—to the third and fourth generation—to repeated actions against them by their enemies. The gist of the eight hundred-plus words of instruction in Section 95:3, 5-7, was to urge the saints to forgive unprovoked hostilities against them to specified upper limits of persecution. Beyond those limits the saints were to make violent response, especially if the enemy refused to repent and seek restitution. The Saints were told that they would be acting out God's own vengeance on the evildoers.

In Kirtland, near the end of the year 1833 Joseph Smith mourned the enormous losses the Missouri saints had suffered in being driven from Jackson County. He addressed an inspired message to them, now in exile in Clay County, northward across the Missouri River. Section 98:3-5 was a message of comfort and hope, as well as severe chastisement for their own culpability in the tragedy. Paragraphs 6-8 of Section 98 was a parable of the nobleman and his servants in the vineyard. The nobleman had given his servants clear instruction on how to build up and defend the vineyard from the enemy. But they had ignored the instructions, and the enemy invaded and captured the vineyard and
drove them out. The nobleman tells them to gather up all their strong warriors, return to the vineyard, and recapture it from the enemy. The servants did as they were told, and, in due time the vineyard was redeemed—just as the nobleman had promised.

This instruction—Section 98—arrived in Clay County, Missouri, early in 1834, but the saints could not mount any sort of attack on their Jackson County enemies. So in late February 1834 Joseph Smith dictated Section 100 to the church in Kirtland, Ohio, calling for a military expedition to march to Missouri and lead the saints back onto their Jackson County lands. The hope was to enlist five hundred warriors. Specific elders were sent out to the church branches to solicit money for the mission, and to recruit the warriors to make the trek to Missouri. Section 100 clearly identified the saints’ enemies as God’s enemies, so the instruction was unmistakable: God would be with them, and the enemies of God would be avenged by the faith and courage of the saints. As paragraph 5 puts it: “inasmuch as mine enemies come against you to drive you from my goodly land, which I have consecrated to be the land of Zion . . . ye shall curse them; and whomsoever ye curse, I will curse; and ye shall avenge me of mine enemies; and my presence shall be with you, even in avenging me of mine enemies, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.”

These references to the enemy in early LDS revelation show that the founding prophet felt under great threat, and rightfully believed that his followers were in constant danger of violence at the hands of their enemies. If the peace gene in the LDS sub-culture seems so recessive as to be lost in the battles against the enemy, one might seek it by turning the angle of vision in slightly different directions and over a longer slice of time.

We now turn to some evidences of a “peace gene” in three of the many possible arenas of inquiry: The Doctrine and Covenants, the church’s hymnody, and in official actions and statements by church leaders and Conferences.

Intimations of a Peace Gene in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants

Many shades of meaning attach to the use of the word “peace” in the church’s revelatory documents. Following are “Four Meanings of Peace,” suggested by and adapted from the Oxford Universal Dictionary. Each heading is stated positively, then amplified in a negative subheading, signifying freedom from less desirable conditions.

1. INNER, PERSONAL CALMNESS—PEACE OF MIND, SOUL, CONSCIENCE

Freedom from mental or spiritual disturbance or conflict arising from a state of passion, or sense of guilt or shame

Section 6:11a (April 1829): Oliver Cowdery is promised peace to his mind in his relationship to God, as well as knowledge from God.

Section 18:2n (March 1830): Walking in meekness of the Spirit guarantees inner peace in God.

Section 39:2b (January 1831): Those who live in the Spirit of God learn the peaceable things of the kingdom of God.

Section 42:17a (February 1831): Seeking in faith brings the “peaceable things” to the center of life, leading to joy and life eternal.

Section 45:7–8 (March 1831): The Endives: those who have slept in peace—after death—will be redeemed to life eternal in the resurrection, while the wicked will be destroyed.

Section 119:9c (April 1887): If neither faith nor medicine has brought healing, the faithful saint is to continue to serve as cheerfully as possible, and thus receive the blessing of inner peace.

Section 158:11a (April 1992): The peace of Christ comes to those who hear his voice and know
God's promises, even in the midst of uncertainty.

2. PUBLIC ORDER AND SECURITY  
*Freedom from, or cessation of, war or hostilities; that condition of a nation or community in which it is not at war with others. Freedom from civil commotion and disorder*

   Section 26:3 (September 1830): Armed with the gospel of peace the saints will emerge victorious over the forces of evil in the world. Implication: the saints will be able to nurture public order and the safety of the society.

   Section 45:12c,d (March 1831): The end times vision of Zion, the New Jerusalem, a city of peace and safety for the saints of God, and the dwelling place of God.

   Section 1:6b,c (November 1831): While peace will vanish from the earth, the Lord will reign in the midst of his saints and have power over them, and judge the world.

   Section 95:3d (August 1833): to live in the covenant means that we renounce war, proclaim peace, and work diligently to link the generations.

   Section 95:6c,d,e (August 1833): In the face of open hostilities or warlike actions against them the saints are to respond as peacemakers until repeated offenses should occur, then they should seek the Lord, who would bless them in doing battle, and would fight their battles, even to the third or fourth generation.

   Section 98:3c, 6e (December 1833): Peace often lulls us into a false sense of security, and we fail to see that active peacemaking involves our preparedness for the time of attack.

   Section 102:7b,c, 8a (June 1834): Work hard to relate to those who oppose you, be sensitive to why they oppose you, even as you use every legal means to gain justice for yourselves, in your quest to recover your losses wrongly suffered.

   Section 102:11 (June 1834): The saints are to earnestly seek peace with their enemies who have wronged them, and to advance the cause of peace among all peoples all over the world.

   Section 112:2, 6b (August 1835—not revelatory): Laws are made to protect the rights and conscience of all persons; all persons therefore owe respect to such laws, as without them anarchy and terror ensue.

3. A STATE OF FRIENDLINESS, UNITY, CONCORD, AMITY  
*Freedom from quarrels or dissension between individuals, groups, or nations*

   Section 81:6 (April 1832): The Order of Enoch is to work in friendly ways with those who oppose them, leaving judgment to God alone; the blessings of peace will follow.

   Section 117:13 (March 1873): Contentions and quarrelings have no place among saints. If they will sustain one another in peace they will know the comforting blessings of the Spirit.

   Section 122:7c,d (April 1894): Ministers, in the spirit of good will, are to counsel together on how to accomplish their tasks together. The result will be peace and a vigor of minds not yet experienced.

   Section 122:8 (April 1894): When the traveling and the standing ministers of the church practice unity and mutual regard, the differences between the quorums will be healed, mutual confidence heightened, and peace (harmony, unity) will bless the whole church as never before.

   Section 123:31 (April 1894—not revelatory): The saints' renewed devotion under the freely acknowledged grace of God will bring prosperity and peace to the church at large.

   Section 133:2 (April 1920): Continued contentions among the quorums erode the message of peace which the Apostles under the direction of the First Presidency are called to bring to the whole
Section 136:3b,c (April 1932): Contentions hinder God’s work, and should be replaced by the peace of fraternity and the unity of all who are caught up in the spirit of Zionic redemption.

Section 138:3c,d (April 1940): Unity and harmony are the essential elements of the sort of peace that will strengthen the foundations of Zion.

4. A CONDITION IN WHICH PEACE, JUSTICE, AND LOVE PREVAIL OR ARE BEING DILIGENTLY PURSUED

Freedom from inequity and injustice, through the work of agents of reconciliation and compassion

Section 36:6f (December 1830—Genesis 7:38, Joseph Smith Translation): God—source of peace, justice, mercy, and truth—suffers because of human folly.

Section 59:5c,d (August 1831): Those who work earnestly to do right will gain peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come.

Section 83:17c (September 1832): God’s essential nature is mercy, justice, grace and truth and peace; implication—those who serve and worship God will embody those same traits.

Section 85:38c (December 1832): The saints are to wear the mantle of charity (the pure love of Christ), which is a bond of perfectness and peace. This is the ground of all their corporate and personal discipleship.

Section 112:8b,c (August 1835—not revelatory): Lawbreakers should be punished; all persons should actively work to bring to justice and punishment those who break good laws.

Section 137:6a (April 1938): If the church will magnify its divine calling as an agent of cultural and social transformation, the world will be blessed and find peace.

Section 156:5a-c (April 1984): The pursuit of peace is holistic—centered in the work of reconciliation, spiritual healing, and the nurturing of an attitude of wholeness of body, mind, and spirit.

Section 157:11 (April 1986; added to canon April 1988): Jesus Christ is identified as the spirit of love and peace abroad in the world, yet not known by the world. Implication: the church’s mission is to make visible Christ’s spirit of love and peace.

Peace Embedded within the Church’s Musical Gene

The “musical gene” has always been a dominant gene in the Restoration’s identity from earliest beginnings to the present. While they were under relentless persecution the first generation-saints sang of peace and harmony and blessing and faith. This rich genetic musical inheritance may help to account for two majestic pipe organs less than a block apart at RLDS headquarters. But for a rich vocal musical genetic endowment among this people, how is it that the RLDS Church, so close to poverty in 1870, had a song book with 1,120 hymns to enliven the worship life of the saints? The hymnbooks of the Reorganization have continued to champion the cause of peace, particularly in our own day. Let us look briefly at some of these hymns, again under the same four headings as used before.

1. PERSONAL CALMNESS—PEACE OF MIND, SOUL, CONSCIENCE

Freedom from mental or spiritual disturbance or conflict arising from a state of passion, or sense of guilt or shame

Emma Smith, Collection of Sacred Hymns 20
Tune: Duke Street, HS 140

2. The Spirit’s power has sealed my peace,
And fill’d my soul with heav’nly grace;
Transported, I with peace and love,
Am waiting for the throngs above.

Emma Smith, *Collection of Sacred Hymns* 45
Tune: Federal Street, *HS* 492

2. Forgive me, Lord, for thy dear Son,
The sins that I this day have done;
That with the world, myself, and thee,
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.
5. When in the night I sleepless lie,
My soul with heavenly thoughts supply:
Let no ill dreams disturb my rest,
No powers of darkness me molest.

Joseph Smith III, “Lord, Let Thy Blessing Rest in Peace” (ca. 1869)*
Tune: Naomi, *HS* 490

1. Lord, let thy blessing rest in peace upon us ere we part,
Nor let that blessing ever cease to cheer the contrite heart.
2. Let us go hence in deepest thought upon thy bounteous love,
To find how much that love has wrought to lift our souls above.
3. Cheer us, blest Lord, for daily tasks, that we may love and live;
For peace each saint in parting asks, the peace that Christ can give.

* Included in every major RLDS hymnbook since 1870.

Joseph Smith, III, “Brethren, Breathe One Fervent Prayer” (ca. 1869)**
Tune: Dancer, *HS* 482

1. Brethren, breathe one fervent prayer, ere hence our footsteps tend,
To the Prince upon whose care all our hopes and joys depend.
Look beneath, around, above—all is filled with blessed peace;
'Tis the gift of God's best love—pray that love may still increase.
2. Go with reverent purpose hence, strengthened, helped, by Spirit's power;
Christ is helper, strength, defense; bless him for this peaceful hour.
Look with chastened hearts before; see, the clouds are silver lined!
What assurance need we more? God is ever true and kind.

** Included in every major RLDS hymnbook since 1870;

2. PUBLIC ORDER AND SECURITY

*Freedom from, or cessation of, war or hostilities; that condition of a nation or community in which it is not at war with others. Freedom from civil commotion and disorder*

Emma Smith, *Collection of Sacred Hymns* 28
Tune: I Love Thee, *HS* 186

[5.] Descend with the Savior in glory profound,
And reign in perfection when Satan is bound;
While love and sweet union together shall blend,
And peace, gentle peace, like a river extend.
Emma Smith, *Collection of Sacred Hymn* 29
Tune: Gratefulness, *HS* 349

3. O, that the day would hasten on,
Wickedness shall all be gone,
And saints and angels join in one,
To praise the Man of Holiness.

4. Then shall the veil of heaven rend,
And the Son Aw-Man will descend,
A vast eternity to spend
In perfect *peace* and righteousness.

6. Cry to the nations far and near,
To come and in the glories share,
That on mount Zion will appear,
When earth shall rest from wickedness.

Emma Smith, *Collection of Sacred Hymns* 31
Tune: unknown

1. Let us pray, gladly pray,
In the house of Jehovah,
Till the righteous can say,
"O our warfare is over!"
Then we'll dry up our tears,
Sweetly praising together,
Through the great thousand years,
Face to face with the Savior.

3. We can then live in *peace*,
With a joy on the mountains,
As the earth doth increase,
With a joy by the fountains,
For the world will be blest,
With a joy to rely on,
From the east to the west,
Through the glory of Zion.

3. A State of Friendliness, Unity, Concord, Amity

*Freedom from quarrels or dissension between individuals, groups, or nations*

One of the most often used hymns in the RLDS tradition was written by Isaac Watts: “Come Gracious Lord, Descend and Dwell.” This has appeared in every RLDS hymnal since 1870. It affirms the primacy of a shared love of God as the basis for interdependent relationships among all the members. The final two stanzas express the union of heart and mind in the gospel that is a window to peace-filled group life.

2. Come fill our hearts with inward strength;
Make our awakened souls possess
And learn the height and breadth and length
Of thine eternal love and grace.
3. Now to the god whose power can do
More than our thoughts and wishes know,
Be everlasting honor done
By all the church, through Christ, his son.

Emma Smith, *Collection of Sacred Hymns* 41
Tune: unknown
3. Lord turn all our hearts unto thee,
To walk in the paths of virtue and wisdom,
To live in the bonds of union and peace,
And glorify thee on earth as in heaven:
O keep us unspotted and free!

4. A CONDITION IN WHICH PEACE, JUSTICE, AND LOVE PREVAIL OR ARE BEING DILIGENTLY PURSUED
Freedom from inequity and injustice, through the work of agents of reconciliation and compassion
As a Graceland College student in the early 1950s I was moved towards pacifism by many influences, large among them *The Hymnal for Youth*, published by Herald House in 1950. A whole section of twelve hymns, 277–288, held many images of international peace and harmony. One of the most compelling combination of words and music was 280 in that collection:

1. Thy kingdom come, O Lord, Wide circling as the sun;
Fulfill of old Thy word and make the nations one.
2. One in the bond of peace, the service glad and free
Of truth and righteousness, of love and equity.
3. Speed, speed the longed-for time foretold by raptured seers—
The prophecy sublime, the hope of all the years.
4. Till rise at last, to span its firm foundations broad,
The commonwealth of man, the city of our God. Amen.

Images of the church as reconciling agent for worldwide healing and renewal, appear almost totally in the work of more recent hymn writers. Geoffrey Spencer’s hymn, “The Cause of Zion Summons Us,” *HS* 314, 1981, amplifies the reality of Zion as leaven, spreading divine love throughout the world by the reconciling work of the saints in Christ.

1. The cause of Zion summons us
To claim a distant dream:
The love of God in every place,
The will of God supreme.
The vision calls us to our task.
Forsaking self and pride,
We love and reconcile with Christ
The world for which he died.

Cleo Hanthom Moon has recorded her vision of a compassionate people dedicated to worldwide peace in her hymn *HS* 415.

1. Help us express your love, O Lord—
Committed to one world in thee!
Abundant gifts enhance our lives;
Oh, free them for humanity!
2. There is no season when we dare
Withhold our love from humankind.
Embracing earth’s supporting strength,
We match whatever needs we find.

Eric Selden, Australian RLDS hymn writer, in his hymn of Zion, HS 386, links the historic zionic enterprise with the blessing of the whole world:
1. Come now, sound the call of Zion!
Share with people of the earth.
All are called to be disciples;
Now’s the time for world rebirth.
Dare we search for new horizons?
Is our faith a hopeless dream?
Or by faith shall we be builders
And with God the world redeem?

Geoff Spencer catches up the spirit of the church’s call to love and care for the whole world, as recorded in the first stanza of this hymn HS 398.
Let us give praise to the God of creation,
Lord of all history and source of all power,
Calling us now to the world’s restoration;
Granting us strength for the needs of this hour.

The proactive peace/justice/love imagery in Evelyn Maples’ hymn, “Creator of Sunrises,” HS 186, is especially poignant in its first and final stanzas:
1. Creator of sunrises, comets, and trees
Whose sampler of love is much grander than these,
Call forth from thy children the colors of life
That free us for laughter, that free us from strife.
3. Forgive us the wreckage of hatred and war
That sadden our souls and the innocent scar.
Restore us to order of sunrise and trees
And love that can make the earth grander than these.

These glimpses into RLDS hymnody point to a large body of musical literature exposing the presence of a dominant and enduring “peace gene” at the heart of this singing community. The post-Section 156 expansion of that impulsion towards peace and order in the church’s hymnody is symbolized in the forty-six hymns found in Sing for Peace published in 1994 and now in wide use among the saints.

Official RLDS Actions and Statements Related to Peace, War, Justice, and Reconciliation
Under this general rubric, RLDS “peace gene” seems to have surfaced, haltingly at first, and as
The tragic carnage of the twentieth century wars exploded round the world, has manifested itself in a broad variety of ways. Furthermore, the frequency, complexity, and intensity of its expression in the church body since World War II has made both—Temple and church dedicated to the pursuit of peace—an understandable outcropping of our development as a religious body.

At the height of the U.S. War between the States the Conference of April 1863 ordered that Section 110 [112] of the Doctrine and Covenants be reprinted in the Herald, and that a committee headed by President Joseph Smith, III, supply a brief preface to it. The preface and appended document appeared in the May 1863 Herald under the title, “THE DECLARATION OF LOYALTY to the Government of the United States, by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.” In the preface the committee—Joseph Smith, III, Jason Briggs, and W. W. Blair—thoroughly denounced the political rebellion that had erupted in bloody battle between North and South. The committee held that governmental leaders, no matter how corrupt or incompetent, deserved the loyalty and prayers of the citizens. The fact that South Carolina and the Southern states had rebelled, proved the validity of the government establishment against which they had rebelled. The committee likened rebellion, in terms of its repugnance, to witchcraft—a crime punishable by death—and implored all citizens to stand behind the duly constituted governmental authority. The church leaders had clearly spoken in favor of a violent crushing of the rebellion, and pledged the loyal support of church members. They seemed to have forgotten that the very government they were pledging loyalty to had been born through the blood of rebellion less than a century before.

The Reorganization formally incorporated in Illinois in 1872. Two years later church leaders created the corporate seal, picturing a lamb and a lion, “lying down at rest,” with the motto, “peace” inscribed. An image of a little child was added to the seal in 1917, but the “lying down at rest” was removed. The sort of peace the church stood for was not to be passive tranquility, but energetic alertness. The word “peace” has always been part of the official seal. It has symbolized for RLDS people the commitment of the church as a whole to the ideals of harmony and order in society.

Delegates to the RLDS General Conference of 1898 voted unanimously to adopt Joseph Luff’s resolutions proclaiming that the United States was morally obligated to intervene against Spain’s brutal regime in Cuba, to help Cuban revolutionaries win their freedom. Using the just war theory, the resolution deplored war, except in cases such as this, where war was to be preferred over the continued tyrannical subjection of the Cuban peoples.

In response to the founding and work of the American Peace Society the General Conference of 1911 passed a resolution in which the delegates “unreservedly commit ourselves to the conservation of world peace.” The resolution noted a growing worldwide sentiment favoring peace and opposing war, and directed that a copy of the resolution be sent to U.S. government officials. See GCR 663, April 10, 1911, done at Lamoni, Iowa.

The Great War, World War I, began in August 1914. Thirty-two months later the U.S.A. entered the spreading conflict, after a long and vigorous propaganda campaign by the Wilson administration to overcome the forces of isolationism. At the April 1917 General Conference at Lamoni, Iowa, president F. M. Smith gave a rousing patriotic speech to the delegates, who endorsed it and ordered that the part of it dealing with the USA’s entrance into the War be sent as the Conference’s stand in support of U.S. policy. Again, the basis of this was the assumption that the allies were preserving democracy in the face of tyranny and corruption. So RLDS people rationalized a position for ultimate peace by backing immediate violent reaction, including bloodshed, against despotic rule.

At the very time this was happening one of the future general officers of the church, a young man in England, was in jail for refusing to serve in the British military during World War I. F. Henry Ed-
wards did not buy the "just-war theory" so went to prison for his pacifism. Five years later he was called to be an RLDS apostle, married Alice M. Smith, daughter of F. M. and Ruth Cobb Smith, and stood by his convictions in this matter the rest of his life. It is no surprise that his son Paul M. Edwards, wrote such a splendid article in the current issue of Restoration Studies (Vol. VII, "Militant Peace Education," pp. 21-30) dealing with some of the hardest issues related to peacemaking and peace education in the church. In another article in Restoration Studies VII Andrew Bolton tells of other RLDS British pacifists in World War I and World War II ("Developing a Theology of Peace: Tough Questions and Hard Decisions, pp. 13-20).

President F. M. Smith repeated his 1917 sentiments the next year in the April General Conference. Again the Conference adopted his patriotic expressions and ordered them sent to U.S. president Wilson, with but one dissenting vote. At the heart of his message was this affirmation: "We stand for peace, but not for peace purchased at the sacrifice of principles fundamental to true liberty. We deplore war; but not even our religious belief in peace can justify a refusal to lend our assistance in a gigantic struggle for the fundamentals of democracy."—General Conference Minutes, April 6, 1918:2602-2603.

It would be hard to measure the opposition to President Wilson’s embracing of the allied cause in World War I. The widely publicized work of George Creel, Wilson’s appointed propagandist, stirred passions on both sides of the issue of U. S. involvement in the war. The Bolshevik revolution and subsequent withdrawal of Russia from the allied cause provoked bitter opposition to any form of American sympathy towards the new Russian order. Thousands of Americans of German descent felt the sting of rebuke and discrimination in many cities and towns across the land.

In this context, the 1918 General Conference debated at length and passed a measure upholding the U. S. Constitution, and denouncing any and all organizations which "have expressed opposition to, or sought to hinder the administration of the Government’s purposes in the conducting of the present war; and unreservedly express our loyalty to and support of the United States Government in its conducting of the war against the Teutonic allies, humbly praying God’s blessing on the allied cause so that complete victory may bring to us an enduring peace, preparing the way for the coming of the kingdom of God."—General Conference Minutes, April 13, 1918:2646-2648.

In August 1928, representatives from several nations signed the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact in Paris, France, pledging themselves and other nations who signed later to outlaw war as an instrument of settling international disputes. The RLDS 1928 General Conference met the following October and passed a resolution (GCR 893) expressing hope that such a lofty ideal would soon be worldwide in scope, and pledging themselves to advance such a laudable cause. The General Conference of 1934 (GCR 930, 6:13) reaffirmed its support for this historic pact, no doubt in response to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and the rise of Adolf Hitler with his sword rattling in Europe.

World War II erupted on September 1, 1939, when Nazi tanks and troops invaded Poland. Hitler’s air and military units seemed on the brink of conquering Europe by mid-1941. Hitler invaded Russia on June 22, 1941, and less than six months later Japanese air force bombers destroyed much of the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. The next day the U.S. Congress declared war on Japan, and joined the allied cause by declaring war on the other two axis powers: Germany and Italy. Four months later the RLDS General Conference unanimously passed a resolution of support and solidarity to the president of the United States. The resolution affirmed the church’s long-standing view that the U.S. Constitution was divinely inspired, championing human freedom and democracy. It pledged the church’s support to all who were fighting to preserve those values, and assured the U.S. president that the church’s prayers for divine wisdom and blessing for him would help
ultimately to ensure a lasting peace around the world, leading to the coming of the kingdom of God on earth. The Conference directed that these sentiments be forwarded to the president of the U.S.A. — *General Conference Minutes, Saints' Herald—Conference Daily Edition*, April 8, 1942:80, and April 10, 1942:102.

World War II ended in 1945 and hope for world peace heightened by the founding of the United Nations organization. By 1949, however, the Soviet Union had exploded its first atomic bomb, and by the mid-1950s two super-powers, USA and USSR, were on the fast track to nuclear weapons stockpiling. The Korean conflict ended in stalemate by 1954, with continued threat of renewed hostility. Recurring armed skirmishes threatened stability in the Middle East. Revolution in Cuba cast a shadow on US-Cuban stability. The RLDS Conference met in October 1958 against this kind of worldwide unrest and passed a motion by Wilford Winholtz and Robert Flanders, calling for the First Presidency to appoint a committee to:

study and review, and to prepare a statement expressing our church views on the basic factors pertaining to the problems of peace and war and the use of force, with appropriate reference to such problems as the doctrine of non-violence, pacifism, capital punishment, H-bomb testing, military service, enlistment, draft, volunteering, conscientious objector, etc., and that such statement be prepared in the form of a suggested resolution for consideration and adoption by the succeeding General Conference, and that publication and distribution be made two months prior to such Conference—*General Conference Bulletin*, number 6 (October 10, 1958):93.

During the next twenty-four years, culminating in the passage of WCR 1177 on April 3, 1982, literally dozens of people labored on successive peace committees to fashion a workable statement dealing with the ever-increasing complexities of war and peace issues. The world was changing rapidly in terms of complicated weapons systems, revolutions in nations where unstable political conditions prevailed, grave ecological considerations, nuclear weapons proliferation, and the many regional wars around the world that defied description or analysis. Each successive committee report to respective World Conferences dealt with changing conditions that required attention to an increasing number of issues directly or indirectly related to the major themes of war and peace.

The constant reality, however, in all five of those committee reports and resolutions that the Conferences passed from 1960 to 1982, was an enduring respect for diverse perceptions and viewpoints, not only on the committees themselves, but across the church population at large. Throughout the entire period of 1958 to 1982, RLDS Conferences intensely desired to record a significant word about how we would as a people relate to these international conflicts that were killing and wounding so many thousands and costing so much financial treasury to resolve.

A primary concern was to give proper guidance to young persons who would soon have to choose how to respond to governmental requirements for military service to prosecute war. Another was the relationship of the RLDS Church with other peace-promoting agencies throughout the world. A third concern was how to respond to the continued production and testing and stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction. On this point, the 1982 World Conference adopted a separate resolution committing the church to local initiatives with other organizations to press for reductions in the stockpiles of nuclear weapons. A fourth issue was the ecological impact of past, present, and future wars.

Finally, addressing the underlying causes of war and other forms of violence through implementing practical principles of the gospel of peace was a long-range issue the committee saw as vital. The Peace Committee became a standing committee of the World Conference, and continued to address concerns of world peace and to report to future Conferences as the committee saw fit to do.

In the midst of official enactments of Conferences, statements on peace and war and the use of force of these twenty-four years, came the prolonged and persistent work of women during the 1970s,
under the leadership of Marjorie Troeh, Women's Ministries Commissioner. Through her untiring devotion to the principle of equality of men and women, new opportunities opened the way for women to be more deeply involved in policy/decision-making, planning, and leadership in the church at many levels of expression. Without the work of the Women's Ministries Commission the call of women to be ordained and for priesthood concepts to be reviewed would in my view have been delayed far beyond the date of Section 156.

WCR 1177 has remained on the books to the present time, strengthened by the Peace Committee's resolution 1227, passed on April 10, 1992:

WHEREAS, Our planet, the places where we live, and our lives suffer from violence and needless destruction; and
WHEREAS, Military force, economic power, and security systems have too often been used for immoral and unjustifiable purposes; and
WHEREAS, In the ten years since the church has adopted 1177, the world has suffered from numerous wars, destructive conflict, local community and personal violence, and ecological degradation; and
WHEREAS, As a church we have been called to pursue peace (Doctrine and Covenants 102:11; 150:7; 151:9-10; and 156:5; Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:11 [IV]; Luke 6:27-28; 1 Nephi 3:189; Mosiah 8:49-50; Alma 14:27-28); therefore, be it
RESOLVED, That we intensify our efforts to heal the causes of violence, war, prejudice, discrimination, greed, hunger, and oppression; and be it further
RESOLVED, That the church encourage all persons and jurisdictions to work with others in waging peace and in developing processes that are alternatives to violence and needless destruction; and be it further
RESOLVED, That we pledge anew to forgive, be patient, bring reconciliation, sacrifice for others, suffer with the pain of compassion, and be actively engaged in the pursuit of peace, all as taught to us by Jesus Christ.

The three resolves of this measure call for the RLDS people to be involved in proactive ways as never before to get at the root causes of war and violence. WCR 1227 should be seen in the context of the full Peace Committee report in the World Conference Bulletin for April 4, 1992:262-278. This comprehensive document addressed a broad range of peace concerns. These were largely ecological in nature, and included a recommendation that an "Earth Stewardship Committee" be constituted as a standing committee of the World Conference. The report's major aspect was the committee's considered response to the Brundtland Commission Report of 1987, which the committee had been asked to do by WCR 1213 at the 1990 World Conference, and featured a theological statement on global stewardship. The report included a copy of the Peace Committee's official statement on the January 1991 "Persian Gulf War" issued a year earlier. It also included suggestions for local peace associations, and the work of the Temple Peace Center.

Obviously this reference to WCR 1227—a 1992 document—is as an outcome rather than part of the soil in which the peace sentiment was nurtured leading to Section 156, in 1984. But it seems to me that there is strong continuity from this 1992 resolution and report of the Peace Committee back to the earlier legislative efforts of the RLDS Church. Those linkages, in my view, are in large measure the story—the RLDS Church since 1958 moved from predominantly insular concerns into the broader arena of world peace and all the related issues. Section 156's call to the RLDS people to become a people of peace was addressed to a people already on that pathway, in some nascent sense of that meaning. Section 156 became a catalyst driving many peace-related learning situations and activities that have transpired since 1984.
“Illicit Intercourse,” Plural Marriage, and the Nauvoo Stake High Council, 1840–1844

Gary James Bergera

When Mormon prophet Joseph Smith embraced twenty-six-year-old Louisa Beaman as his first documented celestial, or plural, wife on 5 April 1841, he inaugurated a period of uncertainty and confusion among some in his young church, headquartered in Nauvoo, Illinois. Both the female Relief Society and male Nauvoo Stake High Council, whose members took seriously their charge to safeguard the morals of the Mississippi Riverfront boomtown, acted swiftly to suppress unauthorized erotic impulses. But because of the secrecy with which the thirty-five-year-old Smith cloaked his revelation of eternal patriarchal marriage, most members of these bodies did not know that some of the activities they were investigating enjoyed the prophet’s imprimatur. In fact, by the time Emma (Hale) Smith, president of the Relief Society, learned of her husband’s celestial unions, he had already taken as part of the “restoration of all things” twenty women, including several of her close associates. The Relief Society’s rocky intersection with the prophet’s controversial teachings has been plumbed elsewhere, the Nauvoo High Council’s has not.

Exploring the beginnings of Mormon plural marriage opens a door into an intimate world of men and women grappling with their prophet’s innovative teachings on sexuality, gender roles, domestic relations, the patriarchal family, and exaltation. The stealth with which Smith propounded his doctrine of multiple wives facilitated the rise of rival teachings and independent interpretations (especially when his plural wives had living legal husbands).

"[H]e instructed those with whom he discussed the subject," explains Mormon researcher Rex Eugene Cooper, “to keep silent and feign ignorance if questioned directly.”

Copyright the Smith–Pettit Foundation.

1 Gary James Bergera is managing director of the Smith–Pettit Foundation, Salt Lake City, and the author of Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002). I appreciate the advice and encouragement of H. Michael Marquardt, George D. Smith, and others.


4 See, for example, Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippett’s Avery, Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, second edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 106–118.

5 For brief treatments, see Bachman, 129–133, 226–227; and Andrew F. Smith, The Saintly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of John Cook Bennett (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 87–91.


7 Rex Eugene Cooper, Promises Made to the Fathers: Mormon Covenant Organization (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 135–136. "Elders had no right to promulgate anything
himself, the church, and those directly involved,” adds Daniel W. Bachman, an LDS historian of Mormon plural marriage, “led to some of the most serious miscalculations of his life.”

Examining the records of Nauvoo’s high council enables a fuller appreciation of early Mormon polygamy, of the challenges facing Smith in attempting to control the spread of his new doctrine, and of the difficulties confronting those poorly informed or completely ignorant of the prophet’s teachings in navigating the sometimes murky waters of love, marriage, and sex.

In taking additional wives, Smith believed he was not only following under penalty of spiritual death a divine commandment to strengthen the family unit, but exercising a righteous prerogative of God’s chosen. “[T]he Lord had given him the keys of this sealing ordinance,” his cousin remembered, and “he felt as liberal to others as he did to himself . . . and said to me ‘You should not be behind your privileges.’” Despite the hardships, Smith was convinced that his actions helped to usher in Christ’s millennial reign, while blessing forever not only the women, their parents, and families, but—through priesthood ordinances of eternal marriage and adoption—united their own husbands and their families in an expanding web of familial and social inter-relationships.

“[T]he thing that my servant Joseph Smith has made known unto you and your Family and which you have agreed upon,” the Lord told the father of one of the prophet’s young brides, “is right in mine eyes and shall be rewarded upon your heads with honor and immortality and eternal life to all your house both old & young.” Smith subsequently blessed this man’s daughter,

thou that dwellest on high bless I beseech of thee the one into whose hands this may fall and crown her with a diadem of glory in the Eternal worlds. Oh let it be sealed this day on high that she shall come forth in the first resurrection to receive the same and verily it shall be so saith the Lord if she remain in the Everlasting covenant to the end as also all her Fathers house shall be saved in the same Eternal glory and if any of them shall wander from the fold of the Lord they shall not perish but shall return saith the Lord and be saved in and by repentance be crowned

but that which they were authorized to teach,” future LDS Apostle Charles W. Penrose later explained. “And when assailed by their enemies and accused of practising things which were really not countenanced in the Church, they were justified in denying those imputations and at the same time avoiding the avowal of such doctrines as were not yet intended for the world.” “Joseph Smith and Celestial Marriage,” Deseret Evening News (20 May 1886). “[T]hey were not denials of plural or celestial marriage,” added Hyrum Smith’s son and future LDS Church President Joseph F. Smith, “as taught by Joseph Smith and practiced at the time by both of them [i.e., Joseph and Hyrum], and many others in prominent standing in the church. These seeming denials themselves are specific proofs of the evidence of the true coin, the counterfeit of which they denounced.” “Celestial Marriage,” Deseret Evening News (20 May 1886).

8 Bachman, 232.

9 George A. Smith to Joseph Smith III, 9 October 1869, in Journal History, Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter LDS Archives.

10 See, for example, Cooper, Promises, 138–147.

11 Quoted in “A Revelation to N[jewel]. K. Whitney,” 27 July 1842, reprinted in The Essential Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 165. “A main motive of some plural marriages seems to have been to extend this saving power through the sealed woman to members of her family.” Cooper, Promises, 140.
with all the fullness of the glory of the Everlasting Gospel. These promises I seal upon all of
their heads in the name of Jesus Christ by the Law of the Holy Priesthood even so Amen.12
On the other hand, failure to obey God's commands could mean eternal damnation.
"[P]repare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you," the
Lord proclaimed in the revelation announcing plural marriage; "for all those who have this
law revealed unto them must obey the same. For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an ever-
lasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject
this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory" (LDS Doctrine and Covenants 132:3–4).
As a result, Smith judged that all "eternal" contracts not sanctioned, or sealed, by the power of
his restored priesthood authority were ultimately invalid.13 "All covenants, oaths, vows, per-
formances, connections, associations, or expectations," the Lord continued,
that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is
anointed, . . . are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead. . .
Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word,
and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and
marriage are not of force when they are dead, and when they are out of the world; therefore,
they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world. —verses 7, 15
"[T]he Prophet felt," Bachman concludes, "that only those who had his approval could
properly exercise the religious ordinance [of marriage], and that he could void marriages that
were not valid in eternity."14 "Believing that one's eternal exaltation depended on Joseph
Smith," adds Kathryn M. Daynes, a historian at Brigham Young University, "ensured loyalty to
him, especially when his power extended not only to his plural wives but also to their families.
Mormons' concern with their salvation was strong and immediate because of their millenarian
belief that the end of the world and the second coming of Christ would happen, not imminently
but in the not-far-distant future."15
During the first two years after Nauvoo's founding, its stake high council, under the First
Presidency (Smith and two counselors), moved authoritatively in both civil and religious
spheres. But by early 1841, with the adoption of a city charter and election of a mayor and city
council, the high council (usually a president, two counselors, and twelve high councilors)
turned almost exclusively to ecclesiastical governance.16 As "watchmen upon the walls," high

12 "Blessing Given to Sarah Ann Whitney by Joseph Smith. Nauvoo City, March 23, 1843,"
typescript of holograph, LDS Archives.
13 See Bachman, 124–136; and Compton, 17–18. Of course, Mormons continued to contract
civil marriages. Joseph Smith himself personally performed at least twelve such marriages in
Nauvoo; his brother Hyrum twenty-six. See Lyndon W. Cook, compiler., Nauvoo Deaths and
14 Bachman, 127.
15 Kathryn M. Daynes, More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage
eternal marriages, see my "The Earliest Eternal Sealings for Civilly Married Couples Living and
16 See Glen M. Leonard, Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise (Salt Lake City:
Deseret Book Co./Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 92–97. For a discussion
of the church's judicial system, see Edwin Brown Firmage and Richard Collin Mangrum, Zion in
councilors became the rapidly growing boomtown’s “conscience and schoolmaster.” They tackled a range of disputes, “resolving disagreements between members,” “deciding issues of individuals’ standing in the church,”18 upholding the innocent, and punishing the rebellious by expelling them from the body of believers (usually known as disfellowship, if temporary, or as excommunication, if more permanent). “This was a powerful tool,” writes Nauvoo historian Glen M. Leonard, “for in a religious society to be excluded from fellowship effectively curbed a person’s opportunities—political, economic, social, and religious.”19

Prior to Nauvoo, cases of alleged sexual misbehavior brought before the church’s high councils for resolution had been few. Doctor Philastus Hurlbut, age twenty-four, had been expelled in 1833 for “unchristian conduct with the female sex”20 (and then helped to produce and promote the first published anti-Mormon book). Two years later, Lorenzo Lewis (age unknown), convicted of “illicit intercourse with a female,” was “cut off from the Church” but promised that “if he repent and humble himself to the satisfaction of the Church, he shall be received into it again.”21 The next day, Lorenzo Dow Young, twenty-seven-year-old younger brother of church apostle Brigham Young, was charged with having declared that “poor men ought not to raise up seed or children,” that “it was right to have sexual intercourse notwithstanding,” and that “he did not intend to have any more children.” The high council did not agree, although it is not clear which of Young’s declarations they disputed. Nonetheless, the chastened offender “made an humble acknowledgement” and was retained “in full fellowship as an Elder in the church of the Latter Day Saints.”22 He went on to father seven more children in addition to the four his wife, Persis Goodall, had already borne.

One of the last cases involving possible sexual misconduct prior to Joseph Smith’s April 1841 plural marriage concerned thirty-nine-year-old British native Theodore Turley. On 26 January 1841, William Niswanger and Benjamin L. Clapp charged their fellow seventy with, among other infractions, “unchristian conduct while on the sea for romping and kissing the females and dancing[,] . . . sleeping with two females coming up the Lakes and on the road to Dixons ferry.”23 Turley had immigrated to Canada in 1818 and converted to Mormonism nine

---

17 Leonard, 96.
18 Ibid., 95.
19 Ibid.
20 See Kirtland Council Minute Book, Fred C. Collier and William S. Harwell, editors (Salt Lake City: Collier’s Publishing Co., 1996), 14–15 (the original minutes are housed in the LDS Archives); also Joseph Smith et al., History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Period I. History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet by Himself (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1973), 1:352.
21 Kirtland Council Minute Book, 143–144; Smith, History of the Church, 2:285.
22 Kirtland Council Minute Book, 145.
23 Quoted in “Minutes of the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Nauvoo, Illinois, 1840–45,” 6 February 1841, typescript prepared by Lyndon W. Cook, copy in my possession, original in LDS Archives; hereafter Nauvoo High Council Minutes. Copies are also available in H. Michael Marquardt Papers, Western Americana, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake
years later. He suffered through the persecutions of the Saints in Ohio and Missouri, and in 1839 returned to England to preach his new religion. In early September 1840, he presided over the second shipload of Mormon emigrants, numbering 200, from Liverpool to New York City, arriving in Nauvoo in late November. Turley could be domineering and autocratic, and Niswanger and Clapp’s allegations may have been provoked as much by an imperious personality as by any actual misdeeds. Turley insisted he was innocent and, as customary, members of the high council presented arguments on both sides. The charges were soon sustained, however, after which

the President decided that he, the defendant, in order to retain his fellowship, should acknowledge, both before the Council, and also, to a public congregation, that he had acted unwisely, unjustly, imprudently, and unbecoming, and that he had set a bad example before his brethren and sisters as he was coming over from Europe.

The Council sanctioned the President’s decision[,] Elder Theodore Turley then made a confession to the satisfaction of the Council, and stated that he would rejoice in the opportunity of making the like confession before the public.

Despite the reference to “sleeping with two females,” it is not certain that sexual contact occurred (the issue seems to have been Turley’s “bad example”). Nor is it clear whom “President” referred to: William Marks, forty-eight-year-old president of the Nauvoo Stake, or Joseph Smith, president of the church in whose office the council met. (In early 1844, Turley would take as one of his first plural wives a young woman who had sailed with him to America; while his accusers would both be excommunicated, Niswanger in 1842 or 1843, Clapp in 1859.)

City, and on New Mormon Studies CD-ROM: A Comprehensive Resource Library (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1998). In addition, typed excerpts may be found in D. Michael Quinn Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.


25 In fact, the other two charges Niswanger and Clapp leveled against Turley related directly to this penchant: “3. For not settling with the brethren for what money he received of them, and taking the lumber from the boat without leave. 4. For threatening the brethren that Brother Joseph [Smith] would not hear any thing that they would not tell him about him for he was of the same spirit and signified the same Priesthood signifying if they told him he would not hear them.” Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 6 February 1841.

26 Ibid.

27 D. Michael Quinn, in The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1994), 632, suggests it was Smith who forgave Turley. On the other hand, the minutes of the next meeting of the high council refer specifically to “President William Marks” (30 March 1841).
Table 1. Twenty-three Cases of Alleged Sexual Misconduct
Brought before the Nauvoo Stake High Council, 1840–1844

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plaintiff vs. Defendant</th>
<th>Date(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Miller vs. Chauncey L. Higbee</td>
<td>20 May 1842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Miller vs. Catherine Warren</td>
<td>25 May 1842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Miller vs. Lyman O. Littlefield</td>
<td>27 May 1842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Miller vs. Darwin Chase</td>
<td>27/28 May 1842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Miller vs. Joel S. Miles</td>
<td>27 May 1842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Miller vs. Justus Morse</td>
<td>28 May 1842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elijah Everett vs. Gustavus Hills</td>
<td>3/4 September 1842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Marks vs. Enoch King and Mary Ware Eggleston</td>
<td>21/28 January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Marks vs. Henry Cook</td>
<td>11 February 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Marks vs. John Thorp and Sarah Miller</td>
<td>21 January 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[William Marks vs.] John C. Annis</td>
<td>21 January 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[William Marks vs.] Thomas Prouse and Charity Thorp</td>
<td>21 January 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[William Marks vs.] William Wilsey</td>
<td>28 January 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[William Marks vs.] John Blazzard and Mrs. Pool</td>
<td>28 January/4 February 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles C. Rich vs. James Reed and Mary Powell</td>
<td>28 January 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[William Marks vs.] John Wells Taylor and Mary Cook</td>
<td>28 January 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Woolsey vs. Job Green</td>
<td>4 March 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac Allred vs. John P. Hendrickson</td>
<td>1 April 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel Brown vs. Elizabeth Rowe</td>
<td>22 July 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin Cowles vs. George J. Adams</td>
<td>1/7 September 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney Roberts vs. Quarts S. Sparks</td>
<td>17/or/18 November 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Smith vs. William Henry Harrison Sagers</td>
<td>25 November 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucinda Sagers vs. William Henry Harrison Sagers</td>
<td>13 April 1844</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of greater significance were accusations brought a year later, in May 1842, against twenty-one-year-old Chauncey L. Higbee during the first in a series of sexually charged inquests. Stories of forbidden seductions sanctioned by Joseph Smith and/or others—notably his loquacious confidant John C. Bennett—had circulated for the past several months. From April 1841 to April 1842, Smith had secretly married eight women and would marry an additional six before year’s end.28 “If you have no accuser,” he told the Saints in November 1841 in words that would be used to legitimize sexual adventurism,

> God will not accuse you. If you have no accuser you will enter heaven, and if you will follow the revelations and instructions which God gives you through me, I will take you into heaven as my back load. If you will not accuse me, I will not accuse you. If you will throw a cloak of charity over my sins, I will over yours—for charity covereth a multitude of sins. What many people call sin is not sin; I do many things to break down superstition, and I will break it down.29

28 See Compton, 4–6.
29 Smith, History of the Church, 4:445.
Five weeks later, he added: "The reason we do not have the Secrets of the Lord revealed unto us is because we do not keep them but reveal them. We do not keep our own secrets but reveal our difficulties to the world even to our enemies. Then how would we keep the secrets of the Lord? Joseph Says I can keep a secret till dooms day." 30 The following March, while surveying his own moral frontiers, Smith published his revision of Abraham's journey with his wife, Sarai, into Egypt (LDS Book of Abraham 2:21–25; cf. Genesis 12:10–20). 31 As literary critic Susan Staker points out, Smith's version shifted the responsibility for Abraham's lying about his relationship with Sarai from himself to God, who was now quoted as saying: "Sarai, thy wife, is a very fair woman to look upon." Because of Smith's relocating of the text's moral voice, Staker continues, "guarding against the consequences of male desire becomes a matter of sacred secrecy, of lying for the Lord. . . . In Smith's revision the boundaries between heaven and earth blur as God implicates himself in the messiest of human affairs, secrets and lies involving male desire and transgressed marital taboos." 32

The next month, Smith broached such a taboo when he propositioned the nineteen-year-old daughter of one of his counselors in the First Presidency. She demurred, and after a few days Smith sent her a letter he hoped would change her mind. "That which is wrong under one circumstance," he argued, "may be and often is, right under another. . . . Everything that God gives us is lawful and right; and it is proper that we should enjoy His gifts and blessings. . . . Blessings offered, but rejected, are no longer blessings. . . . Our Heavenly Father is more liberal in his views, and boundless in his mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe or receive." 33 She was not swayed, told others of the prophet's overtures, slanders followed, and relations between the two families soured. 34

John C. Bennett, the prophet's talented, egotistical ally, had lodged with the Smiths from September 1840 to July 1841. 35 In fact, the thirty-seven-year-old Bennett had been privy to Smith's April 1841 plural marriage and was conversant with his controversial teachings. Consequently, he believed he too was authorized, whether or not Smith conveyed such an impression, to initiate himself and others into the prophet's new order. Smith worried that the enthusiasm with which Bennett embraced the celestial doctrine, and especially his introduction of it to others without Smith's permission, failed to emphasize sufficiently the religious aspects of his revelation and thus exposed the church to the condemnation of nonbelievers. (Smith required a marriage/sealing ceremony be performed with his permission by an authorized priesthood holder prior to sexual contact; Bennett believed that worthy couples, married or not, could

30 Ibid., 479.
33 Quoted in Dean C. Jessee, editor, Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, revised edition (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co./Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 538–539.
34 For an account of this episode, see Richard S. Van Wagoner, Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 294–302.
35 For more on Bennett, see my "John C. Bennett, Joseph Smith, and the Beginnings of Mormon Plural Marriage in Nauvoo," Journal of Mormon History (forthcoming).
engage freely in sexual activity provided they keep their conduct a secret.) By the spring of 1842, Bennett's sexual escapades had made him a liability, especially when rumor connected his and the prophet's names. "We have been informed," Smith and other ranking church leaders (including some already officially introduced to the prophet's teachings) wrote to the Relief Society in late March,

that some unprincipled men, whose names we will not mention at present, have been guilty of such crimes [i.e., debauching the innocent]—We do not mention their names, not knowing but what there may be some among you who are not sufficiently skill'd in Masonry as to keep a secret, therefore, suffice it to say, there are those, and we therefore warn you, & forewarn you, in the name of the Lord, to check & destroy any faith that any innocent person may have in any such character, for we do not want any one to believe any thing as coming from us contrary to the old established morals & virtues & scriptural laws, regulating the habits, customs & conduct of society; and all persons pretending to be authorized by us or having any permit, or sanction from us, are & will be liars & base impostors, & you are authoriz'd on the very first intimation of the kind, to denounce them as such, & shun them as the flying fiery serpent, whether they are prophets, Seers, or revelators: Patriarchs, twelve Apostles, Elders, Priests, Mayors, Generals, City Councillors, Aldermen, Marshalls, Police, Lord Mayors or the Devil, are alike culpable & shall be damned for such evil practices; and if you yourselves adhere to anything of the kind, you also shall be damned.\textsuperscript{36}

Less than two weeks later, Smith angrily "pronounced a curse upon all adulterers, and fornicators, and unvirtuous persons, and those who have made use of my name to carry on their iniquitous designs."\textsuperscript{37} By the end of the month, as word broke of his attempted liaison—which he denied—with his counselor's daughter, Smith complained of a "conspiracy against the peace of my household was made manifest, and it gave me some trouble to counteract the design of certain base individuals, and restore peace. The Lord makes manifest to me many things, which it is not wisdom for me to make public, until others can witness the proof of them."\textsuperscript{38} When Smith shortly afterward threatened to publicize Bennett's libertinism, Bennett first signed into law (at Smith's request and with the city council's approval) a law banning brothels and "adultery, or fornication,"\textsuperscript{39} then resigned as mayor, withdrew (or was expelled, accounts vary) from

\textsuperscript{36}Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Hyrum Smith, Willard Richards, Heber C. Kimball, and Vinson Knight to the Relief Society, ca. 30 March 1842, in Nauvoo Relief Society Minutes, 20 March 1842, typescript in my possession, original in LDS Archives.

\textsuperscript{37}Smith, \textit{History of the Church}, 4:587.

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., 607–608; Dean C. Jessee, editor \textit{The Papers of Joseph Smith: Volume 2: Journal, 1832–1842} (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992), 379.

\textsuperscript{39}The law, as published in the 14 May 1842 edition of \textit{The Wasp}, reads: 

[All brothels or houses of ill fame, erected or being in the city of Nauvoo, be and the same hereby are henceforth prohibited and by law declared public nuisances and that the owners or keepers of such hosues, be fined in a sum of not less than five hundred nor more than fifty thousand dollars & imprisoned for, six months for each offense of one day's continuance of such establishment; and that any person frequenting such establishment, (except on lawful business) shall be fined in the sum of five hundred dollars, and six month's imprisonment for each offense; and further, that for every act of adultery, or fornication, which can be proved, the parties shall be imprisoned six months, and fined, each, in the sum of from five hundred to fifty thousand dollars, and that the individual's own acknowledgement shall be considered sufficient evidence in the case.
the church, and left town by the end of June. Shortly afterward, he began publicly exposing Smith's own secrets, including his letter to his counselor's daughter. It was against this backdrop of clandestine plural marriages that the Nauvoo High Council convened in mid-May 1842.

Chauncey Higbee, second-born son of longtime church stalwart (and occasional high councilor) Elias Higbee, had along with several others fallen under Bennett's intoxicating spell, and on 20 May 1842 Nauvoo's forty-seven-year-old presiding bishop George Miller, who had been investigating Bennett's shady past and had uncovered evidence of an active sexual underground, charged Higbee with "unchaste and unvirtuous conduct with the widow Miller and others." Higbee must have sensed something was amiss—only days earlier, at the prompting of church officials, he had sworn that "he never knew said [Joseph] Smith to countenance any improper conduct whatever, either in public or in private, and that he never did teach me in private or public that an illicit intercourse with females was under any circumstances justifiable and that he never knew him so to teach others." Even so, he does not seem to have fully appreciated the nature of the charges against him (especially since he had been acting in concert with Smith's own brother William) and, when brought before the high council, asked for more time to prepare a response. The council, unaware of Smith's plural marriage activities but eager to stamp out licentiousness, disagreed and immediately called three young women who "testified that [Higbee] had seduced them and at different times been guilty of unchaste and unvirtuous conduct with them and taught the doctrine that it was right to have free intercourse with women if it was kept secret &c and also taught that Joseph Smith authorized him to practise these things &c." Higbee's defense, if he presented—or was allowed to present—one, is not available. But he seems not to have sought forgiveness, for Hyrum Smith, the church's presiding patriarch who would not learn of his younger brother's doctrine until May 1843, moved to make a public example of the young rebel by ousting him from the church and announcing the action in the Times and Seasons (the church's official semi-monthly periodical). (To counter rumors of complicity, Joseph Smith also sued Higbee for slander and defamation.)

40 See Smith, Saintly Scoundrel, 78–91.

41 Bennett first published a series of exposures in the nearby Sangamon Journal, then reissued them that fall in an expanded form in his The History of the Saints; or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842).

42 Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 20 May 1842. Joseph Smith's diary reports that the council met on 21 May 1842 (see Jessee, Papers of Joseph Smith, 386). Also see the brief discussion in Bachman, 226–227. Miller, whom Joseph Smith would subsequently fully instruct in his doctrine of plural marriage, did not take his first celestial wives until after Smith's death. He was excommunicated in 1848 for insubordination and died in 1856.

43 Chauncey L. Higbee, Affidavit, 17 May 1842, printed in Affidavits and Certificates Disproving the Statements and Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett's Letters (Nauvoo, 31 August 1842).

44 It is not clear if Higbee was expelled on the 21st, as the minutes suggest, or on the 24th, as Smith, History of the Church, 5:18, says.

response was to call as witnesses the same women who had testified against him but who he believed could sustain his allegations against Smith. Smith subsequently withdrew the risky civil action, and Higbee mellowed somewhat until 1844 when he enlisted that June with other dissenters to publish the *Nauvoo Expositor*, an event that ultimately precipitated Joseph's and Hyrum's violent deaths in Carthage Jail.

Scandalized by the revelations of Higbee's accusers, the high council, joined by other (unidentified) church officials, met again on 24 May to affirm and take additional testimony from "Mrs Sarah Miller and Miss Margaret and Matilda Neymans . . . relative to the charge against Chancy Higbee and others showing the manner of iniquity practised by them upon female virtue & the unhallowed means by which they accomplished their desires." According to their statements as edited and published by the church in 1844, all three women—sisters Margaret J. and Matilda J. Nyman (in their mid-twenties) and Sarah Miller (née Searcy) (age twenty-seven)—as well as a fourth—Catherine Warren (previously Fuller) (age twenty-two)—testified that Higbee had not only seduced them but had justified his actions in the name of Joseph Smith. In her published testimony, Margaret Nyman reported:

> Some time during the month of March last, Chauncey L. Higbee, came to my mother's house, early one evening, and proposed a walk to a spelling school. My sister Matilda, and myself accompanied him; but, changing our design on the way, we stopped at Mrs. Fuller's: During the evening's interview, he, (as I have since learned,) with wicked lies proposed that I should yield to his desires, and indulge in sexual intercourse with him, stating that such intercourse might be freely indulged in, and was no sin: That any respectable female might indulge in sexual intercourse, and there was no sin in it, providing the person so indulging, keep the same to herself; for there could be no sin where there was no accuser;—and most clandestinely, with wicked lies, persuaded me to yield by using the name of Joseph Smith; and, as I have since learned, totally false and unauthorized; and in consequence of those arguments, I was influenced to yield to my Seducer, Chauncey L. Higbee.

> I further state that I have no personal acquaintance with Joseph Smith, and never heard him teach such doctrines, as stated by Chauncey L. Higbee, either directly or indirectly. I heartily repent before God, asking the forgiveness of my brethren.

Matilda Nyman testified:

> During this spring Chauncey L. Higbee, kept company with me from time to time, and, as I have since learned, wickedly, deceitfully, and with lies in his mouth, urged me vehemently to yield to his desires; that there could be no wrong in having sexual intercourse with any female that could keep the same to herself;—most villainously and lyingly stating that he had been so instructed by Joseph Smith, and that there was no sin where there was no accuser.—Also vowing he would marry me. Not succeeding, he on one occasion, brought one, who affirmed that

---

48 Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 24 May 1842.
49 "Testimony of Margaret J. Nyman v. Chauncey L. Higbee, before the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, in the City of Nauvoo, May 21, 1842," statement signed 24 May 1842, printed in *Nauvoo Neighbor* (29 May 1844).
such intercourse was tolerated by the heads of the Church, I have since found him also to be a
lying conspirator against female virtue and chastity, having never received such teachings from
the heads of the church; but I was at the time partially influenced to believe, in consequence of
the source from whom I received it. I yielded and became subject to the will of my seducer,
Chauncey L. Higbee: and having since found out to my satisfaction, that a number of wicked
men have conspired to use the name of Joseph Smith, or the heads of The Church, falsely and
wickedly to enable them to gratify their lusts, thereby destroying female innocence and virtue, I
repent before God and my brethren and ask forgiveness.

I further testify that I never had any personal acquaintance with Joseph Smith and never
heard him teach such doctrines as Higbee, stated either directly or indirectly.  
Sarah Miller affirmed:

Some two or three weeks since, in consequence of brother Joseph Smith's teachings to the
singers, I began to be alarmed concerning myself, and certain teachings which I had received
from Chauncey L. Higbee, and questioned him (Higbee) about his teaching, for I was pretty
well persuaded, from Joseph's public teachings, that Chauncey had been telling falsehoods; but
Chauncey said that Joseph now taught as he did through necessity, on account of the prejudices
of the people, and his own family particularly, as they had not become believers in the doctrine.
I then became satisfied that all of Chauncey's teachings had been false, and that he had never
been authorized by any one in authority to make any such communication to me. Chauncey L.
Higbee's teaching and conduct were as follows. When he first came to my house soon after the
special conference this spring, Chauncey commenced joking me about my getting married, and
wanted to know how long it had been since my husband died, and soon removed his seat near
me; and began his seducing insinuations by saying it was no harm to have sexual intercourse
with women if they would keep it to themselves, and continued to urge me to yield to his de-
sires, and urged me vehemently, and said he and Joseph were good friends, and he teaches me
this doctrine, and allows me such privileges, and there is no harm in it, and Joseph Smith says
so. I told him I did not believe it, and had heard no such teaching from Joseph, nor from the
stand, but that it was wicked to commit adultery, &c. Chauncey said that did not mean single
women, but married women; and continued to press his instructions and arguments until after
dark, and until I was inclined to believe, for he called God to witness of the truth, and was so
solemn and confident, I yielded to his temptations, having received the strongest assurance from
him that Joseph approved it and would uphold me in it. He also told me that many others were
following the same course of conduct. As I still had some doubts, near the close of our inter-
view, I again suggested my fears that I had done wrong and should loose the confidence of the
brethren, when he assured me that it was right, and he would bring a witness  
51 to confirm what
he had taught. When he come again, I still had doubts, I told him I understood he, (Higbee,)  
had recently been baptized, and that Joseph, when he confirmed him, told him to quit all his in-
quitous practices,—Chauncey said it was not for such things that he was baptized for, do you
think that I would be baptized for such a thing and then go into it so soon again? Chauncey
Higbee, said it would never be known, I told him it might be told in bringing forth. Chauncey
said there was no danger, and that Dr. Bennet understood it, and would come and take it away,
if there was anything.  

50 Matilda J. Nyman, testimony dated 21 May 1842, statement dated 24 May 1842, printed in
Nauvoo Neighbor (29 May 1844).
51 This was William Smith.
Finally, Catherine Warren stated, in part, "I have had an unlawful connexion with Chauncey L. Higbee. Chauncey Higbee, taught the same doctrine as was taught by J. C. Bennet, and that Joseph Smith, taught and practiced those things, but he stated that he did not have it from Joseph, but he had his information from Dr. John C. Bennet. He, Chauncey L. Higbee, has gained his object about five or six times, Chauncey L. Higbee also made propositions to keep me with food, if I would submit to his desires." Additionally, and this did not appear in print, the women implicated by name other young men, including Lyman O. Littlefield (twenty-two and married), Darwin Chase (twenty-six and single), and Joel S. Miles (twenty-five and single).

First, the council wanted to rule on Bishop Miller's charges against Catherine Warren "for unchaste and unvirtuous conduct with John C. Bennett and others." Warren, who had remarried only one month earlier,

---
53 "Extract from the testimony of Catherine Warren vs. Chauncey L. Higbee, before the High Council of the church, &c.," dated 25 May 1842, reprinted in Nauvoo Neighbor (29 May 1844). (See also Willard Richards, Diary, 25 May 1844, LDS Archives: "copying affidavits &c for C. L. Higbee for the Neighbor.") All of these statements were subsequently published in the serialized "History of Joseph Smith" Deseret News (9 September 1857); Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star 23 (12 October 1861): 657–658, but not in Smith, History of the Church. See also Robert D. Hutchins, "Joseph Smith III: Moderate Mormon," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1977, 33. The originals are housed in LDS Archives. Fuller also stated that William Smith attempted to seduce her, offering to bring her food if she would not remarry.

54 Littlefield had married Olive Andrews (born 24 September 1818) on 16 March 1840. Also named, but never charged, was George Thatcher. As previously noted, John Bennett had resigned from the church on 17 May and left town the following month. William Smith remained behind, was never brought before the high council, and in late 1843 married two plural wives with his older brother's permission. In 1845, following Joseph Smith's death, he was excommunicated for insubordination.

55 Bennett, whose mixture of fact and fantasy makes it difficult to know when he is telling the truth, later that same year characterized "the widow Fuller, now Mrs. Warren" as "a luscious woman, with a good head [phrenologically speaking], amativeness at eleven, the same size as Joe's [i.e., Joseph Smith's]," and alleged that she "confessed to [intercourse with] forty men and beasts." Quoted in "Anti-Mormon Lecture," New York Herald (4 September 1842): 2. Bennett would later describe her as: "not particularly attractive in person, though far from being ugly." History of the Saints, 253. The identities of these four women had not yet been publicized by the church; however, Bennett correctly named Warren, the Nyman sisters, and the "widow Miller" (whom he described in History of the Saints as "notorious . . . a voluptuous woman, of ordinary capacity, black hair and eyes, round features, and free and lively disposition." 255–256.) According to records Bennett allegedly possessed, Margaret Nyman's and Sarah Miller's testimony before the high council (date unspecified) read, in part:

Inquisitor.—Margaret, the Lord has revealed that you have been guilty of illicit intercourse with men; confess, and your fault shall be forgiven; if not, God's curse will fall upon you. Margaret—I will confess, I am young and once was innocent, but *****

Inq.—who was the first man deprived you of your virtue? Mar.—Mr. W.—Inq.—How came you to yield? Mar.—He said Joseph approved on it, and I yielded * * * * * Inq.—Any others? Mar.—Yes Inq.—Give the next name. Mar.—You must excuse me. Inq.—If you do not,
confessed to the charge and give the names of several others who had been guilty of having unlawful intercourse with her stating that they taught the doctrine that it was right to have free intercourse with women and that the heads of the Church also taught and practised it which things caused her to be led away thinking it to be right but becoming convinced that it was not right and learning that the heads of the church did not believe nor practise such things she was willing to confess her sins and did repent before God for what she had done and desired earnestly that the Council would forgive her and covenanted that she would henceforth do so no more.

Following her admissions, "she was restored to fellowship by the unanimous vote of the Council."57 Warren remained in Nauvoo with her husband, William Warren, and on 29 January 1846 was endowed in the Nauvoo temple. (The Nyman sisters were never formally brought up on charges before the council; Sarah Miller would be summoned again in early 1843.)

Littlefield, Chase, and Miles—all apparently baffled by the attention—stood before the council two days later. Littlefield, a fledgling writer and poet,58 had three months earlier provoked a minor controversy when, working for the *Times and Seasons*, he had slipped the following anonymous cheeky sentence into one of the paper’s routine marriage announcements: "and when life wanes and they find a peaceful abode in the ‘nan’ow house’ [i.e., coffin], may the many outs and ins they have made, leave to the world an abundant posterity to celebrate their glorious example."59 Given the rumors of rampant lasciviousness, Littlefield’s double

---

56 Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 25 May 1842.
57 Ibid.
59 "Married," *Times and Seasons* 3 (15 February 1842): 701. Either shortly before or after the appearance of Littlefield’s notice, Smith filed charges of slander against the young printer’s apprentice “and obtained a judgment of $500 bonds to keep the peace” (Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:514–515). It is not clear if Smith was responding to the published notice or to rumors that may have connected his and Littlefield’s names.
entendre could not have been more ill-timed. Joseph Smith's critics jumped on the titillating notice, and the *Times and Seasons*'s past editor quickly apologized for the gaffe, stressing: “from an intimate acquaintance of near seven years with Pres't Joseph Smith, I never yet have seen a single indecent or unbecoming word or sentence, from his pen, but to the reverse.”

Littlefield too clarified: “I hope the editor of the [Warsaw] Signal [i.e., a neighboring newspaper critical of the Mormons] will do you [Joseph Smith] the justice to exculpate you from the wholesale charges which I have been, in some degree, the means of calling upon your head; and, if he must blame any person for the notice, let his anathemas, like an avalanche, flow upon me—I will bear the burden of my own foibles.”

All three defendants denied Bishop Miller’s accusations of “improper and unvirtuous conduct and... teaching false doctrine.” (The latter charge related to using Smith’s name in gaining access to women.) “I was taught that doctrine or principle [of plural marriage],” Littlefield years later testified, “the doctrine was talked of between myself and a great many other parties, and always with the understanding that it had its origin with Joseph Smith the Prophet, himself.”

Despite their protestations, Littlefield and Miles were found guilty; Chase complained about the “want of evidence” and was granted a delay of one day. Both Littlefield and Miles were “disfellowshiped” until they could make sufficient “satisfaction to this Council.” When the council reconvened the next day, they determined that Chase’s guilt could not be proven. “The President”—either Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, or William Marks—then “decided that he [Chase] should be restored to full fellowship.” According to the minutes, eight councilors agreed, but four wanted first to hear additional arguments for acquittal and to explain why they “did not accede to the Presidents decisions,” after which the president “again called on the council to sanction his decision which was done unanimously.”

Though not a high councilor, Apostle Wilford Woodruff attended the proceedings. “The first Presidency & The High Council & virtuous part of the Church,” he recorded,

are making an exertion about these days to cleanse the Church from adulterors fornicators & evil persons for their are such persons crept into our midst. The high council have held a number of meeting of late & their researches have disclosed much iniquity & a number been cut off from the church. I met with the High Council to day on the trial of L. O. Littlefield Joel S Miles & Darwin Chase. The two former were cut of for Adultery & the case of D Chase was put of till tomorrow.

28th The case of D. Chase was tryed & he restored to fellowship by the majority of own[ly?] 1 vote.

---

61 L[yman]. O. Littlefield to “President Joseph Smith,” in ibid.
63 Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 27 May 1842.
64 Ibid., 28 May 1844. Some of the quoted material is crossed out in the original.
65 Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, Scott G. Kenney, editor, nine volumes (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–1985), 2:177. Woodruff’s account of Chase’s trial, which he may not have attended but relied on the reports of others, differs from that contained in the high council’s official minutes. Perhaps Woodruff records only the first vote, not the final.
Though clearly angered by the proceedings, Littlefield and Miles subsequently returned to full fellowship. “It is well known to yourself as to me,” Littlefield wrote to Joseph Smith in early 1844, that there has a difference existed between us for sometime. At least, I have had good reasons to believe that your feelings were somewhat insenced at me. My object in penning this letter is to have the matter honorably and amicably adjusted. . . . I take this course because I have learned that to Joseph Smith have been committed the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven which are not to be taken away in this world or in the world to come. Then there is no sacrifice too great for me to lay at your feet. All I possess, all I am, all I expect to be, is dedicated to the cause of God . . . . My errors have principally been errors of the head and not of the heart. I have, at times, been very weak in the faith, but I thank my God that I have never lifted my voice or pen in denunciations of Mormonism. . . . I close by saying it is human to err, but magnanimous to forgive. 66

Littlefield subsequently divorced, remarried, migrated to the Rocky Mountains, wrote against John C. Bennett (without noting his own connection) in 1888, 67 and died in Utah in 1893; 68 Miles testified against one of the prophet’s critics in 1844. 69 Chase remained in Nauvoo, was endowed in the Nauvoo temple in 1846, but later left the church, moved to California, and died during the Battle of Bear River in 1863. 70

66 Lyman O. Littlefield to Joseph Smith, 10 February 1844, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Archives.
68 See Susan Easton Black, Membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1848, five volumes (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, Religious Studies Center, 1984–88), s.v. “Littlefield, Lyman Omer.” Littlefield married Adeline Amarilla Hamblin (born 18 September 1823) in the Nauvoo temple on 31 January 1846 (subsequently divorced), and later Louisa Young (born 1 May 1822) on 1 January 1851. Littlefield’s first wife, Olive Andrews, married Joseph Smith (by proxy) for eternity and Brigham Young for time on 15 January 1846; apparently, she later married Orra Metcalf Lisk, circa 1852, in New Orleans, Louisiana.
69 See “Joel S. Miles, swore,” Times and Seasons 5 (15 May 1844): 540. Perhaps as fallout from Miles’s case, his younger brother, Ira S. Miles (age twenty-three), two weeks later brought before the high council a complaint against Amanda Smith for “unchristian-like conduct. In stating that my wife, Mary K. Miles, has had too frequent intercourse with Joseph McCall, at my house, at different times and other places thereby insinuating that she (that is my wife) is guilty of adultery with said Joseph McCall.” Smith was found guilty of not taking her concerns first to the Mileses. She apologized and was allowed to retain her membership in the church. (See Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 10 June 1842.) Although it is not known if Smith was a member of Nauvoo’s Relief Society at this time, the society’s president, Emma Smith, had less than two months earlier instructed her colleagues: “the disagreeable business of searching out those that were iniquitous, seem’d to fall on her—said it was an unpleasant task, but her desire was to do good—wish’d all the members of the Society to assist her—said it was necessary [to] begin at home.” (Nauvoo Relief Society Minutes, 14 April 1842).
70 See Black, s.v. “Chase, Darwin J.”; Woodruff, 6:96.
Also called before the high council on 28 May 1842 was Justus Morse (age thirty-three). Charged with "unchaste and unvirtuous conduct with the daughter of the Widow Neyman &c. &c.," Morse declined to attend and instead asked that "his name be struck off of the Church Books as he did not wish to stand a trial." Married since 1832 to Elizabeth Towne and the father of as many as six children, Morse had also apparently succumbed to Bennett's wiles and did not want to encourage an airing of his case. The council may have considered allowing him to withdraw, but evidently concluded not to set a precedent, declared him guilty, and ordered "he (the defendant) be disfellowshipped," presumably in absentia. Morse also eventually returned to fellowship, was called in April 1844 on a mission to campaign for Joseph Smith's bid for the U.S. presidency, was endowed and sealed in the Nauvoo temple in January 1846, traveled to Utah and later to California, joined the rival Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now Community of Christ), and died in Ohio in 1887.

Shock waves from Higbee's trial and especially Bennett's sensational public attacks reverberated throughout the summer. Despite the ongoing controversies, Smith married in late July his first teenaged bride, Sarah Ann Whitney, with her parents' permission but without Emma's knowledge. Three weeks later, he wrote to his celestial in-laws:

all three of you can come and See me in the fore part of the night . . . I have a room intirely by myself, . . . I know it is the will of God that you should comfort me now in this time of affliction . . . the only thing to be careful of, is to find out when Emma comes then you cannot be safe, but when she is not here, there is the most perfect saly . . . burn this letter as soon as you read it;

71 Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 28 May 1842.
72 See Smith, History of the Church, 6:337.
73 See Black, s.v. "Morse, Justice (Justus)." Seven months before his death at age seventy-eight, Morse swore to an affidavit detailing, in part, his exposure to "the doctrine of sealing, or marrying for eternity, called spiritual wifery." Morse alleged that he had been introduced to the celestial teaching in 1842 by Amasa Lyman, and that a year later "my own wife and another woman were sealed to me for eternity in Macedonia, by father John Smith, uncle to the Prophet. This woman was the wife of another man, but was to be mine in eternity and the said father John Smith, also taught me that if an unmarried woman was sealed to me that she was mine for time as well as eternity and that I was not limited as to number." He also asserted that "In the years 1843 and 4, Elder Amasa Lyman and father John Smith again taught me the doctrine of spiritual wifery or polygamy, and in the years 1845 and 6, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball taught me the doctrine also." Affidavit, dated 23 March 1887, reported in Charles A. Shook, The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy (Mendota, Illinois: The W.A.C.P. Ass'n, n.d.), 175–179. However, John Smith did not take his first plural wife until August 1843, and Lyman not until September 1844. Furthermore, John Smith did perform some eternal marriage ceremonies, but apparently not until after Joseph Smith's death in June 1844. More than likely, Morse confused the details of his experiences with Bennett, Lyman, and John Smith. He may have married polygamously after Joseph Smith's death, but probably not until 1846. Although his conclusions about Morse's pre-1844 plural marriages are debatable, Michael S. Riggs's "'His Word Was as Good as His Note': The Impact of Justus Morse's Mormonism(s) on His Families," John Whitmer Historical Association Journal 17 (1997): 49–80, is an informative treatment of Morse.
keep all locked up in your breasts, my life depends upon it. . . . I think Emma wont come to-
night if she dont fail to come to night.\footnote{Quoted in Compton, 346–349. “Of course these things had to be kept an inviolate secret,” wrote the mother of Smith’s new wife; “and as some were false to their vows and pledges, persecution arose, and caused grievous sorrow to those who had obeyed, in all purity and sincerity, the requirements of the celestial order of marriage.” Elizabeth Ann Whitney, “Reminiscences,” in Carol Cornwall Madsen, editor In Their Own Words: Women and the Story of Nauvoo (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1994), 202.}

Also by this time, Smith had instructed his close friend Heber C. Kimball (as well as Vin-son Knight, Brigham Young, and perhaps Reynolds Cahoon, who had all married plurally with Smith’s permission) to take a new wife without first informing his legal wife.\footnote{For the dates of their marriages, see George D. Smith, “Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy, 1841–1846: A Preliminary Demographic Report,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 27 (spring 1994): 37–72. For an example of the prophet’s instruction to wed without first informing one’s legal wife, see the experience of Heber C. Kimball, in Stanley B. Kimball, Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 94–95.} On the other hand, Apostle Orson Pratt refused in late July to publicly endorse the prophet’s good character, convinced he had tried to seduce his wife, and as a result was suspended the next month from the Quorum of the Twelve.\footnote{See Gary James Bergera, “Seniority in the Twelve: The 1875 Realignment of Orson Pratt,” Journal of Mormon History 18 (spring 1992): 23–37. Pratt was restored to his office and standing in January 1843.}

\footnote{Quoted in Jessee, Papers of Joseph Smith, 446–447.}

A defiant-sounding Smith, in hiding to avoid arrest for the at-
temted assassination of a former Missouri governor, proclaimed shortly afterward:

O[ron]. P[ Pratt] and others of the same class caused trouble by telling stories to people who
would betray me and they must believe these stories because his wife told him so! I will live to
trample on their ashes with the soles of my feet. I prophecy in the name of Jesus Christ that such
shall not prosper, they shall be cut down in their own plans. . . . I can kick them off my heels, as

The prophet’s bravado helped to kindle a new round of inquiries, and five days later, on 3 September 1842, the high council debated charges against Gustavus Hills. Hills, age thirty-
eight, was a poet and musician, who served as a church clerk, directed Nauvoo’s “Musical Lyceum,” and worked for a time as assistant editor of the Times and Seasons. He had married
Elizabeth Ann Mansfield in 1827, was the father of six children, and had joined the LDS Church in late 1840.\footnote{See G[ustavus]. Hills, “Prosperity of Zion,” Times and Seasons 2 (15 April 1841): 389; “Choir of the Stake of Zion in the City of Nauvoo,” Times and Seasons 3 (1 January 1842): 653; Gustavus Hills, “Salutory,” and “University of Nauvoo. Musical Lyceum,” Times and Seasons 3 (15 January 1842): 663, 666; Black, s.v. “Hills, Gustavus”; and Michael Hicks, Mormonism and Music: A History (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 41–42.} As both a professor of music at the University of Nauvoo and an assis-
tant justice of the Municipal Court, he had become acquainted with the ubiquitous John C. Bennett (chancellor and mayor). Hills’s adoption of Bennett’s views on spiritual wifery led to
his being accused of “illicit intercourse with a certain woman by the name of Mary Clift by which she is with child and for teaching the said Mary Clift that the heads of the Church prac-
tised such conduct & that the time would come when men would have more wives than one &c.”

Hills and Cliff had apparently met late the previous year when both were members of Nauvoo’s choir. By September 1842, Cliff, age twenty-seven, was eight months pregnant, and her obvious condition no doubt prompted some attention.

Cliff was not present when the high council convened on 3 September but had given a deposition on 29 August regarding her situation. The council decided it needed additional information and asked for a second affidavit. When councilors reassembled the next day, both of Cliff’s statements were read aloud. According to her first affidavit, Cliff, “an unmarried woman,” was pregnant with a child which, if born alive, may be a bastard and that Gustavus Hills was the father of such child. The said Gustavus Hills about 4 or 5 weeks since requested deponent to remove to Columbus (Adams county) until after her confinement and he would assist her with support as far as his means would permit; and that such illicit conduct was practiced by the heads of the Church and that the time would come when men would have more wives than one, and he wished that time would come.

In the second, she reported that Hills had told her “he was intimate with another woman in town besides his wife & that the authorities of the church countenanced and practiced illicit connexion with women & said there was no harm in such things provided they kept it secret.” Hills reportedly suggested she chemically induce an abortion but, following her refusal, told her to leave Nauvoo until after the baby’s birth.

The high council called additional witnesses. Esther Smith gave evidence that defendant told her it was lawful for people to hold illicit intercourse if they only held their peace & that the time would it was agreeable to the practice of some of the leading men or heads of the Church. It took place the thursday before the Choir was dismissed in the upper part of Town near the Bluff at 9 O’clock in the evening, she was going home—he offered & went to accompany her and this took place upon the way, she further testified that Mary Cliff joined the Choir at Br Joseph Smiths.

Hills then produced witnesses in his defense, hoping to show that he had been deceived, but “none gave any evidence that he was innocent.” Councilors debated the evidence, apparently decided that Hills had been duped but still required punishment, and concluded to disfellowship him. Less than two weeks later, Nauvoo’s municipal court, acting on a complaint from Cliff’s father, ruled that Hills had, in fact, fathered Cliff’s unborn child. Hills agreed to pay Cliff $200 plus $20 a year for three years if the child survived birth. Cliff’s son, whom she named Jason,

79 Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 3 September 1842. Also see the brief discussion in Bachman, 227.
80 Ibid.
81 Mary Cliff, Affidavit, 29 August 1842, in Journal History, under date.
82 Mary Cliff, Affidavit, 4 September 1842, quoted in Bachman, 227.
83 Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 4 September 1842.
84 The details of this episode were first published in Hicks, 41-42. The agreement Hills signed on 15 September 1842 is housed in Newell K. Whitney Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, and reads:

Know all men by these presents that I Gustavus Hills of the county of Hancock and state of Illinois am held and firmly bound unto Mary Cliff of the county and state aforesaid in the penal sum of
was born the next month but died the following year in late October 1843. Hills was implicated in another case brought before the high council (see below), but was soon restored to fellowship, continued to serve on the municipal court, and in early October 1843 was clerk of a special churchwide conference. He was endowed in the Nauvoo temple in late December 1845 and was sealed to his wife, Elizabeth, in 1846 but died of "congestive fever" later that year.  

Clift married Theordore Turley, with whom she had immigrated to the United States three and a half years earlier, as a plural wife in early 1844 and traveled with him to Utah. Members of Turley's family subsequently antedated the date of the couple's plural marriage to late 1841/early 1842 to provide Jason with legitimate parentage. 

While no new allegations of sexual misconduct were presented to the high council during the remainder of the year, this was due not to a dearth of misbehavior, but to the time needed to investigate such charges. For the last two Saturdays—the 21st and 28th—of January 1843 witnessed a flurry of sexually based questions that had haunted more than a few of Mormonism's converts: Can a husband or wife, separated for whatever reason from his or her spouse, remarry without first securing a divorce? 

Henry H. Wilson [age thirty-three] appeared before the Council and desired to know, whether, in his present condition, it would be wisdom, and also if it would be justifiable by the laws of God and man, for him to unite himself in matrimony, or not, as he had a living wife.

It appeared from evidence adduced that his wife was a very contentious, disobedient and ungodly woman and that she would not submit to good order, or abide his council and al-

---

Two hundred Dollars, which payment will and truly to be made I bind myself, my heirs and legal representatives firmly by these bonds sealed with my own seal and dated this 15th day of September in the year of our Lord One thousand Eight hundred and forty two.

The condition of the above obligation is such that whereas the said Mary Cliff hath made oath that she is pregnant with a child by the said Gustavus Hills and has agreed with the said Gustavus to submit the matter of the support of the same to referees, now if the said child shall be born alive the said Gustavus Hills agrees to pay the said Mary Cliff Twenty Dollars annually for Three years in quarterly payments, in provisions or clothing suited to the condition of the said child, but should the child die, then or should the said Gustavus Hills demand the care and maintenance of said child at any time, then the obligation to pay as aforesaid is to cease from the time of such decease or demand and if the said Gustavus Hills shall will and truly comply with the conditions of the above obligation or should the child die, or its care and maintenance be demanded as aforesaid then this obligation to cease and be void. And further at or before the delivery of said child the said Gustavus Hills shall pay five dollars in money and goods (?) for such an occasion besides the payments before mentioned this obligation being complied with as aforesaid then and in that case the obligation and everything therein contained is to cease, otherwise to remain in full force and effect.

Given under my hand and seal the day and year above written

85 See Journal History, 22 January 1847.
86 Turley's plural marriage to Clift probably occurred at around the same time he married her sisters Eliza and Sarah Ellen Clift on 6 March and 26 April 1844.
87 See Turley Family Book, 56.
88 Of the cases discussed below, the following were first briefly noted by name in Bachman, 130–133: John Annis, John Blazzard, Henry Cook, Mary Hoag, Sarah Miller, Mrs. Pool, Mary Powell, John Thomas Prows, James Reed, John Wells Taylor, Charity Thorp, John Thorp, and Henry Wilson.
together refused to live with and that they had been apart for the last five years and many other things which was unbecoming &c.

After which it was decided by President Hyrum Smith and William Marks, that if he feels himself justified and can sustain himself against the laws of the land, that he is clear as far as they were concerned ((ie) the jurisdiction of the High Council) and was at liberty to marry again on the aforesaid conditions.\(^8^9\)

Additionally, the church strongly discouraged marriage outside the faith: “They, who marry out of the church, are considered weak in the faith . . . [and] must be considered as desirous to please themselves rather than God, entering into temptation voluntarily, which, in the end, will lead to the most lamentable consequences.\(^9^0\) Such advice placed enormous pressure on converts whose spouses had not joined them in baptism to find new partners. These thorny issues had come up before, and councilors knew that by approving a form of common law divorce, they were also sanctioning a form of polygamy. The challenge was to make certain that a couple was irreconcilably incompatible—usually based on evidence of adultery, physical abuse, et cetera—before permitting one spouse to seek another without the benefit of divorce. The high council would have an opportunity to put its ruling to test before day’s end.

Councilors then moved on to what they assumed would be their first case—charges against Enoch King and Mary Ware Eggleston for “living in adultery; and unchristian-like conduct”—but because of a “want of proper evidence as neither party was ready for trial,” they decided instead to investigate Henry Cook’s alleged “unchristianlike conduct, for selling your wife &c. &c.” The thirty-nine-year-old Cook vehemently denied selling his wife, Mary Hoag, whom he had married seven months earlier on 13 June 1842, insisting that a joke told at her expense had been misunderstood. According to the council minutes:

\[
\text{[I]t appeared from evidence, that Cook had lost his wife [i.e., Nancy Bingham, m. ca. 1828, d. ca. 1841] not long since and was left with three children and being in destitute circumstances, and not in a condition to keep house, thought that he had best get married again and advised with some of his friends who also thought it best if he could get a suitable companion, not long afterwards, upon a short acquaintance, and the recommendation of some of his friends he got married to Mary **** not long after this he found that she was in the habit of traveling about at}
\]

\(^8^9\) Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 21 January 1843. Although his first wife is unidentified, Wilson married Frances Kelley three months later on 23 April 1843 (see Black, s.v. “Wilson, Henry Hardy”).

The high council had skirted the issue a year earlier when it ruled on Jesse Turpin’s case in April 1842. Turpin, age twenty-five, had married Eliza Ann Boggess, age seventeen, on 24 December 1840. Less than six months later, he had been disfellowshipped for allegedly marrying another man’s wife. He then appealed his punishment, arguing that “he had not been cut off legally . . . there being only one witness and his testimony circumstantial.” The high council agreed that there “were no evidences given which would give any reason to believe that he had been guilty of the charge,” and ordered that he “be restored to his former fellowship & official standing in the Church.” Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 22 April 1842, and Bachman, 129–130; see also the notices regarding Turpin in *Times and Seasons* 2 (16 August 1841): 514, and 3 (2 May 1842): 771. The Turpins subsequently bore six children, but divorced ca. 1855. Jesse died in 1854 in Kansas, Eliza in 1891 in Utah. See Black, s.v., “Turpin, Jesse,” and “Boggess, Eliza Ann.”

\(^9^0\) “On Marriage,” *Times and Seasons* 2 (1 June 1841): 433.
night when there was no need of it &c. and that she was would shamefully misuse his children & set bad examples before them, use very indecent language to them &c also would abuse him & insult him without a cause and entirely refuse to be subject to him or be under his control, boasting that she would be governed by no man and threaten to use violence on him and his children and that she would go off and say she would leave him, but come back again and many such like improprieties, and that he had remonstrated against such proceedings with as much patience as could be expected under such circumstances and used every method to bring her to her duty that he thought would avail anything with her and afterwards that he had whipped her pretty severely (which was his own testimony) thinking that might bring her to her duty; that he did not sell her but something had been said about it which was understood as a joke by himself and the witnesses but the party making the offer held it as a bargain & so did she. it also appeared that he had formerly been a civil upright man who desired to live in peace and good order, all of which was abundantly proven.

Hyrum Smith, who joined the council as one of President Marks's advisors, "spoke at some length on the subject," delivered to Cook "a very appropriate and severe reprimand for using the rod whipping his wife," but felt that "Cook had acted as well as could be expected under his circumstances." Following Smith's lead, the council voted unanimously to acquit Cook of all charges.91 (Cook subsequently married Lovina Thayes on 5 November 1843, was endowed with and sealed to his wife in the Nauvoo temple in late January 1846, and moved to Utah where he died in 1869.)92 Mary Hoag, who shortly after leaving Cook had remarried, would be asked to account for her actions before the end of the month. (Cook had either offered to sell Hoag for her weight in catfish to the man who then married her, or the man offered to pay that amount for her, which Cook reportedly accepted. Either way, Cook insisted that such talk was strictly a joke.)93

Next, the council ruled on charges against John Thorp and the "widow, Sarah Miller, said now to be the wife of John Thorp," for "living in adultery and unchristian-like conduct." (Miller had appeared before the council the previous year to testify of her involvement with Chauncey Higbee and others.) The couple had wed on 6 December 1842, despite Thorp's being legally married. Thorp, who sensed that being separated from his first wife did not permit his marrying a second one, elected not to attend the trial, worried that "he would be arrested by the civil law and sent to the penitentiary for Bigamy," which the council took as evidence of guilt. On the other hand, Miller "plead ignorance saying she did not know but she had a right to marry him that Thorp used many arguments to induce her to have him and finely convinced her that it was right." After "much was said on the subject," the charges against both were "sustained in the fullest sense," and the council unanimously voted to "cut [them] off from the church."94 (Councillors may have felt that Miller had been sufficiently warned earlier not to entangle herself in

91 Ibid.
92 Black, s.v. "Cook, Henry Lyman."
93 The incident took on a life of its own, and nearly forty-five years later, Wilhelm Wymetal, in Mormon Portraits (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Tribune, 1886), commented: "[T]here was a great deal of swapping and exchanging done in Nauvoo as to wives. Old Cooks sold his wife for a load of catfish, and from that time on he was always called 'Catfish Cooks'" (68).
94 Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 21 January 1843.
such affairs and consequently did not merit any mercy.) Thorp and Miller would soon separate, and Miller would remarry before the end of the year.

The fourth case brought before the council, still on the 21st, concerned John C. Annis's having performed Mary Hoag's civil marriage to John Wells Taylor on 27 November 1842, while she was still legally wed to Henry Cook. Annis, age fifty-eight, "frankly confessed" to having performed the illegal marriage and "manifested a spirit of deep repentance and remorse for what he had done and was willing to make any satisfaction which would be required &c." Hyrum Smith "reprimanded Annis for what he had done, without understanding his duty &c." but recommended, which the council approved, that he be acquitted. (Annis was endowed in the Nauvoo temple in early 1846 and died three years later.)

After several grueling hours, an exhausted council heard the last case of the day involving charges of "the crime of adultery and other unchristian-like conduct" against John Thomas Prows (also Prouse) and his wife, Charity Arms Thorp. Prows, age fifty-one and recently widowed, had hired Thorp (still legally married to John Thorp, whose case the council had just adjudicated) as a housekeeper and soon ascertained that she had some difficulty with her husband and that they did not live together and that he did not provide for her as he should &c and that he became more & more attached to her the more he became acquainted, and also his children became acquainted attached to her and did not want her to leave their house and often solicited him to marry her which at last he did.

His reasons in justification of himself was that Thorp abused her and did not provide for her and because of the attachment of his children to her and more especially after Thorp got married to Sarah Miller &c all this was the statement of the parties and strengthened by other testimony.

Prows and Thorp had married on 21 December 1842, believing that in view of the Thorps' separation, they were free to solemnize their relationship. Hyrum Smith was obviously annoyed at both the Thorps and the Prowses and "spoke at [length] upon the subject showing the iniquity of their conduct that they were living in adultery." He urged the council to disfellowship the Prowses, which they then voted unanimously to do. (The Prowses remained in Nauvoo, but apparently did not travel west with the body of the Saints in 1846. John Prows died in Kentucky in 1865.)

Reconvening the next week on 28 January, the council faced a similarly full docket. First, they ruled on William Wilsey's having performed the illegal civil ceremony between John Thomas Prows and Charity Thorp. Wilsey, age forty-five, pleaded guilty and said he "was sorry." Following testimony in Wilsey's behalf, Hyrum Smith conceded that he "had done wrong, But believed that he had through debility of body and mind done more than right but that he might be forgiven." William Marks added that all "Elders should be cautious & wise in future," and moved that Wilsey be acquitted, which the council approved.

---

95 Ibid.
96 Black, s.v. "Annis, John C."
97 Nauvoo High Council Minutes," 21 January 1843.
98 Black, s.v. "Prows, John Thomas."
99 Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 28 January 1843.
Next, the council heard evidence of adultery from a string of witnesses against and for John Hopwood Blazzard (also Bleazard, Blezard, and Blazard) and a Mrs. Pool. According to Thomas Miller, “Mrs Pool had a husband in England Viz Mr Pool that he and she had difficulties, yet not very serious or very uncommon, not on account of any adultery—parties separated—not divorced.” Ann Booth then asserted that “Mr Pool wished to continue to live with [Mrs. Pool].” Mary Hardman countered that “Mr Pool did not like to live with his wife; loved and respected her and that she sought occasion to have him speak evil against her, to enable her to quit him, and that they parted with each other affectionately when she left England.” Elder D. Wilding said that “he never gave any advise for her to marry, or to leave her husband, believes she had no right to marry.” Blazzard, age thirty-four, then testified that he had sought Apostle Brigham Young’s advice, that Young had replied he “would not give leave to marry, [and] if he married he must be for himself.” Gustavus Hills, who by now had returned to full fellowship, reported that Blazzard had asked his opinion, that he had “answered it was wrong in the statute,” but that Blazzard had encouraged him to seek Joseph Smith’s counsel. Mrs. Pool had written a letter to the prophet, accusing her husband of “ill usage,” and explaining that he “was cross and used her roughly whenever she was in a family pregnant he beat her, never beat her only when pregnant until they both joined the Church after which he was more cross but did not beat her.” After reading the letter, Smith had “advised that Blazzard and Mrs Pool be married,” which ceremony Hills performed. Hyrum Smith, increasingly sensitive to the rumors of polygamy in the church, disagreed with his brother, and instead urged the couple not to marry “unless she was divorced from her husband, and would be wrong &c but gave it as his opinion that they now live in adultery, that they can not be retained in fellowship.” The council endorsed Hyrum’s opinion and expelled the couple from the church.\\n\\n(However, questions lingered, and when the council met the next week, new evidence was introduced accusing Mr. Pool of adultery, after which it was agreed that Blazzard and Mrs Pool be readmitted “to fellowship by baptism.”) Blazzard and Pool’s marriage soon failed, and Blazzard married Sarah Miller—who had left John Thomas Thorp—ten months later on 23 November 1843. The Blazzards remained in Nauvoo, migrated with the main body of the church to Utah, where he died in 1871.

Immediately after its decision to excommunicate Blazzard and Pool on 28 January, the council took a short recess, after which it decided once again to postpone the case against Enoch King and Mary Ware Eggleston. They then moved to charges of “adultery by living together” leveled against James Reed and Mary Powell (ages unknown) by the man who had performed their civil marriage one month earlier, future LDS apostle Charles C. Rich. Reed, Powell, and two witnesses were present. Thomas Evins (or Ivins) reported that “Mrs Powell’s husband lived in pursuit of illicit conduct with females, knew he tried to marry another woman.” Charlotte Arthur continued that “Mrs Powell’s husband was of bad character, 3 years last June since he left Mrs Powell.” Reed added that he had understood “Mr Powell was about to get married,” and Mrs. Powell explained that “Mr Powell was endeavouring to get married, [and] denied to have been married to Mrs Powell [so] she got a certificate of the marriage, [but]

100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., 4 February 1843.
102 Black, s.v., “Bleazard, John Hopwood.”
Powell refused to support her (Mrs Powell) and that he was living in adultery with another woman.” The council was persuaded by the evidence of a permanent rupture in the Powells’ marriage, acquitted Reed and Powell of all charges, and reaffirmed their fellowship in the church.\textsuperscript{103}

For their final ruling of the day, councilors decided to tie up loose ends remaining in the case against “John Wells Taylor and Mary Cook, wife of Henry Cook, (alias the cat fish woman).” (Taylor apparently continued to insist that he had purchased his wife from Henry Cook.) It is not clear from the minutes if either defendant was present. But after reviewing the previous week’s minutes, councilors summarily expelled both from the church.\textsuperscript{104}

When the council met two weeks later, on 11 February 1843, they resolved the much-delayed trial of Enoch King and Mary Ware Eggleston. (King, age twenty-one, had married Eggleston [also Igguldin], age twenty-six, on 30 March 1841.) Eggleston had given birth only three weeks earlier to the couple’s first child. A convert from England, Eggleston had previously married sometime before 1835 and borne two children (both of whom had died before the age of four). However, her husband had not joined her in immigrating to Nauvoo, and Eggleston found herself separated from him by her new religion and in a position not unfamiliar to other converts. Though the council’s minutes of the case are brief, the couple presented a persuasive defense, and was “unanimously acquited by the Council in Council of the whole.”\textsuperscript{105}

King and Eggleston remained in Nauvoo, were endowed and sealed in the Nauvoo temple in late January 1846, migrated to Utah, raised eight children, and died in 1895 (King) and in 1911 (Eggleston).\textsuperscript{106}

The next three cases of alleged sexual misconduct—the last before Hyrum Smith read to the council his brother’s revelation on plural marriage later that summer—were presented in March, April, and July. In the first, Job E. Green, age thirty, was charged with “unchristian-like conduct” for having “made an attempt to go to bed [with] two young females and acted otherwise very imprudently at the time.” Green, whose twenty-seven-year-old wife Floretta Pierce (b. 1835) had given birth to their fifth child two months earlier, pleaded not guilty. After the evidence was presented, the council concluded that since “there being but one witness which was went to establish the most important item,” the charge was “not sustained” and Green was exonerated.\textsuperscript{107} Less than a month later, the council ruled on the following charges against Jordan P. Hendrickson, age thirty-four:

First, that he married a second woman when his first wife was living, from which he was not released by the laws of God or of man consequently committed adultery. Second, that he told the second woman before he was married to her and also others that he had a bill of divorcement from his wife. Third, For abusing & neglecting her and not administering to the wants of the second woman while she was on her death bed. Fourth For slandering the character & speaking evil of her since death.

Hendrickson, married three weeks earlier to Frances Hymphrys (age unknown), pleaded not guilty. The minutes do not record what evidence was presented, but Hendrickson had probably

\textsuperscript{103} Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 28 January 1843.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 11 February 1843.

\textsuperscript{106} Black, s.v., “King, Enoch Marvin or Marion,” and “Ware, Mary Bigg.”

\textsuperscript{107} Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 4 March 1843.
left his first wife before her death to marry Humphrys. Stake president Marks felt that Hendrickson had not “done what he had wilfully” and should remain a member of the church. However, other councilors disagreed, and after a thorough airing of all sides, the council voted instead to expel Hendrickson from the church.\footnote{Ibid., 1 April 1843.} (He would be readmitted in October 1845 and endowed in the Nauvoo temple early the next year.)\footnote{Ibid., 18 October 1845; Black, s.v., “Hendrickson, Jordan P.”} Finally, in July, Elizabeth Rowe (age unknown) was accused of “unchristian-like conduct having been caught in bed with a man not her husband at two different times.” Rowe pleaded not guilty, but the “charge was sustained,” and the council ruled unanimously that “the hand of fellowship be withdrawn from her.”\footnote{Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 22 July 1843.}

During these months of deliberations, Joseph Smith secretly married thirteen new wives, including two pairs of sisters,\footnote{See Compton, 6–7.} while nine of his close male associates entered the celestial order for the first time.\footnote{See Smith, “Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy,” 37–72.} (“It is your privilege to have all the wives you want,” Smith counseled a loyal disciple in February–March 1843.)\footnote{William Clayton, Affidavit, 16 February 1874, original in LDS Archives.} Most significantly, Smith’s first wife and older brother finally “received the doctrine of priesthood” (i.e., plural marriage).\footnote{Quoted in George D. Smith, An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1991), 106.} Hyrum’s conversion was total; Emma, though she participated in the May 1843 sealings of one of the pairs of sisters to her husband,\footnote{Smith had married Emily Partridge and Eliza Partridge without his wife’s knowledge the previous March. When she subsequently agreed to allow him to take wives of her choosing, she selected the two sisters. Smith then repeated the ceremony for Emma’s benefit. See Compton, 407–409.} was hesitant. Still, begrudging support was better than none, and as a reward for her obedience Smith granted Emma’s and his eternal sealing on 28 May.\footnote{See Scott H. Faulring, editor, An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1989), 381.}

By mid-summer, however, Emma’s doubts about the divinity of her husband’s doctrine had returned, and she was threatening revolt—either indulging herself in a plurality of husbands or divorcing her profligate spouse outright.\footnote{See, for example, Smith, Intimate Chronicle, 108 and 117.} Hyrum believed he could persuade Emma to abandon her opposition, and on 12 July told his brother: “[If you will write the revelation on celestial marriage, I will take and read it to Emma, and I believe I can convince her of its truth, and you will hereafter have peace.” Smiling, Joseph replied that Hyrum did “not know Emma as well as I do.” But “the doctrine is so plain,” Hyrum insisted, “I can convince any reasonable man or woman of its truth, purity and heavenly origin.” “Well, I will write the revelation,” Joseph conceded, “and we will see.” He then asked his scribe “to get paper and prepare to write.” “I wrote it,” William Clayton remembered, “sentence by sentence, as he dictated.” When Hyrum returned from reading the revelation to Emma, Joseph asked “how he had suc-
ceeded.” Hyrum answered that “he had never received a more severe talking to in his life, that Emma was very bitter and full of resentment and anger.” His brother “quietly remarked, ‘I told you, you did not know Emma as well as I did.’” When Joseph subsequently read the revelation to a few other intimate friends, one asked if he could copy it. Smith said he had no objection. Before the end of the week, however, “Emma had so teased, and urgently entreated him for the privilege of destroying it, that he became so weary of her teasing, and to get rid of her annoyance, he told her she might destroy it, and she had done so, but he had consented to her wish in this matter to pacify her, realizing that he knew the Revelation perfectly, and could re-write it at any time, if necessary.” (Smith’s revelation was later canonized by the LDS Church as Section 132 of its edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.) “[F]or the rest of the time,” Hyrum’s son later reported, Joseph Smith “was more or less in her power, and all he done hereafter in relation to this law, was done in secret, unbeknown to Emma.” In fact, Clayton recorded in his diary the next month: “This A.M. [Joseph]. [Smith] told me that since E[mma]. [Smith] . . . resisted the P[riesthood]. [i.e., plural marriage] in toto & he had to tell her he would relinquish all [i.e., his wives] for her sake. She said she would given him [the sisters he had married in May] but he knew if he took them she would pitch on him & obtain a divorce & leave him. He however told me he should not relinquish any thing[.]”

When the high council assembled in Hyrum Smith’s office on 12 August 1843, talk of the prophet’s plural marriages was unavoidable. Councilor Austin Cowles’s twenty-nine-year-old daughter had married Smith the previous June, one of Councilor David Fullmer’s sisters had married him a month later, Councilor George W. Harris’s own wife had married the prophet, and Councilor William D. Huntington had taken a plural wife in February 1843 and knew that two of his sisters had married Smith in late 1841. Lewis Dunbar Wilson announced that he was “Satisfied there was something in those rumors, and he wanted to know about it.” Immediately, Hyrum Smith (who would take his first plural wives before the end of the month) excused himself, walked across the street to his house, and retrieved the surviving copy of his brother’s revelation, which he read to the council and “bore testimony to its truth.” Hyrum “reasoned upon said Revelation for about an hour,” remembered Thomas Grover, “clearly explaining the same, and then enjoined it upon said Council, to receive and

118 This copy is currently housed in LDS Archives.
119 Clayton, Affidavit.
120 Joseph F. Smith, quoted in Utah Stake Historical Record, 4 March 1883, LDS Archives.
121 Smith, Intimate Chronicle, 117.
122 The councilors present that day were James Allred, Samuel Bent, Austin A. Cowles, Alpheus Cutler, David Fullmer, Thomas Grover, George W. Harris, William D. Huntington, Levi Jackman, Aaron Johnson, William Marks, Leonard Soby, and Lewis Dunbar Wilson.
123 Compton, 6, 544.
124 Ibid., 6.
125 Ibid., 6, 49–53.
acknowledge the same, or they would be damned.” A majority of councilors “agreed and assented,” testified Leonard Soby, “believing it to be of a celestial order though no vote was taken upon it, for the reason that the voice of the prophet in such matters was understood by us to the voice of God to the church, and that said revelation was presented to said Council as before stated, as coming from Joseph Smith the prophet of the Lord, and was received by us as other revelations had been.” (The council’s official minutes record simply: “No business before the Council. Teaching by Prest Hiram Smith & William Marks.”) Only Cowles (age fifty-one), Soby (age early forties), and stake president Marks (age fifty) would ultimately reject the prophet’s doctrine; James Allred, Samuel Bent, Alpheus Cutler, Fullmer, Grover, Huntington, Aaron Johnson, and Wilson would all marry plurally prior to the Saints’ exodus west. (Fearing recrimination, both Joseph and Hyrum would publicly assert the following June that the revelation referred only to “ancient” and “former days” and had “nothing to do with the present times.”)

Less than three weeks later, Councilor Cowles, whose discomfort with plural marriage was mounting, formally charged thirty-year-old George J. Adams with “unchristian conduct,” for “adultery,” “Breach of covenant,” “lying,” “slandering,” and “putting the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face and raising an image of jealously and causing people to worship it.” Adams, a former Methodist lay preacher and stage actor, had converted to Mormonism in 1840, moved to Nauvoo with his family, and quickly established himself as a compelling, persuasive orator. According to his biographer, he also battled alcoholism, was ambitious and opportunistic, and possessed a sensitive, prickly personality. He defended the church in England and on the East Coast from 1841 to 1842, winning Joseph Smith’s respect, but while on a speaking mission to Massachusetts in early 1843, he was abruptly summoned to Nauvoo to answer questions regarding a rumored affair. Adams had already confessed to a one-time adulterous encounter, word of which had apparently refused to die. After Adams made a
private in-person “acknowledgment” of his actions the following May 1843, including an appropriate expression of contrition, Smith announced that he was “perfect[ly] satisf[ied]” and told colleagues: “Bro Adams will has now started anew,—and let all present hold their tongues and only say that Elder Adams has started anew.” Smith apparently then instructed Adams more fully in the true order of marriage, authorized his taking additional wives, and may have even approved an existing or pending plural relationship.

Thus when called three months later before the high council, Adams “read a document from the first Presidency and objected to any thing being brought up previous to the date thereof [i.e, 5 June 1843].” Joseph and Emma Smith also appeared in his defense. As a result, Cowles’s charges were “not sustained,” and in view of rumors to the contrary, Adams asked that a statement be published attesting to his good character. “This is to certify,” the council wrote, “that Elder George J. Adams has been honorably acquited by the High Council in Nauvoo, from all charges heretofore prefered against him from any and all sources; and is hereby recommended as a faithful laborer in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and a servant of the Lord that is entitled to the gratitude, confidence, liberality and clemency of the Saints and honorably men in all the world.” Rather than draw additional public attention to the accusations, Joseph and Hyrum Smith decided to issue their own announcement:

Know all men by these presents, before whom this may come, that elder George J. Adams, is fully authorized and required from this time forth to travel from place to place, to raise money

opportunity. but My Dear Brother don’t think for one moment that I ever was an adulterer at heart[.] No God [k]nows I never was, nor don’t you think we continued to Sin, No we did not, but Bowed before the Lord and sought his pardon and determined to Sin no more[.] I was also under the influence of many different passions at the time & will tel you all when I see you . . . Oh! Bro Joseph don’t forsake me for God knows I never will you nor his church.

—Adams to Joseph Smith (11 October 1842) Joseph Smith Collection.

“[N]ot that I wish you for one moment to think that I am under transgreshen now or that I have been for many months,” Adams insisted in late February 1843, for I have not—but some runners, and reports have been set on foot in New York not by the World but by envious and jelous Mormons that are Seeking my overthrow and want to make me guilty wether I am or not . . . now My Dear Brother if you can save me without a publick trial, I trust I will never forget it while memory lasts, I dont fear any thing the world can do, No! my enemies that are seeking my overthrow are in the Church, there is no evidence against me—and they can get none, whatsoever I have done you know, and you also know I have sincerely repented months ago . . . My Dear Wife is with me in Good health and spirits considering evrything. —Adams to Joseph Smith (23 February 1843) Joseph Smith Collection.

Faulring, 381. Adams denied that he had been tried, demoted, or committed any sin: “[S]ome say that my license [to preach] was taken from me; that is a lie. Some say I was tried before the Twelve; that is also a lie. . . . I never was brought before the authorities of the Church, for there was no one to lay charges against me, . . . Some say I confessed to Joseph that the reports in circulation about me where [sic] true,; that is another wilful lie . . . my standing was never better since I came in the Church than at present.” Adams to Peter Hess (7 July 1843) in Journal History.

See Faulring, 412; Smith, History of the Church, 6:2 (does not mention Emma Smith).

Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 1 and 7 September 1843.

Ibid., 7 September 1843.
by donations, contributions, or collections, both from the Saints, and all honorable men of the earth, to assist in building the Temple of the Lord at Nauvoo: and he in empowered to give a receipt for the same; and our prayer is, that the God of Israel will open the hearts of the people, that they may give liberally to assist in rolling forth the purposes of God in the last days: and all those who give, shall receive the blessings of God, and be rewarded in this world, and the world to come.\footnote{To Whom It May Concern,” dated 14 October 1843, in \textit{Times and Seasons} 4 (15 September 1843): 329. The Smith brothers may have endorsed Adams again on 7 June 1844; see the certificate reportedly signed by Joseph and Hyrum Smith in \textit{Voree Herald} (October 1846).}

Such efforts in Adams’s behalf may have been futile, however, as his domestic arrangements had already become common knowledge. “A month ago or more,” wrote Charlotte Haven, a young non-Mormon living in Nauvoo, one of the Apostles [actually a seventy], [George J.] Adams by name, returned from a two years’ mission in England, bringing with him a wife and child, although he had left a wife and family here when he went away, and I am told that his first wife is reconciled to this certainly at first unwelcome guest to her home, for her husband and some others have reasoned with her that plurality of wives is taught in the Bible, that Abraham, Jacob, Solomon, David, and indeed all the old prophets and good men, had several wives, and if right for them, it is right for the Latter Day Saints. Furthermore the first wife will always be first in her husband’s affection and the head of the household, where she will have a larger influence.\footnote{Haven to “My Dear friends at home,” Nauvoo, Illinois, 8 September 1843, in “A Girl’s Letters from Nauvoo,” \textit{Overland Monthly} (San Francisco) 16 (December 1890): 635–636.}

Two years later, Adams was excommunicated for insubordination, joined an offshoot church, was expelled for sexual misconduct, then formed his own church in 1861. He sailed to Jaffa (now Tel Aviv) in 1865 where he hoped to found a settlement for his followers, but returned to the United States in 1870. He died in 1880 in Philadelphia.\footnote{See Steven L. Shields, \textit{Divergent Paths of the Restoration: A History of the Latter Day Saints Movement}, third edition (Bountiful, Utah: Restoration Research, 1975), 99. See also Reed M. Holmes, “G. J. Adams and the Forerunners,” in Maurice L. Draper and A. Bruce Lindgren, editors, \textit{Restoration Studies II} (Independence, Missouri: Temple School, 1983), 42–60.}

The next case of alleged sexual misconduct did not turn on secret knowledge. On either 17 or 18 November (the minutes are unclear), Sidney Roberts charged twenty-three-year-old Quartus S. Sparks with “seducing and getting a Sister with child by the name of Mary Aber and other unchristian like conduct.” Sparks and Aber, age seventeen, had recently migrated to Nauvoo from the eastern seabord (apparently New York). Aber, “with a child in her arms,” testified before the council that “Sparks is the father of said child and that it was got by seduction and force that she resisted him until 3 o’clock at night when he got the advantage and accomplished his purpose.” “[T]he crime,” she elaborated, was committed in a house where the family were unbelievers that in consequence she did not cry out, for the sake of the church he being a Mormon Elder knowing they would report the same against the Elders of the church, that for the sake of the reproach it would bring upon the church she went to Brooklin and hid herself up there until the child was born and remained so five weeks after, before it was known to any of the church and that she left for Nauvoo unbeknown to her parents and friends, that when she was about landing at Nauvoo he (Sparks) said she must now shirk for herself, that she was at the house of Mr Thomas, and had gone to
bed when Sparks came to the house and came to her bed and persisted in his attempt[s] until 3 o’clock, she had got up when he got the advantage of her and threw her on the bed and succeeded in accomplishing his purposes.

Sparks, who believed that he was a victim of circumstance, countered that he had gone to bed when Mary Aber came into his room and sat down after a while he got up and went and sat down by her and put his arm around her neck and took other liberties with her they then arose and walked across the floor once or twice and then he threw her on the bed and then went out of the room to avoid her, and give her a chance to go away, but when he returned he found her still[l] laying on the bed when he could no longer resist, but had intercourse with her once and once only, that he did not seduce her but she seduced him.

The couple’s difficulties had surfaced before they left New York (perhaps following the birth of their child), and Sparks had reportedly promised to “marry Mary Abor or be tried at Nauvoo.” On their journey west, Aber felt that Sparks had not sufficiently provided for her and her baby’s comfort. One of the witnesses called to testify, a Sister Robanks, reported that initially “she felt much prejudiced against [Aber] in consequence of iniquity . . . until she saw her weeping and that repeatedly[,] her sympathy was awakened in her favor she afterwards conversed some with her . . . She believed her to have been weeping in consequence of her want of food; believes her to have been neglected by Sparks, that Mary Abers conduct was christianlike on the passage.” On the other hand, a Brother and Sister Wandle said they were “hurt and angry at Mary and a great sympathy for Sparks, on account of the sympathy which the passangers had for Mary in consequence of her talking and the many questions that was asked her by the passangers . . . Spark[s] showed a willingness to provide necessaries for and make her (Mary Aber) comfortable on this passage.” Sparks too insisted “that he did not neglect her (Mary) on the passage.” However, he did admit telling her “when arriving at Nauvoo that she must now shirk for herself, that he had done all by bringing her up to Nauvoo that was required of him by God or man.” The council concluded that Sparks had in fact seduced Aber and voted unanimously to withdraw from him the hand of fellowship.144 Sparks left Nauvoo for Connecticut, where he married Mary Holland Hamilton, age twenty-three, in mid-1844. Two years later, they joined Samuel Brannan and other Mormon passengers aboard the Brooklyn for Yerba Buena and eventually settled in San Bernardino, California, where Sparks died in 1891. His wife died in Salt Lake City in 1898. Mary Aber remained in Nauvoo, was endowed in the Nauvoo temple, and married Rufus Beach, age fifty, in January 1846.145

The last two charges of seduction brought before the high council prior to Joseph Smith’s death both involved William Henry Harrison Sagers (also “Sagars”). Sagers, age thirty-eight, had joined the church in 1833, married Lucinda Madison in 1834, preached Mormonism in Louisiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York, and finally moved with his wife and sister-in-law Phebe Madison to Nauvoo by early 1842 (if not before.) Word eventually spread that Sagers and his sister-in-law shared a sexual relationship, and that Sagers justified his actions by appealing to the prophet’s example. When Smith learned of the stories, he charged Sagers before the high council (joined by members of the Twelve) with “trying to seduce a young girl, living at his house by the name of Phebe Madison . . . [and] using my name in a blasphemous manner, by saying that I tolerated such things in which thing he is guilty of lying &c. &c.”

144 Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 17 or 18 November 1843.
145 See Black, s.v. “Sparks, Quartus Strong,” and “Aber, Mary Catherine.”
Sagers pleaded not guilty, and the council concluded he had been taught "false doctrine," which the prophet corrected, no doubt explaining that plural unions not sealed by the proper authority were adulterous.¹⁴⁶ (He also apparently sanctioned Sagers’s relationship with Phebe at this time or shortly after.) According to Wilford Woodruff, Smith

made an address upon the subject which was highly interesting & its tendency was to do away with evry evil & practice virtue & Holiness before the Lord. That the Church had not received any license from him to Commit adultery fornication or any such thing. But to the contrary if any man Commit adultery He could not receive the Celestial Kingdom of God. Even if he was saved in any Kingdom it could not be the Celestial kingdom.

He said he thought the many examples that had been manifest. John C Bennet & others was sufficient to show the fallacy of such a course of conduct. He condemned the principle in toto & warned those present against going into these evils, for they would shurely bring a Curse upon their heads.¹⁴⁷

The council then voted to endorse Sagers as a member in good standing.¹⁴⁸

Over the next several months, Smith continued to educate Sagers (and others) more fully on "the doctrine of Celestial Marriage or plurality of wives."¹⁴⁹ Lucinda did not share her husband’s vision of the celestial family and did not participate in such instruction. Relations between the Sagerses rapidly deteriorated, the two apparently separated, and in mid-April 1844, Lucinda formally brought charges against him before the First Presidency and Twelve, alleging:

Inasmuch as you have declared officially that you will deal with all persons who teach or have taught the abominable doctrine of Spiritual wives. This is to notify you that Harrison Sagars is guilty of that said sin, which thing can be proven by credible witnesses, and if he is not chastised for it by the church the law of the land will be enforced against him.

H. Sagars left his family in December last[,] since such time he has not provided for them in any way whatsoever. The cause of the innocent demand[s] action immediately and you are the ones to take the matter in hand.

The delicate matter was referred to the high council, which on 13 April ruled that "as the first part of the charge had been brought before the Council before . . . and he tried on it; that the Council had no wright to deal with him on that item. And that the Second part was not sustained and therefore that he should remain in the Church."¹⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, neither of Sagers’s marriages survived, and less than two months later, an embittered Lucinda announced that "Whereas my husband, the Rt. Rev. W. H. Harrison Sagers, Esq., has left my bed and board without cause or provocation, this is to notify the public not to harbor or trust him on my account, as I will pay no debts of his contracting."¹⁵¹ Sagers remained in Nauvoo, was endowed

---

¹⁴⁶ Sagers’s biographer feels that he may have “misconstrued” Smith's teachings. See Ella Sagers Swanson, *The Sagers Clan* (Tucson, Arizona: Ella Sagers Swanson, 1980), 61.

¹⁴⁷ Woodruff, 3:328. Woodruff’s account was subsequently recast as an entry in Joseph Smith’s history in Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:81, which mentioned Sagers by name.

¹⁴⁸ Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 25 November 1843.


¹⁵⁰ Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 13 April 1844. See also Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:333.

and married polygamously in the Nauvoo temple in January 1846, moved to Utah with his families, helped to settle Tooele (west of Salt Lake City), and died in Idaho in 1886.\textsuperscript{152} Lucinda's and Phebe's fates are not known.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Frequency of Meetings and Charges of Sexual Misconduct Brought Before the Nauvoo Stake High Council, 1840–1844}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & Number of Meetings & Number of Cases & Number and Percent of Cases Involving Sex \\
\hline
1840 & 32 & 13 & 0 \%  \\
1841 & 10 & 4 & 0 \%  \\
1842 & 50 & 22 & 7 \%  \\
1843 & 51 & 41 & 31.8 \%  \\
1844 & 14 & 6 & 16.7 \%  \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\begin{tablenotes}
\item Excludes Niswanger and Clapp vs. Turley.
\item Excludes Clapp vs. Turpin.
\item Excludes a case (Knowlton vs. Willis), which, though mentioned on 30 December 1843, was not heard in full and resolved until 6 January 1844.
\item The last meeting of the high council before Joseph Smith's death was on 18 May 1844.
\end{tablenotes}
\end{table}

Not all cases brought before the Nauvoo Stake high council during the years 1840 to Joseph and Hyrum Smith's deaths on 27 June 1844 involved accusations of sexual misconduct. In fact, during the peak year of the council's tribunals, 1843, only slightly more than a third of all cases centered on such behavior. What is instructive is not the number of men and women called to account for their illicit actions, but the range of prohibited behaviors and the responses to them of the church's leaders. For even at the fringe of American religious (and in some ways sexual) expression, Mormons confronted deviance in an assortment of manifestations and guises, some more easily addressed than others. As a divinely sanctioned component of the church's erotic economy, plural marriage not only impacted many Saints' moral identities, but challenged their own leaders' ability to superintend the sexual lives of a growing congregation. That some men and women followed unholy paths speaks not so much to their gullibility, rebellion, or lust, or even to others' self-serving presumption to speak in the prophet's behalf, as it does to Joseph Smith's calculated decision to adopt a variety of sometimes questionable measures in promulgating and practicing his celestial doctrine of "priesthood privileges."\vspace{1em}

\textsuperscript{152} Black, s.v., "Sagers, William Henry Harrison." Sagers was subsequently cited by LDS church apostle (and future president) Spencer W. Kimball in connection with Joseph Smith's declaration that adulterers "cannot receive the celestial kingdom of God." See The Miracle of Forgiveness (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1969), 347. Kimball did not note that Sagers was found not guilty of adultery.
Stealing at Mormon Nauvoo

Bill Shepard

Thousands of visitors flocked to Nauvoo in 2002 to see the restored temple and to share a vicarious kinship with the Mormons who labored on and received their endowments in the original temple. Of this vast number, only a few realized the Nauvoo society, not unlike that of neighboring Warsaw, Illinois, and Burlington, Iowa, contained individuals who were thieves. Although most of the visitors to Nauvoo would readily agree the Gentile communities contained many bullies, thieves, and even murderers, the great majority would deny Nauvoo was home to a similar cast of characters. Few understood that gathering to Nauvoo and taking part in community building did not prevent people from doing bad things. Mormon criminals arrived at Nauvoo with the earliest settlers and grew in numbers and influence until the exodus from Nauvoo in early 1846. It would be difficult for most of the visitors to believe Mormon thieves operated in and around Nauvoo, much less to acknowledge that some participated in a criminal society like that of the Gadianton robbers of the Book of Mormon.

Three major issues relating to Mormon thieves are addressed in this paper—the reaction of Joseph Smith Jr. and Hyrum Smith to these individuals, events that influenced a change in their policy of exposing and prosecuting this undesirable element, and the contrasting approach by Brigham Young in post-martyrdom Nauvoo.

The prophet and patriarch appear to have been genuinely grieved by the emergence of Mormon thieves and met the threat head-on by declaring from the stand and in the Mormon newspapers they neither sympathized with nor sanctioned their criminal activities. Their approach was to identify, publicize their names, and to bring them to justice.

The post-martyrdom period is infinitely more complex. The murders of Joseph Smith Jr. and Hyrum Smith in June 1844, the repeal of the Nauvoo Charter in January 1845, and aggression by the Gentiles unleashed passions among the Mormons that would result in a revision in the manner Mormon thieves were treated. This shift evolved as the shocked and stressed Mormons attempted to adjust to life without the founding prophet. Anger at the Gentiles influenced Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball to ask the Nauvoo church to “withdraw fellowship” from them at the April 1845 General Conference because they had “rejected the gospel.” This drastic step was followed by members of the Twelve Apostles taking oaths to “avenge the blood of the prophets” on 27 June 1845 and the inclusion of this phrase in the endowment ceremonies. The Gentiles were equally guilty of being unable to “turn the other cheek” and instituted a series of aggressive actions that accelerated the Mormon movement away from coexistence with them. After concluding the Mormons had to be driven from Illinois, they launched attacks on outlying Mormon settlements and Mormons were forced to flee to Nauvoo for safety. These and other antagonistic actions contributed to the brief, violent civil war in which armed bands of Mormons and Gentiles harassed each other throughout Hancock County.

It is against this backdrop of hate, confusion, and violence that Mormon thieves were allowed to remain in fellowship in Nauvoo. The capstone of the revised policy came on 27 January 1846 when Brigham Young apparently directed the seventies not to confront or prosecute Mormons who stole from the Gentiles.
Mormon Thieves Prior to the Martyrdom

Historians Roger Launius and John Hallwas, in their excellent book *Cultures in Conflict*, wrote: "Shortly after the Mormons arrived in Hancock County and before much political antagonism had developed, residents in some townships noted a significant increase in theft. Livestock, food, clothes, and other items were taken and the Mormons were immediately blamed." Not only did many Gentiles conclude the Mormons were thieves, they believed stealing was "officially sanctioned by the church." 1

It is evident Mormon thieves were among the early settlers of Nauvoo. The 3 October 1840 General Conference, responding to "depredations committed on the citizens of Nauvoo," appointed a committee of six to assist Joseph Smith Jr. "to search out the offenders, and bring them to justice." In an effort to weed-out Mormons who came to Nauvoo without paying their debts at their previous residence, the conference passed a resolution "to disfellowship [sic]" individuals who arrived without a recommend from their former branch. 2 A month later, an article in the *Times and Seasons*, the local Mormon newspaper, said Nauvoo "has been infested of late with a gang of thieves" and went on to warn the Saints it was imperative they carefully guard their property. Elder David Holman was identified as one of the thieving fraternity and was told to return to Nauvoo and clear his name or he would not remain in fellowship. 3 The following edition of the *Times and Seasons* began with the introduction: "Nauvooans [sic] to the rescue! Your liberty is in danger! Thieves are in your midst! By day and by night are they prowling through your streets! Your property is in peril, and life, and limb, in jeopardy!" After telling the population to "ferret out the perpetrators," the admonition was "the church should be purged." 4 The 15 November 1840 *Times and Seasons* announced four Mormon thieves had fled Nauvoo:

Several individuals have of late absconded from this place whom, it is believed, from the facts that have come to light, were notorious thieves: the public would do well to be on their guard; their names are as follows: James R. Bingham, Alanson Brown, David Holman and Artemus Johnson. The latter made his escape from the Sheriff of this county a few weeks since, being committed for further trial on default of bond of $500. —ED. 5

Jacob Hamlin, who would later become a famous frontiersman and trusted intermediary between the Mormons and Native American Indians in Utah, left a personal account of the divergent elements in the Nauvoo society, "I soon learned to discriminate between the different kinds of people who had gathered at Nauvoo. Some were living the lives of Saints; others were full of deceit and were stumbling-blocks in the way of those who were striving to do right." 6

---

3 "Look Out for Thieves" and untitled statement, *Times and Seasons* 2 (1 November 1840): 204, emphasis theirs.
4 "Escape the Fowler's Snare," *Times and Seasons* 1 (15 November 1840): 221–222, emphasis theirs.
6 George R. Gayler, "A Social, Economic, and Political Study of the Mormons in
Alanson Brown, who was characterized as one of the “notorious thieves,” turned up at the Ramus, Illinois stake in the summer of 1841 and joined with other Mormons in a criminal society. This organization featured drinking, secret oaths, stealing from the Gentiles, and attracting converts through “smooth words and fair speeches.” Joel Hills Johnson, the stake president at Ramus, had considerable difficulty in preventing this hateful group, which included his first counselor (Joseph Holbrook) and the bishop (William Wightman) from assuming power. The situation was partially rectified in mid-November 1841 with the jailing of five members of this group at Monmouth, Illinois, for stealing. Apostles Brigham Young and Willard Richards arrived at Ramus on 17 November and conducted a trial in which the “Monmouth Five”: Joseph Holbrook, Alanson Brown, William H. Edwards, Joseph Telford, and Finley Page were excommunicated. Thomas Edwards and William W. Edwards were also cut-off for assault and assisting the thieves. Seventeen days later a committee headed by Hyrum Smith and Brigham Young held a conference at Ramus in which the stake was discontinued and became a branch. Following this action, the Ramus branch dedicated “nearly a thousand dollars worth of property, consisting of horses, wagons, provisions, clothing, etc., for the Temple... which was removed and taken to Nauvoo.”

This large donation by a small group of Mormons, who had lost much of their capital and possessions in Missouri, suggests a considerable portion of the property was stolen from the Gentiles. It further suggests some of the hierarchy accepted stolen property as tithing or free-will offerings.

Four pages of the 1 December 1841 *Times and Seasons* were devoted to the issue of Mormon stealing. In part, the editors praised the “energetic efforts” that were being taken by

---


9 Michael S. Riggs, in his article about Danite influence at Nauvoo, observed, “Considering Joseph Holbrook’s statement in his Autobiography that the impetus for the theiving activities the summer before was because ‘times became very hard so that many brethren were much put to it for clothing, etc.’ to amass a ‘thousand dollars worth of property’ (including clothing) in the dead of winter, to donate to the Temple, begs the obvious question. How was this possible unless it was indeed ‘milk sucked from the gentiles?’ ” Michael S. Riggs, “From the Daughters of Zion to ‘The Banditti of the Prairies’: Danite Influence on the Nauvoo Period,” *Restoration Studies VII*, Joni Wilson and Ruth Ann Wood, editors (Independence: Herald House, 1998):98, cited hereafter as *Daughters of Zion*. There are precedents for Mormons donating stolen property to the church. Stephen C. LeSueur, in his study of the Mormon–Gentile conflict in Missouri, described the Mormon sacking of Galli- tan and Millport and the depositing “of their spoils in the [Mormon] storehouse.” Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1987), 117–120, cited hereafter as *The 1838 Mormon War*. 
the Mormons to suppress thieving and acknowledged there was a criminal element among the Mormons by saying, "That there are some amongst us base enough to commit such acts we do not pretend to deny, but whether they are all members of this church or not, we do not know." The public was then warned not to believe the leaders of the church sanctioned stealing.\textsuperscript{10} Affidavits by Joseph Smith Jr., Hyrum Smith, the Twelve Apostles, and Mayor John C. Bennett were printed that stated the church did not and would not tolerate thieves.\textsuperscript{11} Additionally, the results of church trial for the Monmouth Five, William W. Edwards, and Thomas S. Edwards were printed.\textsuperscript{12} This was followed by an account of the court martial of Joseph Holbrook and David Smith, both officers in the Nauvoo Legion, on a charge of theft and their being expelled from that body.\textsuperscript{13}

After being warned not to attempt to live in Nauvoo, Joseph Holbrook and others moved from Ramus to the Wisconsin border area. After suffering extreme hardships, Holbrook returned to Nauvoo in early July 1842 and within a few days was rebaptized.\textsuperscript{14} Finley Page and sixty-six other members of the Ramus branch were rebaptized on 25 September 1843.\textsuperscript{15} The entry in the minute book of the Ramus Branch contains "Pres [John] Smith haveing [sic] proposed that the branch be baptized over & being agreeable to the branch."\textsuperscript{16} The rebaptisms may have been the result of a leadership change in the branch, the need to wash away sins, or both.

It is evident the Mormon criminal element was not stamped out by the church disciplinary action in November 1841. In fact, based on the statements of Joseph Smith Jr. and Hyrum Smith at the 6–8 April 1843 General Conference at Nauvoo, the situation had worsened. Hyrum told the conference he had asked two men living in his house, David Holman and James Dunn, if they were thieves. According to Hyrum, Holman told him: "there is a band of men, and some who pretend to be strong in the faith . . . but they are hypocrites, and some who do not belong to the church, who are bound together by secret oaths, and obligations and penalties, to keep the secret; and they hold that it is right to steal from any one who does not belong to the church provided they consecrate two-thirds of it to the building of the Temple." Continuing, Hyrum said Holman asked forgiveness and swore to never steal again and left Nauvoo and went on a stealing spree among the Gentiles. Holman’s statements were printed in the Times and Seasons in an edited form that excluded his statement about the consequences for criminals who broke their oaths, "If they did not remain steadfast they ripped open their bow-

\textsuperscript{10} "Thieves," \textit{Times and Seasons} 3 (1 December 1841):615.
\textsuperscript{12} "Proceedings of a Meeting of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, held at Ramus, Nov. 18th 1841," \textit{Times and Seasons} 3 (1 December 1841):616.
\textsuperscript{13} "Court Martial," ibid., 618. At the request of Joseph Smith, all of these accounts and affidavits were published in \textit{The Wasp} 1 (29 March 1843):2–3.
\textsuperscript{14} Joseph Holbrook, \textit{Autobiography}, typescript, Harold B. Lee Library, Archives and Manuscript Department, Provo, Utah, 31.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Early Branches of the LDS}, 27.
\textsuperscript{16} Minute Book of the Ramus Branch, 25 September 1843, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
Stealing at Mormon Nauvoo

The Missouri Danite belief that stealing from the Gentiles was sanctioned by God was alive and well in the hearts of a considerable number of Mormons. It was easy for these men to redirect their stealing activities to new Gentile enemies—their Illinois or Iowa neighbors. The designation Danite, however, cannot be used to categorize Mormon thieves. Some thieves had been Danites but others were never associated with them; some thieves held the priesthood and others did not; some thieves were strong in the faith and others used their professed religion as a cover; some thieves took missions and paid tithes while others remained at Nauvoo or the settlements looking for a way to make a living without working. Stealing was a way of life for some—others stole to secure the necessities of life and yet others stole to repay the Gentiles for their real and imagined crimes against them.

Yet, in spite of the many charges that Nauvoo was a “den of thieves,” the large majority of the Mormons were law abiding. Suffice it to say that by June 1844, thieves operated from the Mormon communities and stole from both Mormons and Gentiles—this undesirable element included practicing Mormons, pseudo Mormons, and non-Mormons.

Factors and Events That Influenced the Acceptance and Protection of Mormon Thieves in Post-Martyrdom Nauvoo

William Clayton’s 19 September 1845 journal entry indicates Brigham Young and others of the Twelve Apostles knelt in prayer at Bishop George Miller’s house and asked God to deliver “those who had been active in the mob that killed Joseph and Hyrum into our hands that they might receive their deserts.” Ten days later, Thomas Sharp, the Mormon-hating editor of the Warsaw Signal, expressed similar hatred for the Mormons when he printed, “If we were called on to give advice to the Saints, in relation to the best course for them to pursue, we would say: First: Hang the Twelve, the Bishops, and the City police.”

T. B. H. Stenhouse, in his epic history, The Rocky Mountain Saints, captured the essence of the hatred between the Mormons and the Gentiles when he wrote:

The one [side] sought to justify the assassination of the Prophet, the other to revenge his death. The resolutions passed at any meeting at Nauvoo or Carthage amounted to nothing: with such an account unsettled there could be no honesty on either side. There were hostility and conflict of interests which no preambles, resolutions, or public speaking could affect. The Mormons hated the Gentiles, and the Gentiles hated the Mormons. This was the only point upon which

---

19 Michael A. Riggins, in Daughters of Zion, 102, made a strong case that stealing by Mormons at Nauvoo was an extension of the 1838 Missouri Danite culture.
they were agreed.\textsuperscript{22}

The following is an attempt to explain two aspects—how Mormon stealing affected their relationship with the Gentiles and the chronology of events that culminated in violence between these enemies.

The murders of Joseph Smith Jr. and Hyrum Smith struck the Mormons like a thunderbolt, but they followed the dictates of the hierarchy present at Nauvoo and remained non-violent. Over the next several months they were occupied with the succession crisis and in facilitating the gathering to and the strengthening of Nauvoo. In the meantime, their Gentile enemies accelerated their efforts to drive them from Illinois. Significantly, Mormon theft remained at or near the top of their complaint list. Marshall Hamilton, in his article about the distrust, hostility, and violence that prevailed from the martyrdom to the exodus concluded the issue of Mormon theft was “a major tool of the anti-Mormons to justify the repression or expulsion of the Church.” He explained the October 1844 proposed “Wolf Hunt” (pseudonym for a Mormon hunt) by various Gentile militias to be held near Warsaw, Illinois, was organized to deal with “alleged Mormon thieves.” Although Governor Ford’s intervention with some two hundred members of the state militia resulted in the cancellation of the Wolf Hunt, it did not alter the Gentile goal of driving the Mormons from Illinois. This is emphasized in Hamilton’s summary of Gentile accusations in the Warsaw \textit{Signal} about Mormon stealing:

During the period following the assassinations of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, those accusations were redoubled. The Warsaw \textit{Signal} included articles headed “Mormon Thieves” in eight of the fourteen issues published from September 18, 1844, until the end of the year. Beginning on Christmas Day 1844 and running for several weeks into 1845, Sharp included a special column heading with the words “Mormon Stealings” rendered in ornate block lettering, followed by a quotation from the “Mormon Book of Doctrine and Covenants,” which purported to justify thefts from non-Mormons.\textsuperscript{23}

A bill to repeal the Nauvoo Charter was introduced on 7 December 1844 and during the subsequent debate in the Illinois legislature it became evident Nauvoo was about to become a city under siege. Six days later, the Nauvoo City Council passed a preamble that signaled the Mormons would respond to Gentile aggression, “we will leave our enemies to judge, whether it would not be better to make Nauvoo one universal burying ground, before we suffer ourselves to be driven from our hard-earned and lawful homes, by such high-handed oppression.”\textsuperscript{24}


\textsuperscript{23}Marshall Hamilton, “From Assassination to Expulsion: Two Years of Distrust, Hostility and Violence,” \textit{Brigham Young University Studies} 32 (1992):232, cited hereafter as \textit{From Assassination to Expulsion}. LDS Doctrine and Covenants Section 64:27–28 reads: “Behold it is said in my laws, or forbidden, to get in debt to thine enemies; But behold, it is not said at any time that the Lord should not take when he please, and pay as seemeth him good.” Sharp’s stealing reports appear to be exaggerated. For example, twenty-two individuals from the small community of Montebello, Illinois, gathered in December 1844 and listed property they valued at $1346.50 they said was stole by the Mormons. Items included apples, bees, honey, horses, cows, hogs, sheep, logs, potatoes, fences, pies, bacon, etc.


\textsuperscript{24}\textit{History of the Church}, 7:353. Another preamble included, “we think reports of thefts have been very much exaggerated, yet we know from dear bought experience that such
Stealing at Mormon Nauvoo

Eliza Snow, the famous Mormon poetess, after learning of the repeal of the Nauvoo Charter, captured the defiant spirit held by the majority of Nauvoo Mormons when she wrote the Mormon representative at Springfield, Illinois, on 30 January 1845, “Sooner be the prophet’s fate my own, than suffer the pride and dignity of my character to be so humbled as to ask any favor of those hands that are reeking fresh with my brothers blood, and by the strongest proofs in their power to give, have decreed my own ruin and extermination.”

Mormon feelings towards the Gentiles smoldered until the 6–8 April 1845 General Conference at Nauvoo when the Gentiles were cut off from the kingdom of God. Before this dramatic vote, Apostle Heber C. Kimball urged all Mormons to gather to Nauvoo and help build the temple and the Nauvoo house. He stipulated, however they should, “bring their firelocks . . . and keep them well cleaned and loaded, and primed, so that they will go off the first shot, that every man may be in readiness, and prepared, that is, every man shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; [a parody of Ephesians 6:15] (holding up his cane as a sample;) that is the way.” He then told the assembled he wished he had “the preparation of the gospel” to deal with men at Warsaw, Illinois, whom he felt had been disrespectful to the Mormon women. Kimball then proposed “to withdraw fellowship from the Gentiles eniquity [sic], which was done by unanimous vote.” The clerk concluded, “Now they are disfellowshipt [sic].” Brigham Young, following Kimball as speaker, told the thousands of Mormons in attendance the Gentiles had “rejected the gospel” when they murdered Joseph Smith Jr. and Hyrum Smith. Continuing, he explained the Mormons had “preached to them [Gentiles] enough” and the Church would now “turn to the Jews and the house of Israel.”

Young returned to the theme “preparation of the gospel” at a 4 May 1845 public meeting at the stand when he told the congregation: “I want you all to be shod with the prepation, of the Gospel—have your firelocks clean—be ready at a moments warning to slaughter all that things do exist, and further we doubt not there may be some such characters prowling in and about our city” (Ibid., 354).

27 “The Conference,” Nauvoo Neighbor 2 (16 April 1845):2. The doctrine of the Gentile rejection of the gospel was widely cited by the Mormon hierarchy following the martyrdom to mean the Gentiles rejected the gospel because they persecuted the true Church. This doctrine was based on Book of Mormon and latter-day prophecies, which said if the Gentiles rejected the gospel, God would then remove it from them and present it to the house of Israel. Jesus Christ’s post-resurrection message to the Nephites (in the LDS Book of Mormon III Nephi 16:10–12 and III Nephi 7:34–37 in the Community of Christ Book of Mormon) was the main justification for teaching the Gentiles were now bankrupt and beyond salvaging. See “Third Message of Orson Pratt,” The [New York] Messenger 2 (25 October 1845):135; “Farewell Message of Orson Pratt,” Times and Seasons 6 (1 December 1845):1042; Wilford Woodruff statement at “Special General Conference, Manchester, December 14–16, 1845,” Millennial Star 7 (1 January 1846):1–2; Thomas Ward Editorial,” Millennial Star 7 (15 February 1846):60; “Wilford Woodruff Editorial,” Millennial Star 7 (15 June 1846):200.
come—they will find death here—and hell will follow after—our enemies if they that we were not prepared, wod. be upon us."

Six days after Young told the Saints to be “ready to slaughter all that come,” events were set in motion that threatened to shatter the fragile peace with the Gentiles when four Mormons, William Hodge, Stephen Hodge, Artemus Johnson, and Thomas Brown went on a stealing expedition near West Point in Iowa Territory. However, when they attempted to rob Mennonites John Miller and Henry Leisi, a struggle ensued in which Miller was murdered and Leisi was mortally wounded. When Iowa officials traced them to Nauvoo they made it clear if the murderers were not released to them, Nauvoo would be devastated. Johnson and Brown wisely slipped out of Nauvoo and went into hiding but the brothers demanded Brigham Young shelter them in Nauvoo. When Young told them to turn themselves over to the law, they threatened to kill him. In turn, the Nauvoo police helped the Iowa officials arrest the brothers and allowed them to be taken to Iowa for trial. The Nauvoo Neighbor contained a pledge in the 21 May number that the four men had never been Mormons, “We always have and always will help honest men to execute the laws and bring the offenders to justice. Let it be known throughout the land, that these two Hodges are not Mormons, nor never were; neither are Johnson or Brown.”

This blatant lie is a reflection of a dualistic Mormon policy of allowing known Mormon criminals to remain in Nauvoo while, at the same time, assuring the Gentiles that thieves were not tolerated at Nauvoo. Elder William Hodge is said to have given a sermon shortly before he participated in the Iowa murder, and Stephen Hodge told a large audience moments before he and William were hanged they were being put to death because they were Mormons.

28 “May 4, 1845 10 a.m.—Meetg. at stand,” Leonard J. Arrington Papers, typescript, Series 9, Box 12, Folder 2, page 4 at Special Collections, Merrill Library, Utah State University, Logan, Utah. Quoted without revision.
31 On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout 1844–1861, Juanita Brooks, editor, two volumes (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1982), i:43–44, cited hereafter as the Diary of Hosea Stout. William and Stephen Hodge were hung at Burlington, Iowa, on 15 July 1845.
33 For confirmation that William was an elder, see Seventies Record, Book B, 13 Quorum, 1844–1845, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. On 21 August 1845, Milton Kimball, presumably a Gentile, wrote his brother Solon Kimball from Augusta, Hancock County, Illinois, that William Hodge was not only an elder, he “preached a few days before he was concerned in the Murder.” “Brother Solon,” 21 August 1845, holograph, Clark Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.
Johnson was the Mormon thief who escaped from the sheriff and defaulted on a bond of $500 in late 1840. He was ordained an elder on 5 October 1839 at Commerce, Illinois, and was married by Elder Levi Jackman to Almira Ayers the following month. Thomas Brown was also known to be a Mormon thief and along with Johnson rejoined the Mormons on their way to Utah.

Ironically, at the time of the Iowa murders another Hodge brother was under indictment for an earlier robbery in Iowa. Amos Hodge was well known at Nauvoo and had previously

36 “Proceedings of the General Conference,” Times and Seasons 1 (December 1839): 30 and “Married,” Times and Seasons 1 (February 1840): 64. At the trial for William and Stephen Hodge, Almira Johnson testified the brothers could not have murdered Miller and Leisi because she was with them in Nauvoo on the night of the murder and then swore, “my husband is Artemus Johnson, he was home that night [of the murder] . . . he is not in Nauvoo now. I don’t know where he is. . . . Am a member of the Mormon Church. Thought my husband would be suspected of this murder because he had lived this side of the river and was a Mormon.” “Trial for Murder,” Warsaw Signal 1 (9 July 1845): 2.
37 In part, see article in the Illinois State Register signed by a Nauvoo citizen using the pseudonym “Alpha” which said, “Brown, though scarce twenty-one years old, is notorious in Hancock County and the adjoining counties. He has been in jail in Brown County for stealing. His father was expelled from the Mormon Church, six years ago, and was forcibly driven from the community. He has since been in the penitentiary of this State, and is now there for stealing.” “Shocking Murder,” Illinois State Register 6 (23 May 1845): 3.
38 Johnson was a member of Young’s company of pioneers and returned with him to Winter Quarters where he received a patriarchal blessing. He served a mission in 1847–1848 and is thought to have died years later in Utah. Andrew Jensen, Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia, four volumes (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1901–1936), 4:709, cited hereafter as LDS Biographical Encyclopedia and Richard E. Bennett, We’ll Find The Place: The Mormon Exodus 1846–1848 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1997), 329. Hosea Stout recorded on 12 February 1847, “Today I learned and reported to Brigham that Tom Brown was threatening the lives of the 12.” The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1:236. Orrin Porter Rockwell’s biographer wrote, “Tom Brown’s appearance with the Mormons is indeed a surprise. . . . Not only was he a baptized Mormon, but he was apparently a church member in good standing until his death.” Harold Schindler, Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God Son of Thunder (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993): 153, note 12, cited hereafter as Orrin Porter Rockwell. Not surprisingly, Brown did not have a long life as he was “accidentally” shot and killed at Winter Quarters in February 1848. Brigham Young angrily declared, “Brown’s old shoes were worth more than the whole body of the man who killed him.” LDS Biographical Encyclopedia, 4:695.
taken missions to Canada with Homer Duncan in 1840\textsuperscript{40} and to Vermont in 1844.\textsuperscript{41} He was on the bodyguard that escorted the bodies of Joseph Smith Jr. and Hyrum Smith back to Nauvoo\textsuperscript{42} and was the president of the thirteenth quorum of seventy until he was excommunicated on 6 July 1845 after his now infamous brothers were in jail in Iowa.\textsuperscript{43} William Smith, the only surviving Smith brother, suggested that Amos was lured out of Nauvoo and was murdered in Iowa by the Nauvoo police.\textsuperscript{44} Yet another brother, Ervine Hodge, who was also a suspect in an Iowa robbery, was murdered on the night of 23 June 1845 a few rods from Brigham Young’s house which was being guarded by the Nauvoo police.\textsuperscript{45}

All six of these Mormon criminals were known to be thieves but they were allowed to use Nauvoo as a base of operations until after the murder of Miller and Leisi. When John Taylor learned that William and Stephen were accused of murder, he wrote, “they were two of a family named Hodges notorious for thieving”\textsuperscript{46} and on learning that Amos was arrested on a charge of theft on 21 June, his response was, “I am afraid he is connected with a gang of villains that are lurking about, stealing on our credit.”\textsuperscript{47} After Ervine’s murder, Taylor reflected on the fate of each of the Hodge brothers and concluded, “These men had been frequently warned to forsake their evil practices, but this good counsel they would not hearken to.”\textsuperscript{48} Nauvoo schoolteacher James M. Monroe recorded on 12 May, “I have heard today that two men had been murdered by our people a short distance from here.”\textsuperscript{49} Finally, an article in the Illinois \textit{State Register} said Mormon police took the Iowa lawmen “to a house of a man by the name of Hodge, who had long been suspected by them [the police] of being in the stealing and bogus [counterfeiting] business.”\textsuperscript{50}

The Hodge gang was not only confederated with Gentile criminals, it was supported in some undefined manner by two Mormon hard cases, Bill Hickman and Return Jackson Redden, and by Joseph Smith Jr.’s brother-in-law William J. Salisbury. These men mortgaged property to raise $1,000 to pay lawyers to defend William Hodge and Stephen Hodge.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{40} LDS Biographical Encyclopedia, 1:623.
\textsuperscript{41} History of the Church, 6:336.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 7:135.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{The John Taylor Nauvoo Journal}, 10 May 1845, 48, note 178.
\textsuperscript{44} “Letter From Wm. Smith, Brother of the Late Prophet,” Sangamo, Illinois, \textit{Signal} 16 (5 November 1846):2.
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{The John Taylor Nauvoo Journal}, 10 May 1845, 48.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 21 June 1845, 53.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 23 June 1845, 59.
\textsuperscript{49} James M. Monroe Diary, 12 May 1845, holograph, Coe Collection, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut, 122.
\textsuperscript{50} “Shocking Murder,” Illinois \textit{State Register} 6 (23 May 1845):3.
in the tradition of the Gadianton robbers, this grouping of criminals mutually pledged to kill any members who violated their secret oaths.52

Events in the last week of June 1845 further isolated the Mormons. It became evident on the 24th the individuals charged with the murder of Joseph Smith Jr. and Hyrum Smith would not be punished as the trial for the murderers of Hyrum was dismissed “for want of prosecution.”53 As the accused murderers of Joseph Smith Jr. had already been acquitted, some Mormon’s believed the only justice they could obtain was through violence. A second event that further inflamed the Gentiles occurred when the non-Mormon sheriff, Minor Deming, who was believed by the Gentiles to be pro-Mormon, shot and killed the rabidly anti-Mormon Dr. Samuel Marshall in a dispute over the sale of tax land. Deming resigned as sheriff and died before his trial for manslaughter—anti-Mormons and his former friends celebrated his death.54

On the first anniversary of the deaths of Joseph Smith Jr. and Hyrum Smith, members of the Twelve Apostles met together to pray God would avenge the blood of the prophets. D. Michael Quinn, the foremost authority on the post-martyrdom period, explained: “On 27 June 1845 . . . the Quorum of the Twelve’s Prayer circle presented a formal ‘prayer of vengeance’ (often called a ‘oath’) became part of the endowment ceremony at the Nauvoo Temple.”55

Ironically, lawyers for William Hodge and Stephen Hodge attempted to delay their trial so Gentiles Aaron Long, John Long, and Judge Fox could testify they were with the brothers at Nauvoo on the night that Miller was murdered. The delay was denied. However, the three would-be-witnesses made their way from Nauvoo to Rock Island, Illinois and mortally wounded the aged Colonel George Davenport on 4 July 1845 in another botched robbery. During the trial Robert H. Birch, one of the accused murderers, testified the robbery was planned “in Joseph Smith’s old council chamber in Nauvoo.” He added that the conspirators

Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

52 A wide variety of references support this thesis. For example, John Walker testified at the trial of the Hodge brothers that shortly before the assault on Miller and Leisi he asked William how many other criminals from Nauvoo were in their gang. William’s response was, “there was a good many: said when one got into a scrape they would help one get the other out: if they could not one way, they would another. . . . if any of the company ever told any thing that he or the balance would kill him: if ever I told any of the conversation, they would kill me.” “Trial for Murder,” Burlington Hawk-Eye 7 (26 June 1845):2. After Judge Charles Mason told William that he and Stephen would not be hanged if they would reveal the names of the other gang members—William promised to give Mason the desired information the next morning with the stipulation Amos Hodges’ wife (Lydia) would be removed from Nauvoo because, “they [the other gang members] would kill her the moment they knew that he had made a confession.” Mason promised to secretly remove Lydia from Nauvoo and keep her safe. However, William told Mason the following morning he would not reveal information about the gang because “it would bring destruction upon all his friends—that the lives of his parents would be placed in jeopardy in Pittsburgh and that even the walls of the Penitentiary would furnish no protection to himself.” “The Hodges,” Burlington Hawk-Eye 7 (25 September 1845):1.


54 Origins of Power, 181.

55 Ibid., 179.
included Judge Fox, Aaron Long, John Long, Return Jackson Redden, Orrin Porter Rockwell, an unidentified Hodge brother, and others. Aaron Long and John Long and another gang member, named Granville Young, were hanged for murdering Davenport.

The murder of Davenport increased the hostile feelings toward the Mormons, as Gentiles generally believed the murderers were Mormons or Mormon associates. For example, a letter to a Reverend T. Dent from “D. W. K.” of Fort Madison, Iowa, on 16 December 1845 said the murderers were traced—three of them caught—convicted & all hung at the same time on one Gallows in October. They were from Nauvoo—the other two have since been arrested and are in jail at Rock Island—They are also from Nauvoo.” The account in the History of Lee County, Iowa, concluded, “The names in the affidavit [the Longs and Fox] are cited for the purpose of showing who were the confederates of the Hodgeses, and connected with the old Mormon banditti and Danite Band.” A final example is Judge Mason’s statement “While the young Hodges were in jail waiting the execution of their sentence, a party of four or five young men from Nauvoo passed through Burlington on their way to Davenport. On the 4th of July they broke into the house of Mr. George Davenport.”

In August 1845, Jacob Backenstos, a former Gentile member of the Illinois legislature, who had argued against the repeal of the Nauvoo Charter, was elected sheriff of Hancock County when 2,300 Mormons voted for him while his opponent only received 900 votes. Backenstos quickly became a hated figure among the Gentiles for supporting the Mormons and was mockingly called “Napoleon Backenstos.” Early in the following month, in what appears to have been an incident staged by Gentiles, unknown individuals fired into a building in southern Hancock County where an anti-Mormon rally was being conducted. Although no one was injured, this “assault” was used as an excuse by Gentiles to burn some forty Mormon houses, destroy crops, and drive many of the Saints from the Morley settlement in mid-September. John Hallwas and Roger Launius explained: “the whole issue of Mormon theft came up in a big way when Brigham Young suggested that it was wise to gather into Nauvoo during the early fall and bring in all the grain and livestock from outlying Mormon farms. Indiscriminate collection of these commodities exacerbated the tensions.” Several things now occurred simultaneously: so-called “Jack Mormons” or Gentiles who were elected to

56 Illinois State Register 7 (31 October 1845):2.
57 “Respected Friend,” 16 December 1845, typescript, Hawley Collection, Western Illinois University, Macomb, Illinois.
58 History of Lee County, Iowa, (Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1879), 476.
59 Life and Letters of Charles Mason, 80.
60 Mormonism in Conflict, 243.
63 From Assassination to Expulsion, 239. Whitman and Varner cite a later recollection of Anson Call, a member of the Mormon posse that chased Gentile house burners, alleged, “About two hundred houses had been burned, mostly in the southern county.” Sheriff Jacob B. Backenstos, 159.
64 Cultures in Conflict, 245.
offices in Hancock County by the Mormon vote were threatened by their fellow Gentiles. Brigham Young alerted the Nauvoo Legion to serve under Backenstos as a *posse comitatus*, and Orrin Porter Rockwell shot and killed Franklin A. Worrell, a leader of the Carthage Greys who participated in the murders of Joseph Smith Jr. and Hyrum Smith. The story of Rockwell’s responding to the frantic cries of Backenstos for protection from the pursuing Gentiles and his killing Worrell is well known. The Gentile reaction to Worrell’s murder is not as well understood. Thomas Sharp dramatically announced in the *Warsaw Signal* under the enlarged and blackened heading “MURDER OF ONE OF OUR BEST MEN”: “Poor Frank, he was one of the noblest spirits in our county, and his death has kindled and will kindle a flame that can never be quenched until every Mormon has left the vicinity. REVENGE, REVENGE, Fellow Citizens is now the word.”

Not only was Worrell killed on 16 September, Phineas Wilcox and Orrin Rhodes, Gentiles from eastern Hancock County, arrived at Nauvoo with a load of wheat they wanted to have ground. Ignoring warnings his life was in danger in Nauvoo, Wilcox stayed at the house of a Mormon friend named Ebenezer Jennings. The next day he accompanied Jennings to the temple, but was not admitted, and later in the day was taken to the Masonic Hall by three men and was never seen again. A notarized statement by Rhodes was published in the *Warsaw Signal*, which said he looked for Wilcox in Nauvoo periodically until the 26th, when he gave up the search after being threatened with violence. It concluded, “[Rhodes] believes that said Wilcox has been murdered and the body concealed.” On 16 September, a remarkable document signed by Brigham Young was sent to the Mormon settlements of Ramus, La Harpe, Camp Creek, Montebello, and to the Bear Creek precinct, which said if they were disturbed by the mob to “give them the cold lead, or obey the sheriff’s counsel.”

Immediately after the deaths of Worrell and Wilcox, armed groups of Mormons and armed groups of Gentile irregulars were riding “throughout the county... chasing each other, bandits, and real and imagined robbers.” Backenstos, backed by his Mormon posse, occupied Carthage on 19 September 1845 and held it under a state of martial law for over a month.

---

65 Marshall Hamilton explained, “Warsaw postmaster E. A. Bedell was threatened by a group outside his home; he left through a back door and paddled across the river to Iowa in a canoe. In Carthage, the county treasurer and county recorder, who had been elected to office with Mormon support, received warnings to leave town.” From *Assassination to Expulsion*, 239.

66 The best accounts are *Orrin Porter Rockwell*, 138–140 and *History of the Church*, 7:446–447. D. Michael Quinn in *Origins of Power*, 404–405, note 192, said “According to Clayton diary, 17 September 1845, LDS Archives, after killing Worrell, Rockwell went to Highland Branch near the anti-Mormon headquarters of Warsaw and killed four more ‘mobocrats.’ This part of the entry is not in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 183, or in History of the Church.”

67 “Murder of One of Our Best Men. To Arms! To Arms!!” *Warsaw Signal* 2 (17 September 1845):2, emphasis his.


69 *Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 16 September 1845, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

70 *Cultures in Conflict*, 245.
Not only did many Gentiles go into hiding, the courthouse was occupied, homes were searched for weapons, and passes were required for individuals entering or leaving the city.71

Another tragedy occurred within days of the occupation of Carthage when Samuel McBratney or McBracking, a young man from Warsaw, Illinois, who was believed by the Mormons to have been associated with the Gentile house burners, was not only murdered, his body was mutilated. The Gentiles claimed a posse led by Backenstos and Bishop George Miller committed the murder.72

The tombstone of Andrew Daubenheyer can be found in the center of the isolated Tull Cemetery located nine miles north and one mile east of Nauvoo. His date of birth, "March 13, 1793," is given, but the date of his death is strangely listed as "Sept. 45." Graphically engraved between these dates is the caption "Killed by the Mormons." Historical sources are sparse about Daubenheyer's death—the most extensive account was written by Foster Walker in a yearlong series of anti-Mormon articles published in the Dallas City, Illinois, Review from March 1902 to March 1903. Walker's account says Daubenheyer was returning to the Camp Creek area after taking supplies to the anti-Mormons at Carthage when he was attacked. After his horse "came home rider less" on 21 September, and after an extensive search, his body was finally located, shot through the head, in a sheltered ditch covered with prairie hay. Walker concluded, "One more crime had been committed through Mormon bigotry."73 This conclusion was in line with Governor Thomas Ford's earlier assessment, "the Mormons murdered a man by the name of Daubenheyer, without any apparent provocation."74

71 Sheriff Jacob B. Backenstos,159. Whitman and Varner explained "That night, Backenstos and his Mormon posse rode into Carthage to quell acts of violence and rescue his own family, then consisting of Sarah and their two children, ages three and one. The scene they met was chaotic.

72 From Assassination to Expulsion, 239–240.


We were ordered [by Sheriff Backenstos] to put our horses under a fast run and for every man to do his best and to order the marauders to stand and if they did not to shoot them down. As we turned the corner of the field, we saw them sitting upon a woodpile, eating melons. They mounted their horses and ran for [their] life and we pursued them for about 2 miles. We killed one [McBratney] within 1 mile from where we started. The rest leapt from their horses, into a cornfield. One was killed while going over the fence; some one or two other[s] were (reported) wounded .... The man that was killed touched the firebrand to my father's house the same morning. Cited in Sheriff Jacob B. Backenstos, 159.


75 Governor Thomas Ford, History of Illinois: From its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847 (Chicago: S. C. Griggs & Co., 1854), 409, cited hereafter as History of Illi-
Stealing at Mormon Nauvoo

A force of some three hundred militia, under the command of Brigadier General John J. Hardin, the state militia commander, accompanied by Governor Thomas Ford, Judge Stephen A. Douglas, Major W. B. Warren, and Illinois Attorney General J. A. McDougal arrived at Carthage on 28 September and gave Backenstos's forces fifteen minutes to get out of the city. After the speedy departure of Backenstos and his Mormon allies, Hardin went about reestablishing civil authority. Roger D. Launius and John E. Hallwas editorialized, "[Hardin] quickly found that anti-Mormons and especially Mormon irregulars were plundering the county at will and put a stop to it by prohibiting any group of more than four persons from either side to assemble."76

Jason H. Sherman, a resident of Carthage and eyewitness to these events, described some of the Mormon depredations, "Other parties, with or without official authorization, were out plundering night and day taking horses from stables before the eyes of their owners in some instances, and driving cattle from farms into Nauvoo, where they were slaughtered and salted down for the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."77 Governor Thomas Ford remembered the Mormon role in these deprivations in a similar manner, "the people who had been burnt out of their houses assembled in Nauvoo, from whence, with many others, they sallied forth and ravaged the country, stealing and plundering whatever was convenient to carry or drive away."78 Hardin and his force arrived at Nauvoo to search for the bodies of Wilcox and Daubenheyer on 30 September. However, after an unsuccessful search, Hardin reported to Governor Ford by letter on 4 October that Wilcox had been recognized as being a member of the mob at Carthage during the assault on Joseph Smith Jr. and Hyrum Smith and reported on the unsuccessful search at Nauvoo to locate his body. He concluded, "The question still remains unanswered, 'What has become of Wilcox?' I think he has been killed."79

Responding to the 22 September request by the Quincy Committee, composed of representatives of nine counties to determine Mormon plans, the Twelve Apostles announced two days later the Mormons would leave Nauvoo the following spring. The necessity for abandoning Nauvoo was emphasized in a letter from Hardin, Douglas, and others to the Mormon hierarchy on 2 October, "Should you not do so, [leave Illinois] we are satisfied, however much we may depurate violence and bloodshed, that violent measures will be resorted to, to compel your removal, which will result in most disastrous consequence to yourselves and your opponents, and that the end will be your expulsion from the state."80

Norton Jacob, a faithful Mormon, recorded the 6–8 October conference at Nauvoo was disrupted by the arrival of Hardin's troops who searched Nauvoo for thieves and stolen property. He added, "They found some property which was claimed by Mr. Crawford who was said to be one of the house burners" and described the arrest and removal from Nauvoo of two Mormons named Gardner and (Daniel) Smith. He then recorded Brigham Young's condemnation of

nois.

76 Cultures in Conflict, 245.
77 As cited in Cultures in Conflict, 291.
78 History of Illinois, 410.
79 John J. Hardin letter, to Governor Thomas Ford, 4 October 1845, Illinois State Register 2 (17 October 1845):2. When Hosea Stout, who was the Captain of the Nauvoo police when Hardin searched Nauvoo, learned that Hardin had been killed in a battle in Mexico he wrote, "This is joy to me." The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1:253.
80 History of the Church, 7:450.
"such characters in the most severe terms and took measures to have them all cut off from the church."\(^{81}\)

Later in October, most of General Hardin’s forces were disbanded, and the duties of keeping the Mormons and Gentiles from harming each other fell to Major William Warren with two companies of militia. This force was too small to be effective and in a renewal of Gentile violence outlying Mormon homes were burned and the inhabitants were threatened. On 15 November, fifty-seven-year-old Edmund Durfee, a guest at Solomon Hancock’s home at the mostly deserted Morley settlement, was shot and killed when attempting to extinguish a barn fire set by Gentiles.\(^{82}\)

In December, indictments were issued against Brigham Young and others at Nauvoo on a charge of counterfeiting, but the governor did not assist the U. S. Marshall “in obtaining custody of the accused as he had informally agreed not to prosecute for past crimes in order to speed up the Mormon removal.”\(^{83}\)

The Response to Mormon Thieves in Post-Martyrdom Nauvoo

According to William Clayton, Brigham Young told a group of Mormons in the Nauvoo temple on 2 January 1846, “we will leave this wicked nation to themselves, [sic] for they have rejected the gospel, and I hope and pray that the wicked will kill one another and save us the trouble of doing it.”\(^{84}\) This hyperbolic statement is a reflection of Young’s feelings towards the Gentiles—it also provides insight into why he concluded that the Church need not prosecute Mormons who stole from Gentiles.

The scene was set for his intervention in the business of the seventies on 26 January 1846 when Joseph Young, Brigham’s brother and president of the seventies, expressed concern about thieves in the quorums. The History of the Church gave a sanitized version of the meeting in which Young told the seventies, “If he knew of a man belonging to the quorums stealing he would be cut off [from] the church and published in the [Nauvoo] Neighbor.” Young further explained the teaching of righteous principles was a law of the Church and those who stole from others not only jeopardized the seventies, but they “were not fit to be called saints nor decent human beings, they would go to hell.” This highly edited version referred to James Dunn being cut-off, presumably for stealing, and two others were to be questioned for drunkenness.\(^{85}\) Fortunately, a copy of the minutes of this meeting is available in the Leonard J. Arrington Papers at Utah State University, which gives a more correct rendering of Joseph Young’s address to the seventies:

I want every man who steals, cut off & sent down to hell. if I call out a mans name who steals he is wicked enough to seek my life—I wod. go thro’ Streets & say give me labor & food to sustain myself & family—if there is a man in these Quorums who steal I will cut them off & publish them in the Neighbor we have always taught them to be honest virtuous & upright—

---


83 Mormonism in Conflict, 250. Governor Ford’s reasoning for not supporting the arrests of the Twelve Apostles is in History of Illinois, 412–413.

84 The Journals of William Clayton, 2 January 1846, 251.

85 History of the Church, 7:365.
the honest, pure & good I want in a body by themselves & the wicked will go to hell—here are the lives of thousands jeopardised by these rascals—they will call you Brother & pilfer your property—they are neither Mormons, nor Hymn beings, but mongrels, & I think there is a good number of people here who will bear me out, the time is coming when they will be ferreted out—Aremius Johnson was cut off 5 yrs ago. Alanson Brown was cut off—he has turned States evidence & names 200 of his colleagues. Jacob Gates there are some have been in the penitentiary & are come back in our midst—these names have been thrown in my face this past week—I cannot blame the old Citizens for their hard feelings—James Dunn got in a scrape in a Mo. he has been to the penitentiary, yet retains his standing—he wrote his Uncle in Michigan that the 12 sanctioned his stealing—Potts & Davidson have been to the penitentiary. . . . Johnson was an old acquaintance there is a perfect band of them on this side, & the other (of the river) if we can feret out the thieves, we shall then be able to accomplish what we want. Joseph motioned that we drop James Dunn & carried—he then enquired about the character of David Holman, Jacob Gates bror. Holman had better suffer for a Season, than that the whole body should suffer. . . . Young spoke to root out evils—Jos: Young was in a very difficult sitn. we can hardly strike amiss—I am merciful—let Holman’s case stand a little season—if he is a thief he can cease from it, and become a good man, all these things are heaped upon us as a body. I want the brethren to find some tangible witness against Holman. 86

Evidently, the issue of thieves in the quorums was not resolved, as Joseph Young told the seventies the following day, “There are brethren in these quorums and even presidents who are connected with a body of those consecrating thieves, who pretend to say that they have a right to consecrate from the Gentiles, but such will steal from their brethren as well as others.” Other elders concurred and wanted the criminals identified and expelled from the church. John D. Lee, clerk of the seventies and Brigham Young’s adopted son in a system known as the Law of Adoption, disagreed. He said his brethren “were probably too hasty” in their determination to rid the quorums of thieves. He qualified their decisions as being overly excited and concluded, “that did the elders posses the power of Jehovah in their present weak condition in less than twenty-four hours the earth would be depopulated, especially should the elders be vested with that power in turns, for what would be spared by one would likely be destroyed by another.”

Brigham Young, who was attending this critical meeting of the seventies, apparently settled the issue. He said men “have come into our midst who were as corrupt as the devil himself” and explained many believed it would have been better to terminate their activities by “cutting their throats with a feather.” Such a permanent solution, argued Young, would be stopping a man “in his career” and would take away his free agency. He justified this position by stating, “Cain was permitted to live, peradventure, [sic] he might repent of his wickedness.” Young then stated that it was a policy of Joseph Smith Jr. to retain dangerous criminals in fellowship rather than excommunicate them because, “peradventure [sic] they might, notwithstanding they had been guilty of murder and robbery, come to the waters of baptism through repentance, and redeem a part of their allotted time.” To do less, according to Young, could result in the offended criminals claiming at the judgment day “we took away their agency.”

Continuing in a more traditional mode, he said presidents of the seventies should use

86 “Jany. 26. 1845 Quorum of 70. in the 70 Hall 10 a. m.,” typescript, Leonard J. Arrington Papers, Series 9, Box 12, Folder 2, pages 3–4, in Special Collections, Merrill Library, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, cited hereafter as Quorum of 70 Minutes. Quoted without revision.
good judgment and mediate problems in private whenever possible. This charitable approach could prevent the individual who committed a minor offense from being unjustly condemned and suffering emotional problems. Finally, Young closed with the statement, “We should be charitable, liberal, patient and forbearing with each other and above all never blast each others’ characters, rather hide each others faults with the mantle of charity; for when but few know your faults they seem but few, but expose them and they become multitudes.”

Conclusions

Mormons and Gentiles chose to believe the worst about each other and to ignore the fact the majority of people in both camps were law-abiding. For example, the Mormons who lived in Plymouth, a small settlement in eastern Hancock County, were generally assumed to be thieves by their Gentile neighbors but after the Mormons left the area it became apparent that the Mormons were unjustly accused “as such things [stealing] have happened since the Mormons left.” An even more dramatic example is the testimony of Governor Thomas Ford in his 17 December 1844 “Message from the Governor, in Relation to the Disturbances in Hancock County,” in which he listed some of the sensational criminal charges against the Mormons—murder, thieving counterfeiting, swindling—and concluded:

"Upon the whole, if one half of these reports had been true, the Mormon community must have the most intolerable collection of rogues ever assembled; or, if one half of them were false, they were the most maligned and abused... It was a fact also that some larcenies and robberies have been committed, and that Mormons had been convicted of the crimes; and that other larcenies had been committed by persons unknown but suspected to be Mormons. Justice, however, requires me here to say that I have investigated the charge of promiscuous stealing, and find it to be greatly exaggerated. I could not ascertain that there were a greater proportion of thieves in that community, than in any other of the same number of inhabitants; and perhaps if the city of Nauvoo were compared with St. Louis, or any other Western city, the proportion would not be so great."

Mormon journals are largely silent on the issue of Mormon theft. This suggests stealing by Mormons was not as epidemic as their enemies portrayed it. Additionally, the criminal activities of the transient “river rats,” who operated from the wharf area, were blamed on the Mormons. Mormon historian Truman G. Madsen summarized the variety of non-Mormon criminals who flocked to Nauvoo, “At this time [1844] Nauvoo was the largest city in Illinois; hence, counterfeiters, blacklegs, bootleggers, slave traders, gamblers, and every other disreputable type of person found their way there, trying to exploit the possibilities for dishonest profits, trying to gull recent and sometimes naive converts who had come from far and near.”

Stealing at pre-martyrdom Nauvoo was a serious problem, as Mormon thieves not only preyed on their brethren; they threatened the stability of the fledgling stake of Zion. The

---

greater impact of these Mormon thieves, however, was the unsettling effect their criminal activities had on the Gentiles. Many wondered if their goodwill in helping the destitute Mormons who arrived in 1839 and 1840 was ill advised after it was widely circulated Mormons were stealing from them. Real and imagined Mormon stealing influenced the Gentiles to set and ultimately carry out the goal of expelling the Mormons from Illinois. Less than two-dozen Mormons were identified by the Mormon hierarchy as being thieves up to June 1844. It is evident, however, that many more went undetected, but it is my sense there were fewer Mormon thieves proportionally in Nauvoo prior to the deaths of the Smiths than there were Gentile thieves in the neighboring towns.

The post-martyrdom period is much harder to quantify because of the escalating levels of hate in both camps. It is evident, however, the Missouri persecutions, the murder of the Smiths, and the repeal of the Nauvoo Charter did much to shape the Mormon attitudes towards the Gentiles. Add to that, the inflammatory speeches by Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, the vote to “cut-off” the Gentiles, and the oaths to “avenge the blood of the prophets” all contributed to an atmosphere in which normally law-abiding Mormons committed criminal acts. Just as the number of Gentiles who stole from the Mormons, burned Mormon houses, and destroyed Mormon property is unknown, it is impossible to determine how many Mormons stole from the Gentiles. Several factors, however, provide insight into the number of Mormon thieves in this period. Alanson Brown’s identification of two hundred Mormon thieves appears to be a realistic estimate. Moreover, Joseph Young’s statement, “There are brethren in these quorums [seventies] and even presidents who are connected with a body of these consecrating thieves,” substantiates Brown’s testimony. Even if the number of thieves who made Nauvoo and the satellite settlements their base of operations during 1845 is doubled, 400 thieves out of a population of some 12,000 people does not prove the Mormons, as a community, encouraged or condoned stealing. If the estimation of 400 thieves is reasonably correct, there is no way to know how many Mormons were in this number. Some stealing would have been committed by thieves posing as Mormons and by Gentile criminals living in the Mormon areas. In my estimation, the actual number of Mormon thieves did not proportionally exceed the number of thieves in the neighboring Gentile communities. Moreover, my research leads me to believe the number of Mormon thieves will never be known because of the exaggerated charges made by the Gentiles and the tendency of the Saints in post-martyrdom Nauvoo to deny Mormon thieves lived at Nauvoo. Speculation about the percentage of Mormon thieves in and around Nauvoo will continue until there is a means of making sense of the Mormon and Gentile propaganda about who was the criminal and who was the victim. Such an idyllic solution does not seem to be close at hand.

Plundering and violence by Mormons in September 1845 is an even more disturbing indictment. Again, because of lack of documentation, it is impossible to know the number of Mormons who were involved in violent crime in this brief period but the number does not appear to exceed 200. Whatever the number, this group of Mormons was every bit as reprehensible as the worst of their Gentile enemies, as they were not only thieves, some were murderers. Stephen C. LeSueur, in his study about the Mormon War in Missouri, examined the factors that caused normally law-abiding Mormons to plunder the Gentiles in 1838. His explanation of Mormon-initiated violence in Missouri, if transposed, does much to explain vio-

92 Quorum of 70 Minutes.
lent Mormon activities in Hancock County:

The desperate crimes committed by the Mormon soldiers can be attributed to several factors. Their militant activities and the belligerent speeches of their leaders during the summer and fall of 1838 had been leading them on a course of increasing lawlessness and violence. Pent-up hostility and frustration, fostered by years of persecution, lay waiting to explode. The Mormons’ conviction that they were God’s chosen people, that their righteous anger justified retaliation, and that their depredations were helping to build the kingdom of God encouraged Mormon soldiers to commit crimes they normally would not have perpetrated. Their perception of all Missourians as “enemies” and “mobbers” led the Mormons to believe that their victims deserved their fate, that they had brought the wrath of God on themselves. Once the Mormon soldiers had begun, many of them discovered that they enjoyed plundering and burning in behalf of the Lord.\(^94\)

The reversal of the pre-martyrdom policy of identifying and prosecuting Mormon thieves came about in stages as hatred between the Mormons and Gentiles increased. This changing policy is exemplified by the fact that known thieves such as the Hodge brothers, Artemus Johnson, and Thomas Brown were allowed to remain in fellowship. Finally, after both sides committed murder and extensive plundering, the stage was set for Brigham Young to override the wishes of his brother Joseph and many of the seventies who wanted to rid their quorums of Mormon thieves. The policy “of covering each other’s faults with the mantle of charity” meant that Mormon thieves would be retained in fellowship in spite of their crimes against the Gentiles. In short, it was a reflection of Young’s malevolent attitude toward the Gentiles. Hence, accused murderers Artemus Johnson, Thomas Brown, and Orrin Porter Rockwell became trusted scouts, hunters, and bodyguards on the trek to Utah. It was also a system in which Daniel Smith, the thief who was arrested and forcibly removed from Nauvoo by General Hardin’s forces on 7 October 1845 and who Brigham Young pledged to cut off from the Church, received his endowments in the Nauvoo temple on 30 January 1846.

Mormons who received their endowments in the Nauvoo temple after being severed from the church for stealing from the Gentiles include: John Telford on 24 December 1845; William Edwards on 31 January 1846; Joseph Holbrook and William Holliday Edwards on 6 February 1846; and David Smith on 7 February 1846. David Holman, who was known to be a Mormon thief throughout the Nauvoo period, received his endowments on 22 January 1846. James Dunn, who refused to promise Hyrum Smith he would cease being a thief, received his endowments on 6 February 1845.\(^95\) Moreover, he is the individual who had been in a Missouri prison and told his family, “The 12 sanctioned his stealings.”\(^96\)

\(^94\) The 1838 Mormon War, 121.
\(^95\) All endowment dates are from The Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register, located in the Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.
\(^96\) See footnote 85.
A Tale of Two Mormons

M. Guy Bishop

I remember the first time I heard the name of Mormon, Mormonites, Latter-day Saints, they sounded strange to me. —Henry Bigler, 1834

You [Stephen Post] have stood out and stultified your manhood and prostituted your priesthood till you have wasted your life. —Joseph Smith III to Stephen Post, 1879

Henry William Bigler (1815–1900) and Stephen Post (1810–1879) wore Mormonism quite differently. From the time of Bigler’s conversion, when twenty-two years old in 1837, until his death six decades later at age eighty-five, Bigler remained a stalwart, faithful Latter-day Saint. Post, however, proved quite the antithesis. After embracing Mormonism in 1836, Stephen Post floated from one variety of the religion to another, constantly seeking what he called the “true” shepherd. He died, in the words of historian of the Mormon dispersion Dale L. Morgan, as “the last great champion of Rigdonite Mormonism.”

Henry Bigler, a product of the trans-Appalachian frontier, was a homespun, self-reliant, humble man. Fueled by the insatiable land hunger that marked much of the American dream, his great-grandfather, Holland-born Mark Bigler, had come to America in 1733, settling first in Pennsylvania, and then later moving to Carroll County, Maryland. Mark Bigler died there, a respectable farmer, in 1787.

Mark’s second son, Jacob, married a “tolerable handsome” redheaded woman of Dutch and Welch parentage named Hannah Booker (or Booher), then moved southwest to the new frontier settlement of Shinnston, Harrison County, West Virginia. The community was named for Levi Shinn (1748–1807), a New Jersey Quaker who explored the area in 1773, eventually settling the region three years later. In 1793, Hannah Bigler gave birth to her sixth child, a son named Jacob, after his father. This younger Jacob (1793–1859) grew up along the West Fork River near Shinnston learning the skills of a frontiersman and a farmer. In May 1814, at twenty-one years of age, he married Elizabeth (Betsy) Harvey, the daughter of an itinerant preacher named Basil Harvey. Jacob and

---

1 Henry W. Bigler, Autobiography, ca. 1896, 26, Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter LDS Archives).
2 Incoming Correspondence, Stephen Post Collection, LDS Archives (hereafter SPC).
3 See his Patriarchal Blessing in Stephen Post, Miscellaneous Papers, SPC.
6 Compare Ronald O. Barney, One Side by Himself: The Life and Times of Lewis Barney (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2001), 33. See also Norman Burns, “The Bigler Family: Descendants of Mark Bigler Who Immigrated to America in 1733,” typescript, ca. 1960, 1, Copy at the Family History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
7 Bigler, Autobiography, 4.
Betsy would be the parents of Henry William Bigler. In Bigler's words, his parents were "poor but honest and religiously inclined." 9

Less is known of Stephen Post's youth. He was born nearly five years before Bigler, at Greenwich, Washington County, New York, on 3 January 1810. Of his adult life, an 1841 letter written to Brigham Young in response to an official (Quorum of the Twelve Apostles) request for information from missionaries, Post wrote, "I am a blacksmith by trade, have only a small house & lot of 4 acres of land, a wife and two children (boys)." 10 In January 1836, following his introduction to the Mormon gospel, and his conviction of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, Post "subscribed to the law [of the Lord]" and accepted baptism at the hand of Elder Stephen Winchester. 11 Shortly after his baptism, Stephen Post was called as a missionary by his new faith. In April 1836 he "took out his license to preach." 12 By July 1837, by his own calculations, he had "traveled 544 miles and preached forty-three sermons." 13 Post proclaimed Mormonism sporadically in the region near his Pennsylvania home for the next eight years.

In June 1838 the Jacob Bigler family, including son Henry, all of whom were now followers of Mormonism, heeded their prophet's call to gather with the Latter-day Saints at Jackson County, Missouri. According to a revelation recorded by Joseph Smith Jr. in 1831, Jackson County was both the site of the biblical Garden of Eden and the place to which Christ would return on his Second Coming. 14 For Henry Bigler, this was but the first of many geographical relocations for the sake of his beliefs.

On his first Sunday with the Saints, now located at Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri, Bigler received an opportunity to see first-hand some of the luminaries of his new religion. At the church services that day, he saw Joseph Smith Jr., whom he admiringly observed in his journal to be "all that the Elders [in Harrison County, Virginia] said he was." 15 To the slightly-built Bigler, who weighed but 150 pounds, Smith's very physical bearing (over six feet tall and weighing near 200 pounds) must have been impressive. In the following days, Bigler recorded the deportment of Joseph Smith Sr., the prophet's father, whom he fancied as "favoring the old patriarch Jacob" and Sidney Rigdon, first counselor to Joseph Smith Jr. in the church's presiding First Presidency. In Bigler's eyes, Rigdon was a "large" man, who was "rather corpulent," but an excellent orator. 16 Shortly after Henry Bigler arrived in Missouri, the non-Mormons of the area became alarmed by this large influx of suspect outsiders. 17 According to Bigler, "the Missourians began to hold meetings and resolutions passed to drive the Mormons out of the state." 18 These protests were the beginning of the end for...

9 Bigler, Autobiography, 5.
10 Stephen Post to Brigham Young, 10 November 1841, Journal History, LDS Archives.
11 See ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Post, Journal, 23 July 1837, LDS Archives.
15 Bigler, Autobiography, 19.
16 See ibid., 20–21.
Mormonism in Missouri. Armed conflict soon followed. On 25 October 1838, Missourians and Mormons battled near the Crooked River resulting in the deaths of four of the combatants. Missouri’s Governor Lilburn Boggs issued orders to drive the Mormons from the state. Following the capitulation of Joseph Smith Jr. at Far West and the subsequent surrender of Mormon forces (including Bigler) at Adam-ondi-Ahman, the Latter-day Saints left the state. In Bigler’s words, “the whole Church of twelve or fifteen thousand were driven and fled to Illinois.”

There they settled along a mosquito-infested, malaria-ridden bend of the Mississippi River near today’s Quincy, Illinois. At this spot, the followers of Joseph Smith Jr., the Mormon prophet, would build the city of Nauvoo. This community, according to historian Ronald E. Esplin, would be, “important to Latter-day Saints [as] the City of Joseph.” When they arrived in Illinois most of the Mormons were bewildered and confused. Their prophet was languishing in a Liberty, Missouri, jail. Having been forcibly driven from their residences, the Saints now found themselves homeless and penniless outcasts along the banks of the Mississippi River. Fortunately for these outcasts, the residents of Quincy welcomed them as a downtrodden people in need of refuge.

While Post was far distant on a mission at the time of the Missouri trouble, Henry Bigler was right in the middle of it. Neither he nor his immediate family were actually victims of the hostilities, but the events impacted Bigler’s perception of anti-Mormon persecution for the rest of his life. He became an ardent defender of Mormonism for the rest of his days largely because of the Missouri persecutions.

In his later autobiography, Henry Bigler joined his fellow Latter-day Saints in their almost universal condemnation of the Missourians. His version of these persecutions was not penned until nearly sixty years later in the 1890s. For the most part, it was not a first-hand perspective, but reminiscences likely influenced by the writings of Church historian George A. Smith with whom Bigler lived sporadically throughout the mid-nineteenth century. During much of Mormonism’s final days in Missouri, Bigler was “lying sick with the ague.” The closest he came to the shooting was witnessing some celebrating Missourians near Adam-ondi-Ahman “who seemed to take delight in shooting chicklings, pigs and hogs belonging to the Saints.” Henry Bigler’s account of the Missouri violence was not one of a first-hand participant, although he shared Latter-day Saint memory of the Missouri persecutions to the end of his days. Further to the east, Stephen Post was still faithfully preaching the gospel of Mormonism. Throughout the first part of 1838, he was laboring in Erie County, Pennsylvania, where, judging from his journal, he remained unaware of events transpiring.

19 LeSeuer, The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri, 151; Bigler, Autobiography, 23.
20 Bigler, Autobiography, 23. Bigler’s estimate of the number of Mormons who fled to Illinois may be too high. Historians have most recently placed the figure at “some five thousand.” See Roger D. Launius and John E Hallwas, editors, “Introduction,” Kingdom on the Mississippi Revisited (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 2.
22 Historian David L. Bigler has recently observed, “For those who went through the Mormon War and stuck with the faith... it would always be Missour-i they remembered with a will for vengeance in their hearts.” The Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West (Spokane, Washington: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1998), 27.
23 On Church historian George A. Smith, see Davis Bitton and Leonard J. Arrington, Mormons and Their Historians (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 15, 23.
25 Ibid.
in Missouri. A typical entry from Post’s journal made near the time of the Church’s difficulties in Missouri reads: “Sun. Jan. 14th [1838], I preached at Concord [Pennsylvania], Miss Margaret McDougle manifested a desire to go forward in baptism, next Sabbath was appointed at her request.”

Nearer the time of the Saints’ expulsion from Missouri, it was still uninterrupted missionary work that held Post’s attention. On 19 August he, “Preached at Concord near Brother Avery’s residence[,] My brother Warren went with me. I ordained him at intermission & he preached the P. M. discourse.” Interestingly, there was never any mention of events in Missouri. Yet, it would seem that by August 1838 there would have at least been rumors of these happenings. Post’s final journal entry for 1838 on 24 December reads simply, “I preached at Concord... I had considerable liberty of speech.”

While Henry Bigler and the majority of the Mormons struggled to begin anew in Illinois, Stephen Post remained in the Great Lakes region. May 1839 found him at Kirtland, Ohio. As Bigler moved in close proximity to the Church leaders in Missouri, Post appears to have been on equally familiar terms with the guiding churchmen in Ohio. On the night of 11 May 1839, he lodged with Martin Harris at Kirtland. In comparing the two men’s lives at this juncture, it is important to realize that Henry Bigler was still single. In Missouri, he had the support of his immediate family (parents and siblings), who shared much of the hardship and persecution with him. Stephen Post does not seem to have enjoyed such a solid base of support. His wife, Jane, was not yet a Mormon and may have even been antagonistic at this juncture. She never affiliated with Joseph Smith Jr.’s, nor later Brigham Young’s, brand of Mormonism. Jane Post would not embrace her husband’s religion until many years later when he had become a disciple of Sidney Rigdon’s.

Until the 1844 death of Joseph Smith Jr., at Carthage, Illinois, and the resulting fracturing of Mormonism, the activities and beliefs of Henry Bigler and Stephen Post, while differing in geographical locale and immediate experience, still shared one commonality—each man accepted Joseph Smith Jr. as a prophet of God. But that would soon change. This shared direction would die with the prophet.

Emerging from the scramble to succeed Joseph Smith Jr. as Mormonism’s mouthpiece were Brigham Young, James J. Strang, William Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and, eventually, Joseph Smith III. At the core of the differences were the theological changes, which swept the religion during the last years of the prophet’s leadership. The primary questions facing post-martyrdom Mormons centered on succession in the Church’s presidency and the still nascent temple rites.

26 Post’s journal, January through December 1838, contains infrequent entries and makes no mention of Missouri at all. One can only speculate that he was busy with missionary work (which he writes of often) and/or that he was unaware of events in Missouri.

27 Ibid., 14 January 1838.

28 Ibid., 6 August 1838.

29 Ibid., 24 December 1838.

30 Ibid., 11 May 1839.

31 On Jane Post’s acceptance of Rigdonism, see Church Record, Attica Branch, SPC; also Bishop, “Stephen Post,” Differring Visions, 191–192.


33 On the trying issues surrounding this critical event in Mormonism, see Michael D. Quinn, “The Mormon Succession Crisis of 1844,” Brigham Young University Studies 16 (November 1976): 187–233;
Bigler opted to follow the leadership of Brigham Young and the Council of the Twelve Apostles, while Post followed first Strang and then Rigdon. Bigler’s allegiance to Young and the Twelve was not surprising. His decision, therefore, is not too surprising. Henry Bigler had consistently stood behind the Church leaders from the day of his conversion. He always seems to have enjoyed a trusted and mutually respectful relationship with Brigham Young.

Furthermore, LDS Apostle George A. Smith was a relative by virtue of Smith’s marriage to Bigler’s favorite cousin, Bathsheba. While not really an insider, Henry Bigler was close to the seat of Mormon power. Stephen Post does not seem to have had such a close relationship with the religion’s inner circle. By the mid-1840s, he was already demonstrating an orientation toward the less orthodox fringe of Mormonism.

The murder of Joseph Smith in June 1844 threw the Church into disarray. Some, like Bigler, chose to cast their lot with Brigham Young and the Twelve Apostles. Others, such as Post seem to have been estranged from this bloc by several factors. Was Brigham Young the rightful successor to Smith? Was the ever-escalating attention to building the Nauvoo temple a correct goal? And what about the incipient temple rites being advocated by Young and the Twelve? Then there was that disconcerting rumor of polygamy.

At this juncture in Mormon history, Stephen Post set off on a quixotic quest to find the true shepherd he had long sought. After Joseph Smith Jr., he gravitated from James Strang to William Smith to Sidney Rigdon. It could well be argued that Post went from true believer in 1835 to Mormon heretic by 1856–1857. A heretic is one who professes new religious beliefs that are opposed to the orthodox doctrine of his former faith. By the fall of 1857, having fleetingly followed James J. Strang and William Smith, he embraced the leadership of Sidney Rigdon. Soon Stephen Post would fall into the category of a heretic. Under Rigdon’s spell, he came to view Joseph Smith Jr. as a fallen prophet because of his introduction of plural marriage and temple ordinances. Sidney Rigdon was the sole purveyor of religious truth, and the Church of Jesus Christ of the Children of Zion, founded in June 1863, was the one and only true church.

By this juncture, Henry Bigler had completed his second Latter-day Saint mission to the Sandwich Islands in fewer than ten years. Leaving a wife and young family behind in Utah, he answered Brigham Young’s call for missionary service. Bigler served as the mission president in Hawaii from 1857 through 1858. The voyage to Honolulu proved physically damaging to his health. Traveling steerage class required him to sleep on the deck of the ship. Bigler suffered severely from seasickness and from the elements. On Sunday 23 August 1857 he tellingly wrote in his journal: “Sea sick, could not eat well.” The following day he felt a “little better drank some gruel and eat a little.” But “it is cold and disagreeable on deck and even in bed all night my legs was cold not having anything to cover myself except my coat.”

Henry Bigler’s commitment to his religion was unquestionable. He suffered much physical and emotional deprivation for the sake of Mormonism.


34 Regarding the impact of these issues on Nauvoo Mormonism, see the several appropriate essays in *Kingdom on the Mississippi Revisited: Nauvoo in Mormon History*.


37 These shipboard quotations are found in Henry W. Bigler, Book G, 23 and 24 August 1857, Henry William Bigler Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
While Stephen Post was wrestling with his Mormonism as he searched for a true shepherd, Bigler was giving all he had to advance the gospel where he was at in the Sandwich Islands. Which man's actions were most worthy of praise? Bigler displayed selfless dedication to his faith; Post was doubtless an earnest seeker after religious truth. Who is the better servant—the eternal seeker or the steady doer? These questions are probably moot. Each man was following his conscience and trying to meet the expectations of His God, as he perceived them.

In Hawaii, Bigler attempted to revitalize the faith of the local Saints and combat Protestant attempts to reclaim members lost to Mormonism. He tried to institute the Utah practice of a reformation among wavering church members in the Islands. In August 1857, the enumeration of Hawaiian Saints stood at 3,192 members—roughly the same figure as when Bigler had left three years earlier. Trying to maintain a glimmer of hope, he speculated that this discouraging census was due to the fact that “So many of the [Hawaiian] Saints have moved from place to place since being baptized that they are lost track of and hence are not represented as faithful members.”

Over the next several months Henry Bigler spent much of his time wrestling with what he described as the “dwindled away and withered up” state of Hawaiian Mormonism. The Saints seemed caught up by the blossoming Hawaiian nationalism of the mid-1850s, which had brought with it a growing rejection of Anglo–Christian values and championed a return to the traditional native religion. Not only were the Mormons hurt by this cultural swing but also the Protestants and the Catholics.

It was at this juncture that Bigler tried to institute an Utah-like reformation in order to rekindle the fires of Hawaiian Mormonism and stem the tide of apostasy. The reformation encouraged an open confession of sins, rebaptism, and a commitment to strive for a more Christ-like life. This return to basic Mormonism was typical Henry Bigler. His faith in the religion was unshakable and he expected the same of others. He secured a pledge from local Mormon leaders throughout the Islands to “endeavor to introduce a spirit of reformation among the native Saints.” His optimism would be tested time and again during the following months.

In October 1857, he preached at a meeting attended by fifteen or sixteen at a congregation that just three years earlier had numbered more than sixty members in good standing. While Bigler was working to right things for Mormonism in the Hawaiian Islands, back in Utah the situation for his church was looking bleak. United States President James Buchanan, acting on rumors of sedition, sent Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston with army troops to take back control of the territorial government from Brigham Young. Rumors of Johnston’s army marching on Utah even found their way into Honolulu newspapers. No doubt, this became a cause for concern to Bigler as he worried about his family back home.

Then in November he received a letter from Brigham Young dated 4 September 1857 informing him that “The United States evidently have commenced a war with us, and are determined to put an end to us or our religion.” This letter officially closed the LDS Hawaiian Mission and ordered Henry Bigler and all the elders to return to Utah “as soon as possible.” The Hawaiian missionaries quickly prepared to abandon the field.

Reflecting a cautious bearing and not wanting to concern the local Saints, Bigler shared extracts from Young’s letter with the other missionaries then advised the elders to “prepare for a sudden...
change of affairs in the mission." While he likely would have judged this second Hawaiian mission less fulfilling than the first had been, Bigler had shown once again his willingness to sacrifice personal preference, convenience, and even family to serve the church to which he was so devoted. He would be returning to a frightened and restless Utah, to a wife and young family he barely knew, and to a world in upheaval. The next eighteen years would be the only of his entire adult life, since becoming a Latter-day Saint, that he could call his own.

While Henry Bigler was fighting to save Hawaiian Mormonism during the late 1850s, Stephen Post continued his quest for religious verity. In September 1855, he attended a gathering of disgruntled Mormons at Kirtland, Ohio. Martin Harris and William Smith conducted the assembly. Both men were notables of early Mormonism. Harris had been one of the three witnesses to the golden plates, which contained the Book of Mormon. A decade earlier while serving a mission in Ohio, Post had stayed with Martin Harris at Kirtland. William Smith was the younger brother of the prophet, Joseph Smith. These two must have offered the type of religious base that Stephen Post was diligently looking for. To Post, Joseph Smith remained the quintessential prophet and Harris and William Smith offered indisputable links to the prophet.

Harris and Smith each professed divine callings to reorganize the Church in a manner resembling the Kirtland experience of the 1830s. William Smith claimed the right to succeed his brother as prophet. Like Post, those gathered at Kirtland in 1855 sought to restore this earlier variety of Mormonism: a church that was devoid of Brigham Young, polygamy, and temple rituals. To them, and certainly to Stephen Post, this was a more pure, desirable Mormonism. Post hoped this group might succeed in restoring the excitement he felt with the religion of the 1830s. He remained committed to the Book of Mormon, and Harris, as one of the witnesses to that book, must have been attractive to Stephen Post. And, for him, William Smith, the prophet's brother, offered hope for a revitalization of Mormonism.

Post's journal indicates that this Kirtland conference passed resolutions accepting the Book of Mormon, the Bible, the Doctrine and Covenants as the word of God; acknowledged the restoration of priesthood authority through Joseph Smith Jr.; and refuted the endowment, sealings, and all other additions to LDS beliefs since Joseph Smith's day—in other words, the practices embraced by the followers of Brigham Young in Utah. Earlier, as a Strangite, Stephen Post had championed a similar litany of beliefs.

Yet, something was still missing for Post. In the end, he would cast aside this new belief as he had those of Brigham Young and post-martyrdom Nauvoo and Beaver Island's James J. Strang. As he had done before, Stephen Post rejected the movement at Kirtland, which he now judged as "a land barren of faith, a people without a shepherd." Where was Post now to look for the true beacon? Disappointed with the Kirtland movement, he turned to Sidney Rigdon. After failing to achieve leadership of the Mormon Church in the months following the murder of Joseph Smith, Rigdon laid other plans. Having faltered in his attempt to obtain the prophetic mantle of Joseph Smith Jr., Rigdon saw his actions taken by Brigham Young and the Twelve Apostles as a sign of apostasy. Now living in Pittsburgh, the would-be prophet was soon disfellowshipped; then Apostles Parley P. Pratt, Orson Hyde, and Charles Rich attempted to take his ministerial license—an act he refused to
comply with. As a consequence of this refusal, the Twelve prepared to excommunicate Sidney Rigdon, an action that took place within days.

Rallying his supporters—mainly opponents of Young and of plural marriage—Rigdon seemed to blame his problems on polygamy. "Did the Lord ever tell any people that sleeping with their neighbor’s wives and daughters had anything to do with preparing the way of the Savior’s coming?” According to his biographer, “Hatred of polygamy burned in Rigdon’s heart.”

Sometime late in 1855 or early in 1856, Stephen Post, still with the Harris–Smith assembly at Kirtland but obviously searching, had written to Rigdon now living at Friendship, New York, where he had moved in 1848. Post’s original letter has been lost, but the content can be surmised by Sidney Rigdon’s response. Claiming to have lost any interest in Mormonism, Rigdon said he responded only because “common courtesy” required it. Apparently, Stephen Post had inquired about his early relationship with Joseph Smith and Mormonism. “I was called and sent forth to do a certain work before the Lord,” wrote Sidney Rigdon. This summons to the ministry occurred “previous to my acquaintance with J. Smith.”

Rigdon expressed cynicism about whether or not the old organization (pre-Nauvoo Mormonism) could ever be rebuilt. Post, who even then must have been wrestling with the efforts of Martin Harris and William B. Smith, likely solicited Rigdon’s thoughts on this movement. In the following months, Sidney Rigdon’s interest in Mormonism must have been rekindled, for he maintained regular communication with Post thereafter. He had found in Stephen Post an interested disciple.

In a manner reminiscent of Joseph Smith Jr., Rigdon sent Post a revelation from the Lord: “Verily, verily, thus saith the Lord unto my servant Stephen Post, I have looked upon thee and seen thy works and thy desires to understand my revelations, and I have heard thy prayer. And now I call [you] to a great work in assisting my servant Sidney Rigdon in preparing the way before me, and Elijah, which should come.”

This must have been the proof Stephen Post had been seeking: a revelation directed to him seeming to address the very questions which so troubled him. Certainly, Sidney Rigdon must be the true shepherd he had so diligently sought.

The revelation involving Post was not Rigdon’s first experience with the revelatory process. He had witnessed it first hand while working closely with Joseph Smith during the Church’s early years. In December 1830, Sidney Rigdon had been called by revelation to assist in the restoration of the gospel in the latter days. In fact, the revelation calling Rigdon to this duty appears to have impacted, at least stylistically, the later word of the Lord recorded to Stephen Post in April 1856: “Behold, verily, verily, I say unto my servant Sidney, I have looked upon thee and thy works, I have heard thy prayers, and prepared for thee a great work.”

Rigdon and Stephen Post were well suited to each other. In fact, Sidney Rigdon’s biographer

---

46 Ibid., 355.
47 See ibid., 355–360. Throughout the proceeding, Rigdon maintained the legitimacy of his claims to leadership of the LDS Church.
48 Quoted in ibid., 370.
49 Ibid., 372.
51 Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 20 January 1856, SPC.
52 Post, Journal, 7 April 1856.
53 The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Section 35:3.
has noted, "Rigdon and Post were two yoked visionaries." 54 Both men’s lives were, for better or worse, tied to the Book of Mormon and to millenarian zeal. 55 Each trait was reflective of early Mormonism. Whatever paths they later followed, neither man ever cast these convictions aside.

Following his forced parting of ways with Brigham Young and the LDS Church in the mid-1840s, Rigdon first founded the Church of Christ (Rigdonite) at Pittsburgh in late 1844. His loathing of plural marriage and of Brigham Young and the Twelve led to Rigdon’s organization of this opposing faction of Mormonism. His Church of Christ outspokenly disavowed polygamy, equating it with adultery and disputing (still) Young’s right to head the Church. 56 The voice of this dissent was the Messenger and Advocate of the Church of Christ, 57 a copy of which may well have led Stephen Post to Rigdon’s Church of Christ at Pittsburgh.

Stephen Post still clung to basic Mormon tenets even after disassociating himself from the main body of the Church by refusing to move west in 1846. The Church of Christ drew its support from others disenchanted Latter-day Saints much like Stephen Post. It was here that Rigdon and Post began a relationship that would last until Rigdon died in 1876.

In Post, Sidney Rigdon found a willing supporter. In Rigdon, Stephen Post believed he had found the true beacon he had been so tirelessly seeking. Each man complemented the other. Because of this, Post rose rapidly within the Rigdonite movement. Sidney Rigdon longed to wear the mantle of a prophet, and Post helped bolster that characteristic with the older man. Clearly, Rigdon offered Stephen Post something he needed in his religious being. He believed that he had found a viable prophet, who seemed to offer just what had drawn Post to Mormonism to begin with—charismatic leadership, a millenialist perspective, advocacy of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, and no polygamy.

In the spring of 1866, Sidney Rigdon received another revelation directed toward Post. He was called to be a “spokesman for my servant Sidney.” 58 As the prophet’s spokesman, Post’s immediate role was to write a treatise intended to promote the Children of Zion and Sidney Rigdon as the rightful prophet of Mormonism. Zion’s Messenger (1864), coauthored with William Hamilton, sought to show that the rivals of the Children of Zion (primarily Joseph Smith III and the emerging Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 59 but also Brigham Young and the Latter-day Saints in Utah) were not the chosen successors to Joseph Smith Jr.’s original movement.

Post’s and Hamilton’s efforts at this time were specifically aimed at “scattered Zion,” which seemed to mean those who were now following Joseph Smith III. Not forgotten, however, were those who had “polluted their inheritance” 60 through polygamy. In order to redeem Zion these competing factions were called to follow Sidney Rigdon, “the chief shepherd on the earth.” 61

The response of these competitors to Rigdon’s and Post’s diatribes says much about how the Latter-day Saints and the Reorganization must have viewed the “chief shepherd” and his spokes-

54 Van Wagoner, Sidney Rigdon, 403.
55 Ibid., 414.
56 See ibid., Chapter 15.
57 On the Messenger and Advocate, see ibid., 382, note 7.
58 See Copying Book A, “Book of Revelations of Jesus Christ to the Children of Zion through Sidney Rigdon, Prophet,” Section 61, SPC.
60 Stephen Post and William Hamilton, Zion’s Messenger (Erie, Pennsylvania: Sterrett and Gara, 1864), 2, 4–5, SPC.
61 Ibid., 4–5.
man, Post. Brigham Young and the Twelve, whom Rigdon referred to in 1863 as “the Twelve blasphemers,” all but ignored the Children of Zion. Joseph Smith III, likely due to the geographical proximity of the Reorganization and the Children of Zion, was forced to face the Rigdon issue. Between 1865 and 1879, Stephen Post, now the effective leader of the Children of Zion gathered at Attica, Iowa, wrote several dogmatic, meandering letters to young Joseph Smith III urging him to come over to Sidney Rigdon’s side. In the end, Smith, clearly annoyed by Post’s harassment, replied that Stephen Post had “wasted” his life in Rigdon’s service.

By the mid-1860s, Stephen Post, now following the prodding of Sidney Rigdon, had thrown off the last vestiges of his Mormonism to become a Mormon heretic. He, along with Rigdon, now claimed that Joseph Smith Jr. was a fallen prophet and that Sidney Rigdon was God’s spokesman on Earth. Post had at last found his true shepherd, but to the rest of the Mormon world, Rigdon was a fraud and Post had been duped.

According to the historical record, Henry Bigler and Stephen Post never met. Although unrecorded, it seems likely that by the mid-nineteenth century Bigler would have judged Post’s true shepherd (Rigdon) to be a charlatan. Stephen Post, however, clearly found the recipient of Bigler’s support (Brigham Young) to be attempting to “prevert [sic] the order of heaven” by failing to recognize Sidney Rigdon’s call to lead the Church. Following the death of Rigdon in July 1876, Post, who had long been the de facto leader of the Children of Zion, became Sidney Rigdon’s successor until Post’s death three years later.

Henry Bigler outlived Stephen Post by twenty-one years. He spent the last two decades of his life officiating in Latter-day Saint temple rituals at St. George, Utah. This aspect of Bigler’s life offers the final contrast between these two nineteenth-century Mormons. The former promoted temple Mormonism almost to his dying day, while the latter disavowed the practice and joined with others in working against it and other trappings of the Utah church, which he found to be highly controversial.

Henry Bigler, a humble, devout Mormon, remained a committed Latter-day Saint to his dying day. Stephen Post, described by Joseph Smith III as seeking “to become learned above what is written,” ended up a heretic. Each man had started his career as a Mormon on basically equal footing. Henry Bigler enjoyed a supportive family and a close relationship with what eventually became the Latter-day Saint hierarchy—Brigham Young, George A. Smith, and others. He remained close to this body throughout his life.

Stephen Post, lacking family support until after he became a Rigdonite, endlessly floated from one variety of Mormonism to another. In the end, he denied the prophetic stature of Joseph Smith Jr. and denied many basic beliefs of the faith. The form of Mormonism that he and Sidney Rigdon promoted, with the exception of a belief in the Book of Mormon, bore little or no resemblance to the creed Post originally avowed. Here we have a tale of two Mormons, one who remained true to his initial beliefs and one who was swayed by the various pretenders to the throne of the prophet. Henry Bigler died comfortably sheathed within the countenance of his faith. At the time of his death, Stephen Post headed a small Midwestern sect longing for followers.

---

63 See Stephen Post to Joseph Smith III, 19 February 1865, 13 June 1866, and 29 July 1879; Joseph Smith III to Stephen Post, 6 August 1879, SPC.
65 Quoted in ibid., 190.
66 Joseph Smith III to Stephen Post, 6 August 1879, SPC.
The Temple Lot Case: Fraud in God’s Vineyard

S. Patrick Baggette II

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

—Isaiah 2:3 King James Version and II Nephi 8:19 Book of Mormon

Introduction

The Temple Lot Case was instituted to remove the cloud on title to a certain piece of real estate just west of the Independence Courthouse in Jackson County, Missouri. Several religious factions simultaneously claimed title to this property. Further, this property was not to be given up by any of the parties without a struggle of Homeric proportions, as it was (and is) believed by the factions that on this lot the apocalyptic Temple of the Lord would one day stand.¹

Background

Joseph Smith Jr. was born 23 December 1805 at Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont.² He was the fourth of nine children and third son of Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith.³ Joseph Smith Sr., a farmer, evidently was not much of a businessman. He appears to have been very industrious but frequently fell prey to the devious tactics of cunning speculators.⁴ After a series of crop failures in Vermont, the Smiths moved to the new state of New York and settled in Palmyra, Ontario (now Wayne) County, New York.⁵ The Smiths purchased “new land” in what was known as the Phelps and Gorham Purchase. At this time, Palmyra was a “place of considerable business” that included weaving and milling (Palmyra was later to become an Erie Canal Town).⁶ Four years later, the Smiths moved across Ontario County to Manchester, New York. It was in this town that Joseph Smith Jr., an under-educated youth of fifteen, would convulse the religious community of his home.

Two years after moving to Manchester, New York, a great religious upheaval took place with several denominations crying for the attention and ultimate conversion of their respective

¹ See Revelation 21:3, King James Version.
³ Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, Ancestry and Posterity of Joseph Smith and Emma Hale, with Little Sketches of Their Immigrant Ancestors, All of Whom Came to America between the Years 1620 and 1685, and Settled in the States of Massachusetts and Connecticut (Independence: Herald House, 1929).
⁴ Davis, The Story of the Church, 42.
listeners. At first, the preachers were happy merely to have someone join a church, whichever
the convert might choose; however, this feeling didn’t last long when the people of the
community began to move in greater numbers to opposing denominations. Joseph Smith Jr.
was fifteen at this time and later related that “[a] scene of great confusion and bad feeling
ensued; priest contending against priest, and convert against convert, so that all the good
feelings, one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words, and a
contest of opinion.”

Four of Joseph Smith Jr.’s family were proselyted to the Presbyterian faith
(his mother, his brothers Hyrum and Samuel Harrison, and his sister Sophronia.)

In the spring of 1820, Joseph Smith Jr. was confused as to which church he should join. He
seems to have preferred the Methodist Church; but, he was not sure if he should join them. He
wondered whose doctrine was correct, if any, and how he could find out. One day, while
laboring under these divisive feelings, he read from the Epistle of James 1:5 King James
Version: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and
upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” Joseph decided that he would exercise the option and
determined to go to the wooded land adjoining his family’s property to pray for guidance.

When he had arrived at the place previously chosen, he knelt down to pray vocally, for the
first time in his life. He had no sooner begun to pray when some power overcame him so that
he could not speak. He called on God to deliver him and at the moment of his greatest despair,
a light appeared directly overhead and descended until it fell on him. In the light, Joseph saw
two personages standing above him in the air. One of the personages called Joseph by name
and said, (pointing to the other), “This is my beloved Son, hear him.” Joseph was commanded to
join none of the churches competing for his attention and was given a promise that “the
fullness of the gospel should at some future time be made known unto [him].”

A few days later, Joseph related what had happened to him to one of the Methodist
preachers who promptly dismissed the vision as being of the devil. He soon found that even
though he was a young, obscure boy of fifteen, persecution knows no age limit. It appears that
despite the differences among the religious sects, they all united against the boy and his vision.

Later in life, Joseph Smith Jr. compared his feelings to those of the apostle Paul when he
made his defense before King Agrippa concerning his vision when he “saw a light and heard a
voice.” He continued:

So it was with me; I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two person-
ages, and they did in reality speak unto me or one of them did; and though I was hated and
persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision yet it was true, and while they were persecuting
me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to
say in my heart, Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision, and “who
am I that I can withstand God,” or why does the world think to make me deny what I have
actually seen, for I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not

7 Smith, Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story, 5.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 7.
10 Ibid., 9.
11 Letter from Joseph Smith Jr. to Joseph Wentworth, editor of the Chicago Democrat printed in the Times and Seasons 3 (1 March 1842):706. This is the first published statement of early Church history.
12 Smith, Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story, 11.
deny it, neither dare I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God and come under condemnation.\textsuperscript{13}

For three years, Joseph suffered the ridicule of the community resulting from his profession of the vision. Then on 21 September 1823, the angel Moroni appeared before Joseph and told him that God had “a work for [him] to do and that [his] name would be had for good and evil, among all nations, kindred, and tongues; or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.”\textsuperscript{14} Further, the angel told Joseph that he was to translate a book written on gold plates in fulfillment of Old Testament prophesy, which book gives an account of the former inhabitants of the American continent and the source from which they came.

To aid him in the work he would be provided with the Urim and Thummim, which were with the plates. The Urim and Thummim are also known as “interpreters” and were used by the Israelite high priests\textsuperscript{15} to behold the will of God for the guidance of the Lord’s people. The “interpreters” were to be used to translate the writings on the plates of gold into a book. This book was to be called the Book of Mormon.

**Book of Mormon**

The Book of Mormon purports to be a sacred history of the former inhabitants of the American continent and, also, purports to record the origin of these people. This history was recorded on gold plates by certain priests. The last priest (Moroni) traveled from Central America in 421 C.E.\textsuperscript{16} and buried the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the sword of Laban in Hill Cumorah located in what is now New York state.\textsuperscript{17}

On 22 September 1827, Joseph Smith Jr. was led to Hill Cumorah and was permitted to remove the Urim and Thummim and the gold plates for the purpose of their translation.\textsuperscript{18} This translation was called the Book of Mormon, whose primary purpose is “the convincing of the Jew and the Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.”\textsuperscript{19}

**Organization of the Church**

On Tuesday, 6 April 1830, the Church of Jesus Christ was organized at Fayette, New York.\textsuperscript{20} This occurred just seven months before the first American railroad train made its inaugural run from Schenectady to Albany in New York, a distance of seventeen miles.\textsuperscript{21} In December 1830, the church (which numbered about seventy members) received a revelation “directing them to translate no more until they had removed to [the state of] Ohio” and, on 2 January 1831, the Church received a revelation commanding the church to gather to Kirtland,

\textsuperscript{13} Smith, *Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story*, 12.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{15} See Exodus 28:30 King James Version and also Ezra 2:63 King James Version.
\textsuperscript{16} Book of Mormon (Independence: Herald House, 1908).
\textsuperscript{17} Davis, *The Story of the Church*, 36.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 593.
\textsuperscript{19} Book of Mormon, i.
John Whitmer Historical Association Journal

Ohio.

While located in Kirtland, Ohio, the Church received a revelation that the next General Conference was to be held in Missouri, and several of the elders were called to go, two by two, by different routes and meet in Independence, to hold the Conference there. Joseph Smith Jr. was among the people commanded to go to Independence. He left Kirtland on 19 June and was among the first to arrive in Independence.

Movement of the Church

While in Independence, Missouri, in July 1831, Joseph Smith received a revelation pointing out the exact spot for the building of the temple. On 3 August 1831, Joseph, along with nine elders, dedicated a certain piece of ground a little west of the city of Independence for the building of the temple. After the ceremony, Joseph returned to Kirtland, Ohio, while the others remained to take care of Church business, which included the preparation for the relocation of Church headquarters to Independence. During this time, Kirtland, Ohio, served as the headquarters of the Church, and Independence was its chief mission. Not all fared well for the Church, however.

In 1833, the Saints (this being the term by which members of the church referred to themselves) were driven out of Jackson County by angry mobs that were angered by their block voting powers, Eastern (anti-slavery) ways, and religious arrogance.

In July 1833, tensions were growing to a fever pitch. The animosity between the long-time residents of Jackson County, Missouri, and the never-ceasing flow of Eastern converts provided a breeding ground for hatred and mob rule. On 21 July 1833, the Saints wrote to Missouri Governor Daniel Dunklin and asked for protection and redress for the wrongs they had suffered. On 19 October 1833, Dunklin replied by declining to help, instead referring the Saints to the Justice of the Peace in their respective counties. On 7 November 1833, the Saints were expelled from Jackson County under the extreme duress of mob violence.

After leaving Jackson County, the Saints crossed the Big Blue River and settled in Clay County, predominately near Liberty, Missouri. From this location, they petitioned the Governor of Missouri to restore them to their property. Once again, the governor declined to offer any assistance. On 10 April 1834, the Saints petitioned Andrew Jackson, president of the United States of America, for relief from the savage religious persecution that was visited on them. He referred the matter to the War Department, which was headed by Lewis Cass, secretary of

---

22 RLDS History, volume 1, 165; Davis, The Story of the Church, 112.
24 Ibid.; RLDS History, volume 1, 184.
25 RLDS History, volume 1, 201.
26 Ibid., 203; Doctrine and Covenants Section 57.
28 RLDS History, volume 1, 320.
29 Ibid., 321.
30 Ibid., 404.
31 Ibid., 413.
war, who referred the matter back to the state of Missouri.\textsuperscript{32} On 16 June 1834, the Saints, recently expelled to Clay County, met with representatives from Jackson County to hear a proposal that they sell all their property and never return to Jackson County.\textsuperscript{33}

The relocation of the church to Clay County seemed to calm the passions of the mob at least for a season. However, on 26 July 1836, the Saints were asked to move, this time by the people of Clay County.\textsuperscript{34} Trying to find a solution to the settlement problem, the Saints introduced an act in the legislature to organize a new county.\textsuperscript{35} The act providing for the formation of Caldwell and Daviess Counties was approved by Governor Daniel Dunklin on 29 December 1836.\textsuperscript{36}

Back at Church headquarters in Kirtland, Ohio, events comparable to those in Jackson County, Missouri, were transpiring. Mobs continued to press their afflictions on the Saints. These malicious acts included the burning of the Saints’ printing press and the filing of frivolous lawsuits that compelled their attendance in court away from home and family. However, the persecution in Kirtland seemed to be primarily financial as opposed to the physical and financial deprivation endured by the Saints in Jackson County, Missouri.

The year of 1838 proved to be one of horror for the Church headquarters located in Kirtland, Ohio, and its significant mission now located in Caldwell County, Missouri. On 12 January 1838, members of headquarters were chased out of Ohio by mobs plotting to kill the prophet (Joseph Smith Jr.) and his assistant.\textsuperscript{37} The members made their way from Ohio to the body of members in Caldwell County. This influx of Saints alarmed the people of Missouri and resulted in the Mormons not being allowed to vote in the elections held in Daviess County in August 1838.\textsuperscript{38} This caused intense friction and resulted in the “beginning of the end” for the Saints domiciled in Missouri. Tensions continued to mount until 27 October 1838. On this date, Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued his now-famous order that provided “the Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the State, if necessary, for the public’s good.”\textsuperscript{39} Only through the determined efforts of General Alexander W. Doniphan of the first state militia were the Saints not completely annihilated.

On 30 October 1838, “the direct and legitimate result of the exterminating order of the chief executive (Governor Lilburn W. Boggs) of the State of Missouri,” was the Haun’s Mill Massacre.\textsuperscript{40} Of the twenty families that lived in Haun’s Mill, almost all were killed or wounded.\textsuperscript{41} Thereafter, all remaining Saints still residing in Missouri fled to Commerce (later renamed Nauvoo), Illinois.

Once again, things were relatively calm for the Saints until eventually mob violence crowded around their settlement. This violence resulted in the murder of Joseph Smith Jr. in

\textsuperscript{32} RLDS History, volume 1, 417.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 495.
\textsuperscript{34} RLDS History, volume 2, 66.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 78.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 136.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 167.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 217.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 224.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 231.
Carthage, Illinois, on 27 June 1844. With the martyrdom of the prophet, power immediately descended to the president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who at that time was Brigham Young. Young was to hold this power until the successor to Joseph Smith Jr. could rightfully assume his place. In a cunning usurpation of authority, Brigham Young led the majority of the Church hierarchy and membership away from Nauvoo, Illinois, to Winter Quarters (near what is now Omaha, Nebraska,) to prepare for their trip to California; however, the actual journey terminated at the Salt Lake Valley. Brigham Young also took the historical name of the Church—Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the term “Mormon” to identify his followers.

In due time, the successor to Joseph Smith Jr. took his place and led the reorganization of the otherwise shattered Church. This successor was Joseph Smith Jr.’s son (Joseph Smith III), who was set apart for this responsibility by his father on no less than four occasions. This group became known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and was incorporated under the laws of Iowa at the time of the reorganization.

Another group that was to play a part in the Temple Lot Suit became known as the Hedrickites, also referred to as The Church of Christ. They were followers of Granville Hedrick and had alienated themselves from the main group of Mormons in 1835 when a certain revelation dealing with the form of Church leadership was received. However, they were one of the first “Mormon” groups to return to Jackson County, Missouri, in February 1867, after the Saint’s expulsion in 1833. This group held possession of the Temple Lot when the lawsuit was initiated.

Pre-Conflict Chain of Title

For ease of understanding, the significant transactions involving the title to the Temple Lot have been arranged into two segments, Pre- and Post-Conflict transactions. For purposes of this article, the Pre-Conflict transactions are primarily defined as those transactions that were not the subject of the Temple Lot suit.

In chronological order, the Pre-Conflict transactions are as follows:

1803 France to the United States, via the Louisiana Purchase.
1825 Osage Indian Nation to the United States.
1828 The United States to the State of Missouri, by Act of Congress, 24 January 1827.
1831 State of Missouri to Jones H. Flournoy.
1831 Jones H. Flournoy and Clara Flournoy to Edward Partridge.

---

42 RLDS History, volume 2, 241.
44 Ibid., 108.
46 Treaty of St. Louis, Missouri, with Great Osage and Little Osage, 2 June 1825, United States–Osage, 7 Stat. 240 (1825).
47 Jackson County Deed Book 456, page 46.
48 Jackson County Deed Book 163, pages 60–61. (However, the originals of this transaction are not available. In their stead, certified certificates 83 and 84 are used).
49 Jackson County Deed Book B, page 1. This deed created the famous 63.27 acre Temple
The Temple Lot Case: Fraud in God's Vineyard

The foregoing is the actual chain of "pre-conflict" legal title. However, this sterile presentation is not without its intrigue. As mentioned earlier, Joseph Smith Jr. and several elders of the original Church met on the Temple Lot on 3 August 1831 and dedicated the land to be the site of the temple. Also, at this time Joseph Smith Jr. staked a claim to the site by blazing a tree and placing a stone marker on the site. Either of these methods of staking a claim was considered acceptable. Many historians have thought that the elders at the temple site dedication did not know who owned the land. However, this is not true; they knew that the state of Missouri had title to the land and that the land would be granted for purchase in the coming December. It was common knowledge that lands belonging to the government would be sold to individuals. To facilitate their purchase Joseph Smith Jr. and others returned to Kirtland, Ohio, to collect money for that purpose and left Bishop Edward Partridge in Independence to receive the forwarded money and complete the transaction.

When December and the awaited state disposition of land finally arrived, a strange event happened. An individual named Jones Hoy Floumoy purchased the site instead of Bishop Partridge. Richard Price and Pamela Price, in The Temple of the Lord, stated:

"History does not record why Bishop Partridge did not acquire the Temple Site land before Jones H. Floumoy did. But it is surprising that the Floumoys held the Temple Site for only one week—and then sold it to Bishop Partridge for the same amount they paid for it—two dollars per acre. What is more surprising is that they sold 63.27 acres to the Bishop out of the very heart of their new 160 acre total."

Thus, it appears the Floumoys jumped the claim of the Church and, in order to keep the peace, sold to the "rightful owner" a very large portion of the new purchase at no profit. It should be noted that title was made by Bishop Partridge in his own name because the Missouri Constitution of 1821 prohibited the taking of title in the name of a church. However, it was understood that the property was purchased with funds obtained from the members of the Church and that Bishop Partridge held the property in trust for the Church. From the foregoing, it would seem that the land was destined to be the center of controversy.

Post-Conflict Chain of Title

There are three significant deeds in the post-conflict chain of title. They are: the Cowdery deed, the Poole deed, and the Harris deed. Two of these deeds appear to be fraudulent misrepresentations and the remaining deed, possibly the only valid deed, is never even heard of.

Tract (which contains the 2 acres comprising the Temple Lot.)

50 RLDS History, volume 1, 209.
52 Missouri Historical Review (July 1928); Price, The Temple of the Lord, 33.
54 RLDS History, volume 1, 211; Price, The Temple of the Lord, 33.
55 Jackson County Deed Book 163, 60-61.
56 Price, The Temple of the Lord, 35.
58 Ibid.
Cowdery Deed

On its face, the Cowdery deed purports to transfer title of all lands from Bishop Partridge to the children of Oliver Cowdery (John, age 7; Jane, age 3; and Joseph Smith Cowdery, age 1) for the sum of $1,000. This purported warranty deed was not dated but an accompanying affidavit was dated 25 March 1839. In addition, it was not recorded until 7 February 1870. It should be noted that the Saints were evicted from Missouri under Governor Boggs's extermination order in the latter part of 1838; thus, if the date of the attached affidavit is correct, the transfer was made under less than ideal circumstances.

There are several flaws present in the Cowdery deed that reveal it to be fraudulent. The first flaw is that the deed was not dated and the affidavit attached, dated 25 March 1839, was signed before Judge Elias Higbee in Caldwell County, Missouri, after he ceased to be a judge in that county. Second, the deed was signed by Bishop Partridge in Caldwell County when the bishop was actually in Illinois. Third, the deed purported to sell the land to Oliver Cowdery as an elder in the Church, even though he had been expelled on 11 April 1838 and was not considered a member at that time. Finally, the children mentioned in the deed never existed.

A possible explanation for naming the heirs incorrectly is that in the emotionally charged setting following the expulsion, Bishop Partridge actually meant "Josephine" Cowdery when he wrote "Joseph Smith" Cowdery. Also, Oliver Cowdery did not have a son named John, but his brother Warren did. Despite the possible explanations, it must be remembered, "Oliver Cowdery was a lawyer, and never would have accepted a deed which failed to name his two heirs!" In The Temple of the Lord, Richard Price further stated: "It should be noted also that at the Winter Quarter Council Meeting on April 26, 1848, when the [sale of] the Temple Site was discussed, the name of Oliver Cowdery was not mentioned. If Bishop Partridge had made a deed to Oliver [Cowdery] in 1939, these apostles would have known it. This is especially true of Brigham Young, for Oliver's half sister, Lucy, was married to Brigham's brother, Phineas Young."

On Oliver Cowdery's death in 1850, Oliver's widow, Elizabeth Whitmer Cowdery, and his only living child, Marie Cowdery Johnson, became vested with title under the Cowdery deed. On 29 May 1886, Elizabeth Ann Cowdery (widow of Oliver Cowdery) deeded the

59 RLDS History, volume 2, 662.
60 Jackson County Deed Book 73, page 432; Price, The Temple of the Lord, 65.
63 RLDS History, volume 2, 150.
64 Price, The Temple of the Lord, 68.
66 Ibid.
67 Price, The Temple of the Lord, 68.
68 Ibid.
69 Davis, The Story of the Church, 73.
property to her daughter, Marie Louise Johnson. By quitclaim deed dated 9 June 1887, Marie Louise Johnson and Doctor Charles Johnson, her husband, deeded the property to George A. Blakeslee, a bishop and trustee of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS). It was under this claim of title of the Cowdery deed that the RLDS Church based its ownership.

Poole Deed

The Poole deed, in contrast to the Cowdery deed, purports to be a transfer of title from the heirs of Bishop Edward Partridge. On its face, the quitclaim deed by Bishop Partridge's widow, Lydia Partridge, and his three children assigned title on 5 May 1848 to James Poole for $300 consideration.

A few months later, the same James Poole was in financial difficulty. The result of his predicament is quite apparent in the actions of the Circuit Court of Jackson County, for the sheriff levied the same property that Poole had recently acquired and sold the same to John Maxwell for $1,315. John Maxwell then entered into an agreement with Samuel H. Woodson, whereby Maxwell agreed to give a portion of his newly acquired property by quitclaim to Woodson in exchange for Woodson's plating the land. The plat became an addition to the city of Independence and was known as the Maxwell–Woodson Addition. However, Maxwell died without executing the quitclaim deed. Woodson brought suit against the Maxwell Estate and prevailed. The court, to satisfy the obligation to Woodson, ordered a sheriff's sale of all the real property owned by Maxwell and the Temple Lot property was fractured into eight lots that descended to five hands. After several mesne conveyances, the Temple Lot property was united in the hands of Granville Hedrick, trustee of the Church of Christ, on 5 March 1877.

This chain of title appears to be very convincing; however, as with the Cowdery deed, there was a fatal flaw. Following the martyrdom of Joseph Smith Jr. in 1844 and the rise to power of Brigham Young, preparations were made for the exodus while his followers camped at Winter Quarters (near Omaha), Nebraska. This mass exodus ended at the Salt Lake Valley in 1848. James Poole, a blacksmith in Independence, "sent his agent, a Mr. Pearson, to Winter Quarters where the Saints were camped with Brigham Young in preparation for the trek to Utah. Mr. Pearson did business with a churchman named J. A. Kelting who relayed a message to the apostles. The apostles, in turn held a council meeting on April 26, 1848." The record of that meeting became known as the "Winter Quarters Document" and "escaped the public eye.

---

71 Jackson County Deed Book 146, page 139.
72 Jackson County Deed Book 146, page 544.
73 Jackson County Deed Book N, page 203.
75 Smith, Temple Lot Deed, 7.
76 Jackson County Deed Book N, page 244.
77 Jackson County Deed Book 115, page 452.
78 Price, The Temple of the Lord, 44.
until Richard and Pamela Price discovered it in the archives of the LDS Church in Salt Lake City in 1977. It is very important to note that Brigham Young was married to one of the Partridge heirs (Emily Dow Partridge) and the sale meant substantial financial gain for his family. In addition, Brigham Young was the recipient of all the records of the original church by virtue of being the president of the Quorum of Twelve (second position of leadership) before the martyrdom of Joseph Smith Jr. in the original church.

A review of the Winter Quarters Document reveals that the apostles knew that: 1. Bishop Edward Partridge had sold the Temple Lot to Martin Harris (a member of the High Council, i.e., a counselor to Joseph Smith Jr. in the First Presidency); 2. this same Martin Harris had not recorded the deed; and 3. the apostles knew that the Temple tract belonged to Martin Harris, his heir(s), or to one whom he may have sold the land. In spite of this knowledge, they sold a quitclaim deed to James Poole. Thus, the Poole quitclaim deed was in the context of rightful ownership a nullity because it passed no interest in the real estate.

Harris Deed

Perhaps the most valid of the deeds, the Harris “deed,” represents a transfer from Bishop Edward Partridge to High Council member Martin Harris. However, the fate of the physical deed is unknown. The only record of its existence is contained in the minutes of the Winter Quarters Document and testimony in the Temple Lot Case.

As mentioned earlier, Martin Harris never recorded the deed transferred from Bishop Partridge. This should not be too surprising because if Martin Harris had not recorded his deed before March of 1833, when the Saints were expelled, his life would have been in danger if he had returned to Independence to do so. No Saint could have recorded a new deed, especially a prominent man such as Martin Harris, for one of the “Propositions” published by the original settlers of Independence to the Saints in Jackson County provided that, “The Mormons are not to make any effort, ever after, to settle, either collectively or individually, within the limits of Jackson County.” Harris’s only recourse, thus, appears to be through the mail. In the Winter Quarters Document, there is a Mr. Kelting who stated that Martin Harris “wrote to Independence that he had sold the land—but there are no deeds, or ever made the appearances.” If Martin Harris had mailed the deed to Independence, there is a real possibility that it was destroyed as “the postmaster in 1833, at least, was none other than Jones Hoy Flourney, who had sold the same land to Bishop Partridge two years earlier. And the county clerk, who recorded deeds was Samuel C. Owens. Both of these men signed the petition which resulted in raising the mob

---

80 Price, The Temple of the Lord, 44.
81 John J. Stewart, Brigham Young and His Wives and the True Story of Plural Marriage (Salt Lake City, Mercury, 1985).
82 Price, The Temple of the Lord, 44; Recorder’s Office.
83 RLDS History, volume 1, 429.
84 Price, The Temple of the Lord, 46.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.; Recorder’s Office.
87 RLDS History, volume 1, 429.
88 Recorder’s Office.
89 Price, The Temple of the Lord, 49.
which drove the saints from their homes in the month of November.\textsuperscript{90}

Thus, with all the confusion of title and the emotionally charged contentions as to which faction of the Church was the successor to the original Church and its property, the stage was set for civil intervention by the court. In 1891, the RLDS Church filed a suit in equity in the U.S. Circuit Court at Kansas City, Missouri, against the Church of Christ for possession of the Temple Lot.\textsuperscript{91}

**Trial Level**

The trial of the Temple Lot Case\textsuperscript{92} furthered the intrigue that had already surrounded the purported transfers of the property. The complainants in the case, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), sought to claim ownership of the subject property by equitable title as successors to the primitive Church, while the defendants in the suit, the Church of Christ (Hedrickites) sought to assert ownership by legal title to the property. No sooner had the Hedrickites entered their appearance than the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS or “Utah” Church) began to actively participate in the defense of the suit, even though the LDS Church was not a party to the action!

The first witness called by the Hedrickites was Woodruff Wilson, president of the LDS Church. Based on testimony obtained in the trial, it appears that Woodruff Wilson arranged for the LDS legal assistance in this case. In addition, it also appears that Mr. Wilson arranged for several people to appear as unsubpoenaed witnesses. The extensive legal assistance provided by the LDS Church apparently concerned Judge Phillips (before whom the case was tried) for he asked the defense counsel about the relationship, to which the judge received a response to the effect that the Hedrickites have “absorbed the Mormon (LDS) Church.”\textsuperscript{93} This explanation, however, does not allay his concern, for he finds the LDS Church to be “the power behind the throne” in defense of this case.\textsuperscript{94} Judge Phillips’s concerns seem to have been well founded as the attorneys provided by the LDS Church changed the Hedrickite’s defense strategy from that of owner of legal title to that of equitable owner as true successor to the primitive Church.\textsuperscript{95}

**Credibility of Witnesses**

The credibility of witnesses in the Temple Lot Case was probably the most important factor in determining the outcome of the suit. The plaintiff (RLDS Church) seems to have played its trump card when it called its third witness. That witness was Joseph Smith III, president, prophet, and seer of the RLDS Church (who claimed to be the true successor to his father’s office, both by lineal right and acclamation of the successor Church’s membership.)\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{90}RLDS History, volume 1, 315; Price, The Temple of the Lord, 49.
\textsuperscript{91}RLDS History, volume 5, 53.
\textsuperscript{92}Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints v. Church of Christ, 60 F. 937 (C.C.W.D. Mo. 1894); rev'd, 70 F. 179; reh'g denied, 71 F. 250 (8th Cir. 1895); cert. denied, 163 U.S. 681 (1896).
\textsuperscript{93}Ibid., 951.
\textsuperscript{94}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{96}J. Orr, “Complainant’s Abstract of Pleadings and Evidence,” 1893. Hereafter referred to as Abstract.
It appears that Joseph Smith III developed credibility with the Court when he testified at length on how purported revelations became law in the primitive Church (under the leadership of his father, Joseph Smith Jr.). Further, he seems to have solidified his credibility when he encouraged opposing counsel, during the plaintiff's rebuttal, to ask any question concerning his father's alleged practice of polygamy: "proceed with your inquiry without regard for my feelings for I have none whatever in the matter, I am here to answer every question that is legitimate, or that has any bearing on this case in any way, shape, or form. I will answer any question you put to me that meets these requirements." The balance of the plaintiff's (RLDS) witnesses also took this tack and none refused or evaded questions posed them by either party's counsel.

In contrast, the LDS/Hedrickite witnesses openly evaded questions. The following is an excerpt of the testimony of Lyman O. Littlefield, president of the Quorum of Seventy in the LDS Church:

Q: Did you in your correspondence with Joseph Smith [III] . . . in relation to this revelation on polygamy . . . say that Brigham Young . . . claimed that no man on earth ever saw that revelation until . . . 1852, or that had a copy of it?
A: I do not remember that.
Q: Could you swear you did not write that?
A: I cannot say. I do not remember anything about it. The correspondence speaks for itself, and is still in existence, I suppose.
Q: Well, if it is in there, is it true?
A: I do not remember if it is in there or not. I remember nothing about it.
Q: Well, if it is in there, is it true?
A: The correspondence speaks for itself, and is still in existence.
Q: If that statement is in reply that you wrote to Joseph Smith [III] is it true?
A: I guess you are familiar with it.
Q: Well, yes, I guess I am just as familiar with it as you are, just exactly . . . I have no doubt but that you know right well what is in it, but if you are willing to go on record as evading the question in that way, all right.

The defense witness (Littlefield) did not answer the question and, a little later in the examination, the following exchange took place:

Q: Who notified you to appear as a witness?
A: I am willing to answer the question if I am compelled to answer it.

By the examiner: "Answer the question."

Answer of witness: Wilford Woodruff, the President of the Church in Utah; he notified me to appear.

Thus, we see that this was a gratuitous attendance by the witness; he was not subpoenaed to appear, he testified merely because another witness requested his presence.

The same type of behavior was evidenced by Mr. Joseph C. Kingsbury, the defense witness appearing immediately after Mr. Littlefield. The record of the trial reveals that Mr. Kingsbury "refused to take the ordinary oath to 'tell the truth the whole truth and nothing but

---

97 Abstract, 50.
98 Ibid., 496.
99 Ibid., 331.
100 Ibid., 332.
the truth of his knowledge of and touching the matter in controversy,' but was sworn by affirmation." In his testimony, he stated that: "An oath is more binding than an affirmation. It is considered to be more serious, that is the way I understand it—that an oath is more binding or more serious than an affirmation. I generally affirm, and I suppose it is because my understanding is that a man cannot be convicted of perjury on an affirmation, and he can if he is sworn." (bold emphasis added)

Another defense witness, Joseph P. Noble, when asked about the names of his wives responded:

I did not say I could not tell the names of all my wives, I might tell some of them. I do not think I could tell the names of any of them, and I swear that I will not tell, just for your damned nonsense. Yes, sir, I am an elder [priest] in the church and I am swearing in court... I said it was not your damned business because your question was so nonsensical. I cannot tell the date I took my first plural wife... because the date bothers me... it might tend to criminate [sic] me if I answered that question.

Another defense witness, Mary Rachael Thompson, was constantly prompted by Joseph Fielding Smith, an LDS priesthood member. From the foregoing, we see a less than favorable perception of the veracity of the defendant's witnesses.

**Doctrine of the Churches**

As previously stated, both parties to the suit claimed to be the rightful owners of the property as the legitimate successor to the primitive Church. With the issue thus framed, the Court was forced to determine what constituted Church doctrine prior to the martyrdom of Joseph Smith Jr. and then determine which Church more closely followed that doctrine.

It seems the outcome of the case would be determined by one doctrine—polygamy. Loosely, this was the crux of the case, and it became the duty of the Court to determine if this doctrine had been practiced by the primitive Church. If it had not, the Court must then determine which of the parties initiated the practice thereby terminating their rights as successor to the primitive Church.

The first question one must ask is how did a purported "revelation" become doctrine in the primitive Church? Joseph Smith III, plaintiff's witness and president of the RLDS Church, testified that when the purported revelation was received by the primitive Church it had to pass each of the following by unanimous vote: 1. the First Presidency, 2. the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and 3. the Quorum of the Seventies. If each of the previous branches (equal in power to another) unanimously approved the revelation as being "of God," then the revelation was passed on to the body of the Church for the member vote. If a majority of the membership approved the revelation, it was then canonized as a law of the Church and published in the Doctrine and Covenants. Joseph Smith III, president of the RLDS Church, and William

---

101 Abstract, 333.
102 Ibid., 339.
103 Ibid., 370.
104 Ibid., 343.
105 RLDS vs. Church of Christ, 60 F., 950.
106 Ibid.
107 Abstract, 50.
Blair, editor of the RLDS newsletter *The Herald*, both testified that this method was used by the RLDS Church. In contrast, defense witness Lorenzo Snow, LDS president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, stated "the entire authority of the Church rested upon the Twelve. Brigham Young [President of the Twelve at the time of Joseph Smith Jr.'s martyrdom] was made President of the Church afterwards." William Blair, plaintiff's witness, stated the LDS Church had materially changed the functioning of the First Presidency by making it subservient to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Next, one must determine if the purported revelation concerning polygamy went through the procedures outlined above. As mentioned earlier, the Court's determination of responsibility was critical to the outcome of the trial. As such, the vast majority of the testimony in the case dealt with polygamy. In retrospect, it seems the LDS Church hurt its image in the eyes of the Court by the constant, unwavering espousal of the doctrine of polygamy and their accusation that the doctrine was practiced by the late Joseph Smith Jr. as early as 1842 (two years before his martyrdom).

These claims were refuted in several ways. The defendants, through their chief witness Wilford Woodruff (president of the LDS Church), alleged that Joseph Smith Jr. taught polygamy as early as 1842. However, John C. Bennett was excommunicated from the primitive Church in October 1842. The official church newspaper, the *Time and Seasons*, ran an article, dated 1 October 1842, that stated:

We, the undersigned members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints [the primitive church] and residents of the city of Nauvoo, person and families, do hereby certify and declare that we know of no other rule or system of marriage then the one published from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants [of 1835 (specifically Section 101, which provided for monogamous marriage)], and we give this certificate to show that Dr. J. C. Bennett’s "secret wife system" is a creation of his own make as we know of no such society in this place nor ever did.

This proclamation was signed by the Quorum of Twelve, including Wilford Woodruff and in addition his wife, Phoebe Woodruff, signed a similar document distributed by the Ladies Relief Society and published in the same edition of the *Time and Seasons*. In addition, the *Time and Seasons* made the following proclamation on Thursday, 1 February 1844:

Notice

As we have lately been credibly informed that an elder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints [at this time the primitive (church)], by the name of Hiram Brown, has been preaching polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrine, in the city of Lapeer, State of Michigan, this is to notify him, and the church in general, that he has been cut off from the church for his iniquity; and he is further notified to appear at the Special Conference on the 6th day of April next, to make answer to these charges.

Joseph Smith  Hyrum Smith

Further, several witnesses for the plaintiffs and the defendants testified that Joseph Smith...
Jr. did not preach the doctrine of polygamy, either publicly or privately. How then did the doctrine become an issue in the Temple Lot Case?

It appears that Brigham Young (of the LDS Church in Utah) "revealed" the revelation of polygamy at the General Conference of the LDS Church in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1852.\(^\text{115}\) Supposedly, the revelation was given to Joseph Smith Jr. on 12 July 1843, almost eleven months before his death. In addition, the "revelation" had not been brought before any Quorum of the Church, or membership of the Church for approval during Joseph Smith Jr.'s life.\(^\text{116}\) Its first presentation to the public occurred at the LDS Conference in 1852. Thus, this did not follow the law of the primitive Church.

Another oddity concerning the "revelation" of polygamy included the manner of becoming the law of the LDS Church. As previously mentioned, before a purported revelation may become law it must first pass the three leadership Quorums and then be presented to the general membership for the approval/disapproval of the revelation.\(^\text{117}\) However, Jack H. Carter, a former member of the LDS Church and witness for plaintiff, stated that "the manner of doing business under the leadership of Joseph Smith [Jr.] and that of Brigham Young were not the same. . . . Joseph Smith [Jr.] never tried to take the agency from a man in regard to elections."\(^\text{118}\) Concerning the "revelation" on polygamy, John H. Carter further testified, "the revelation was made to the people and forced upon them."\(^\text{119}\) Clearly, this was not the procedure used in the primitive Church.

Finally, it appears that the LDS Church totally committed itself to the change in doctrine from monogamous to polygamous marriage in 1876. Prior to this time, the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (canonized and codified revelations from the Church prophet) was in effect.\(^\text{120}\) Section 101 of the Doctrine and Covenants provided, in part, that:

Marriage should be celebrated with prayer and thanksgiving; and at the solemnization, the persons to be married, standing together, the man on the right, and the woman on the left, shall be addressed, by the person officiating, as he shall be directed by the Holy Spirit: and if there be no legal objections, he shall say, calling each by their names: "You both mutually agree to be each other's companion, husband and wife, observing the legal rights belonging to this condition: that is, keeping yourselves wholly for each other, and from all others during your lives." And when they have answered "Yes," he shall pronounce them "husband and wife" in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by virtue of the laws of the country and authority vested in him: "may God add his blessings and keep you to fulfill your covenants from henceforth and forever. Amen." (bold emphasis added)\(^\text{122}\)

Despite there having been no proper vote on the polygamous revelation, the LDS Church deleted Section 101 from their Doctrine and Covenants in 1876 and in lieu thereof inserted the "revelation" on polygamy.\(^\text{123}\) When questioned about this event, Woodruff Wilson, president of

\(^{115}\) Abstract, 322.
\(^{116}\) Ibid.
\(^{117}\) Ibid., 50.
\(^{118}\) Ibid., 183.
\(^{119}\) Ibid., 182.
\(^{120}\) Ibid., 50.
\(^{121}\) Doctrine and Covenants Section 101.
\(^{122}\) Abstract, 293.
\(^{123}\) Ibid., 309.
the LDS Church, stated: "I do not know why it was done. It was done by the authority of whoever presided over the Church, I suppose. Brigham Young was the President then."\(^{124}\)

There appear to have been other doctrines (e.g., blood atonement, Adam/God theory, avenging oaths) that were added and/or changed to the doctrine of the original Church by the LDS faction. However, none carried more emotional impact than did the issue of polygamy within the Church.

**Legal Title**

The Court finally reviewed claims of legal title almost as an afterthought to the issue of Church doctrine. Both sides claimed title to the Temple Lot through quitclaim deed that, as mentioned earlier, proved to be defective. However, based on the issue of Church doctrine (and the convenient use of the RLDS deed), the Court held that the property was vested in the RLDS Church as it was the true successor to the primitive Church.\(^{125}\) Further, the Court held that the theory of "laches" did not extinguish the RLDS right to the property because the mob violence visited on them had prevented them from enforcing their rights. The Hedrickites appealed the decision.

**Appellate Level**

The Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit reversed the trial court on the theory of "laches."\(^{126}\) This court was unpersuaded that the plaintiff had been prevented from exercising its rights and found no excuse for the delay. Thus, the Temple Lot was awarded to the Church of Christ (Hedrickites). The RLDS Church filed a motion for rehearing. This motion was denied.\(^{127}\) Further, the Court found that to award title to the RLDS Church would put a cloud of title on a large part of the land in Jackson County. This the Court refused to do. On receipt of the denial, the RLDS Church applied for writ certiorari to the United States Supreme Court. This application was also denied.\(^{128}\) This left the Temple Lot in the possession of the Church of Christ (Hedrickites).

**Conclusion**

As with other political trials, the trial of the Temple Lot Case did not settle what was intended, that is, settle the title dispute to the Temple Lot. Instead, the bottom line was that status quo would be maintained. It is somewhat ironic that the parties to the suit, through a convoluted course of action, got exactly what they wanted. The RLDS Church was declared the true successor to the primitive Church (based on points of doctrine and practice of same) and the Church of Christ was awarded the property that was coveted by all factions of primitive Church. The LDS Church, for its part, received another chance to do legal battle with the RLDS Church (in 1880, the title to the Kirtland Temple, located in Ohio, was awarded to the RLDS Church by the Court of Common Pleas, Lake County, Ohio.) Despite the efforts for full adjudication, the war of words still continues among those involved in the suit. ◀

\(^{124}\) Abstract, 309.

\(^{125}\) RLDS vs. Church of Christ, 60 F., 957.

\(^{126}\) Ibid., 70 F., 179.

\(^{127}\) Ibid., 71 F., 250.

\(^{128}\) Ibid., 163 U.S., 681.
“Cultivate the Gifts of Music and of Song”:
The Hymnals of the Reorganization*

Richard Clothier

Latter Day Saints of all persuasions who enjoy singing can be thankful that the families of Joseph Smith Jr. and Emma Hale Smith associated themselves with the Presbyterian and Methodist faith traditions rather than with groups such as the Society of Friends that were active in the Palmyra area at that time. While the Quakers had little use for music either in or out of the church, the Methodists and Presbyterians enjoyed a strong tradition of singing. No doubt this background was of some influence when, three months after the 6 April 1830 organization of the church, the young prophet directed Emma, a capable singer, to compile the first hymnal of the church, in a document that ended with these now well-known words: “my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me” (Doctrine and Covenants 24:3b).

Emma accepted this responsibility, but the work did not progress rapidly. In addition to her normal duties, during the next five-and-a-half years Emma was to experience several household moves, three pregnancies, the adoption of twins, and three infant deaths. In the meantime, William Wines Phelps, a recent convert who brought with him some experience in journalism, was asked to travel from Kirtland to Independence and set up a printing press there. One of the tasks he was to undertake was to “correct” the hymns Emma had been selecting (revising them freely to ensure compatibility with Latter Day Saint doctrine) and begin printing them in The Evening and the Morning Star. When Emma’s hymnal, dated 1835, finally came off the press not long before the dedication of the Kirtland temple in March 1836, the pocketsize volume contained ninety hymn texts. It included no tunes, or even names of authors or composers, but about forty of the texts can be identified as having Latter Day Saint authors, the majority of them attributed to W. W. Phelps.

It was not long before the need became apparent for more than the ninety hymns Emma had presented in her first hymnal and for more hymnals than the thousand or so copies that came out of the Kirtland print shop. In 1839, the high priests assembled in Nauvoo voted that Emma should be the one designated to compile a second hymnal. Re-

* This article was adapted by the author from a paper presented at the May 2003 annual conference of the Mormon History Association held at Kirtland, Ohio.

1 Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants Section 24:3b. LDS Doctrine and Covenants 25:12.


5 Ibid.
sponding to this request, in 1841 she published her Nauvoo hymnal, a work that contained 304 hymns, including 78 of the 90 from her Kirtland hymnal.

In the meantime, the dearth of hymnals was also being felt in the British mission, and it was decided there that three members of the Twelve Apostles who were laboring in that mission, Parley P. Pratt, John Taylor, and Brigham Young, would compile a hymnal for the church members in Europe. In 1840, the three apostles produced their hymnal in Manchester, England, with a first run of 3,000 copies. Just as W. W. Phelps was a pivotal force and substantial contributor to the 1835 Kirtland hymnal, so Parley Pratt was to the 1840 Manchester hymnal, with no less than 47 of the 277 hymn texts being his. It appears that Joseph would have preferred that the missionaries wait for the publication of Emma’s Nauvoo hymnal, which he considered would become the “standard work” for the church, however their collection seems to have gained his approval after the fact.

The story of these first three Latter Day Saint hymnals, as well as the hymnals of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints subsequently published in Utah, has been often told, and will not be explored further here. Less well known, however, is the fact that Emma did not end her work of compiling hymnals in 1841, but in fact went on to publish two more collections: the first in 1861 and an expanded version of the same book in 1864. These two works form the foundation for the body of hymnody represented in the seven major hymnals published since that time by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, now Community of Christ. A brief survey of these volumes will show them to be notable for the range of styles and content they encompass, reflective of the evolving cultural and theological milieu of their times. It is interesting to note that, while Emma’s Nauvoo work becomes the basis for the hymnals of the Reorganization, the apostles’ Manchester hymnal, which has been characterized by Michael Hicks as “better-suited to the expanding theology of Joseph’s last years,” is the work from which the hymnals of the Utah-based church flow.

The First Hymnal of the Reorganization

After the migration to Utah, while the Salt Lake valley was blossoming with its multitudes, efforts were being made back in the Midwest to “gather the remnants.” Even before the “new organization of the church” was formally effected in Amboy, Illinois, on 6 April 1860, those who had been working toward organizing with “young Joseph” (Joseph Smith III) as prophet showed a desire to continue their rich tradition of singing. In his Memoirs, W. W. Blair records that a conference held in Amboy in June 1859 took action to provide for the publication of a hymnal “based upon the hymns published in a former edition, selected and compiled by Sister Emma, the wife of Joseph the Seer.”

---

6 Roberts, History of the Church, 4:118–119, 131.
7 Hicks, 26–27.
8 A number of theses and dissertations on LDS hymnology are listed on page 32 of Hicks’ seminal work on the subject.
9 Hicks, 31.
"Cultivate the Gifts of Music and of Song": The Hymnals of the Reorganization

Only a few months after the April 1860 organizational meeting, a conference that convened in Sandwich, Illinois, in October confirmed this action by voting that “Sister Emma Smith Bidaman [sic] be appointed to make a selection of hymns, to make a hymn-book,” and that “Bro. Isaac Sheen be authorized to publish the said hymn-book on the most advantageous terms.” The same resolution instructed the branch presidents “to obtain subscriptions for the hymn-book and forward the same to Bro. Israel L. Rogers, the Bishop of the Church, or to Bro. Isaac Sheen.” In reporting the action of the conference, the October issue of The True Latter Day Saints’ Herald spelled out the obvious rationale for Emma’s selection: “[Sister Emma Smith Bidaman [sic] was appointed by a revelation in July, 1830, to make a collection of sacred hymns... She has therefore been re-appointed to the performance of this work.”

The price of the book was set at 50 cents. Thus began a series of publications by the Reorganized Church that, in its efforts to enhance the musical life of the body, would encompass a rather remarkable degree of variety.

Emma’s collection, called simply The Latter Day Saints’ Selection of Hymns, was published (by “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints”) in Cincinnati in 1861 and was, as suggested by the action of 1859, patterned closely after her Nauvoo hymnal of 1841. In fact, all but 12 of the 249 hymns were common to that previous collection of 304 hymns, among them 70 of the 90 hymns she had selected for her Kirtland hymnal, and 58 that had first been printed in the Manchester collection. In 1864, an enlarged edition was published, adding thirty-seven texts, including eight by David Hyrum Smith, the youngest son of Emma and Joseph Smith Jr., born less than five months after his father’s assassination.

It is significant that the Reorganization began with a hymnal that was essentially a revision of Emma’s Nauvoo work, rather than with the Manchester collection. This fact is noteworthy not only because Emma identified herself with the Reorganization while the apostles who had compiled the Manchester work went West, but also, as Michael Hicks and others have pointed out, because the 1841 Nauvoo compilation appears to be more in harmony with the hymnody of mainstream Christianity than was the 1840 Manchester collection embraced by the Utah church. Since it may be said that the theology of a body is not only expressed but to some degree shaped by the hymns it sings, this factor, in addition to being significant at the time, may well have helped set the courses traveled since then by the two organizations.

Among the examples cited by Hicks of this “shift in emphasis” in Emma’s Nauvoo hymnal to be carried over to the Reorganization are Newton’s “Amazing Grace,” and Watts’ “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” both of which appear in the Nauvoo hym-

---

12 The True Latter Day Saints’ Herald 1 (October 1860): 238.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., 244.
15 Ibid.
16 Hicks, 28–29.
nal but not in the Manchester collection. It should be noted that these two hymns are included in the current Community of Christ hymnal, but not the present LDS hymnbook. In addition, several distinctive texts from the Manchester hymnal, such as “Praise to the Man Who Communed with Jehovah,” and “The Glorious Gospel Light Has Shone,” with its theme of baptism for the dead, are still to be found in the current LDS hymnbook, but have never appeared in hymnals of the Reorganization.

A glimpse of the challenges faced by the young church may be seen in notices that appeared from time to time in issues of the Herald. In the December 1860 issue, the editors expressed their frustration with “the extreme backwardness in forwarding subscriptions for the Hymn Book,” and began publishing in each issue the names of those who had sent in their subscriptions. Only thirteen names appeared in that issue. In the fifth issue of the following year, which did not appear until August, the editors explained, “The delay of the Herald is caused by the inadequate supply of funds for the publication of it and the Hymn Book combined. If we could sell the hymn books which we have on hand, and if our numerous delinquent subscribers to the Herald would pay their subscriptions, our embarrassment would cease... If we cannot publish [the Herald] regularly we can publish it irregularly.”

The Work of Mark Forscutt

The story moves on to New Year’s Day 1865, when a significant baptism into the Reorganized Church took place in none other than Salt Lake City, Utah. Mark H. Forscutt had joined the Latter Day Saint movement in his native England and after spending several years as a missionary there, sailed with his new bride for America in March 1860. After pushing a handcart from Nebraska to Salt Lake City, this talented individual served for a time as private secretary to Brigham Young. He soon became disillusioned, partly, according to his daughter, because of the pressure he felt to practice plural marriage. For a time he joined with the Morriseite movement in Utah, where he was ordained an apostle.

After his baptism into the Reorganized Church, Forscutt returned to the Midwest, where he became a close friend of Joseph Smith III. A gifted orator, Forscutt would be the one selected by Joseph to preach the funeral sermon for his mother, Emma. His command of language, as well as his self-training in music, were to find expression in several positions of leadership and ministry and, notably, in the next two hymnals of the church, which he edited. The account of the annual Conference in St. Louis, on 6 April 1869, includes the following action: “The compilation of a new hymn book was authorized by resolution, and Joseph Smith appointed on the committee of compilation, he to choose his associates. He chose M. H. Forscutt and David H. Smith, and appointed Norman W.

---

17 Ibid. It should be noted that Hicks’ statement that “Redeemer of Israel” was absent from Emma’s 1841 hymnal is inaccurate. It was simply omitted from the index.
18 The True Latter Day Saints’ Herald 1 (December 1860): 292.
19 The True Latter Day Saints’ Herald 2 (August 1861): 144. Emphasis in the original.
“Cultivate the Gifts of Music and of Song”: The Hymnals of the Reorganization 141

Smith to act in case D. H. Smith was gone on his mission before the completion of the work. 21

To say that the hymnal that resulted from this action was ambitious would be an understatement. By the next year (1870), Forscutt and his committee had produced *The Saints’ Harp*, a collection of no less than 1,120 hymn texts filling 792 four-by-six–inch pages. More than two-thirds of the texts in Emma’s 1861 hymnal had been retained, and hundreds of texts from a variety of sources were added, including eighty-eight new texts by Forscutt, forty-nine by David H. Smith, and thirty-four by Joseph Smith III. In a lengthy preface, the committee anticipated concern over the size of the hymnal, and explained its rationale, addressing a dilemma faced by hymnal committees everywhere.

The size of the book may be objected to by some; but we do not believe the objection will be persisted in when it is considered that the number of tastes we were required to select hymns to suit is so great, and of so varied a character, that but few if any hymns ever written would have suited all. Had we selected what only gratified us, some would have been ungratified; and had we selected only what would have pleased some of these whose choice would not be ours, others of them would still have been displeased. 22

The committee went on to state that “a very respectable number of our brethren and sisters have desired that we should furnish tunes with this book of hymns.” It explained that this would have made the book too expensive for many members and cited the problem of differing musical tastes in the church, so that “while we might please many, we should not please all.” Thus, it suggested that the church appoint a separate committee on music for a future hymnal. 23

The committee’s suggestion was acted on in due course and at the September 1871 Conference held near Council Bluffs, Iowa, “A resolution was passed, on the 22nd, authorizing the appointment of a committee to collect matter for the Saints’ Harp. The President appointed M. H. Forscutt, N. W. Smith, D. H. Smith, J. A. Scott, John T. Kin-naman, William Roberts, and Phineas Cadwell.” 24 By the collection of “matter” for *The Saints’ Harp*, the resolution alluded to the addition of tunes for the 1,120 texts of that volume.

The work progressed slowly. Over the next seventeen years, numerous changes took place in the make-up of the committee on music for the hymnal, including the release of Forscutt for a time while he was on a mission to Europe, and even the release of the entire committee in 1876. In 1887, counsel given to the church through Joseph III settled questions about music in the church by encouraging members to “cultivate the gifts of music and of song.” The document stated, “The service of song in the house of the Lord with humility and unity of Spirit in them that sing and them that hear is blessed, and acceptable with God.” The document accepted the use of instruments “as wisdom and choice may direct,” with the exception that instruments were to “be silent when the Saints assemble for prayer and testimony.” The same counsel urged the acceleration of the hymnal project with these words: “To facilitate unity in the song service of the church

22 *The Saints’ Harp* (Lamoni: RLDS Church, 1870), iv.
23 Ibid., iv–v.
24 *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 3:629.
those to whom the work of providing a book of song has been intrusted [sic] may hasten their work in its time” (Doctrine and Covenants Section 119).

The following year, Mark Forscutt was reappointed as editor of the hymnal, and *The Saints' Harmony* was finally published in Lamoni, Iowa, in 1889. It was a massive, unique work, made up of split pages, with more than 700 tunes on the top half, and the 1,120 texts from *The Saints' Harp* on the bottom. The texts were numbered, but the tunes were not, being identified only by their name and the page on which the tune began. In order to find a suggested tune for a desired text, one had to flip through the top half of the book and search for a tune that had the number of that text printed above it. This process was aided by the fact that the tunes were printed more or less in the numerical order of the texts for which they were suggested, however, in many cases several text numbers were printed above a given tune. Thus, while this novel approach may have slowed the process of matching texts and tunes, it may also have encouraged the use of alternate melodies.

No less than 127 of the tunes printed in *The Saints' Harmony* were written by Mark Forscutt, using his own name and nine pseudonyms. Instead of a pocket-size volume, as previous hymnals had been, this monumental work measured 8½ by 11 inches, was 1½ inches thick, and weighed more than three pounds. In addition to the hymns, it included seven anthems, twenty-seven pages of indexes, and even a twelve-page short course in music theory.

An excerpt from the long preface to this work provides an insight into the sources of the tunes presented in the collection and into the feeling of accomplishment Forscutt must have felt in publishing this ambitious project.

We may surely be pardoned if we rejoice that in *The Saints' Harmony* about four hundred and fifty compositions are published for the first time to the world, that five hundred and two pieces are published for the first time in America, and that three hundred and ninety-three of these are original contributions by our own composers, written with the intention of their being first published in *The Saints' Harmony*.26

Mark Forscutt had produced a book that was by far the largest collection of hymnody in the history of all Latter-day Saintism. The reader cannot help but be amazed by the statement in another paragraph of the preface wherein he reveals that he had “contemplated a more extensive” work!

It will come as no surprise to modern readers that this most ambitious of all the church’s hymnals was not well received. The book was large and cumbersome, and expensive for the time at $2.50 per copy. Most people could not read music, so it would seem unrealistic to expect that so many unfamiliar tunes could be effectively learned by the congregations. This was especially true in that many of the tunes were either newly composed or arranged or of European origin. Perhaps the only surprise is that it was six years before action was taken to initiate a more modest and usable collection of hymns.

---

25 The creative pseudonyms of this English-born Nebraska resident included “A. Nebraskan,” “M. English,” “A. Unicorn,” “Fetteri,” “Hilliare,” “M.**,” “Marcellus Ostracis,” “Mareschal,” and “Mu Phi.”

26 *The Saints’ Harmony* (Lamoni: Herald House, 1889), Preface.
The Saints’ Hymnals and Zion’s Praises

At the Conference of 1895, a resolution initiated by the St. Louis District was accepted that set forth a remarkably detailed plan for a new hymnal that would avoid the problems of The Saints’ Harmony. The resolution recommended a procedure for quickly obtaining suggestions of most-used hymns and tunes from the branches. It went on to specify that the new book should be a “smaller and more convenient” volume, with no more than 200 hymns, plus 50 additional numbers to be “grouped in the back of the work with one bar of the tune above.” The book should be called “The Saints’ Hymnal,” and should be priced at “not more than fifty cents each.” The resolution even suggested the names of three musicians to serve as a committee to compile the book. Mark Forscutt was not among them.

In a short time, the 1895 Saints’ Hymnal was published in Lamoni, Iowa, the church headquarters at the time. The collection was, essentially, an abridgement of Forscutt’s Saints’ Harmony. In their work, the committee managed to fulfill each of the requirements stated by the conference, including the suggestion that each hymn tune be referenced with its page number in The Saints’ Harmony, and each text referenced with its source in The Saints’ Harp. One exception seems to be that evidently 250 hymns were found to be too limiting, since the total number included was actually 300, with more hymns added in subsequent editions.

During this period at the turn of the century, the Sunday school movement had been spreading throughout the church, along with a Religious Society for youth. Responding to the urging of the General Sunday School Association, a committee was appointed to prepare, as a supplement to the Saints’ Hymnal, a songbook that would be better suited to these activities. Thus, in 1903, a collection of 232 musical compositions, primarily lively assembly songs and gospel hymns, was published in Lamoni under the name Zion’s Praises. The book soon found acceptance not only by the young, but by many older members as well. A majority of the hymns were drawn from popular gospel hymnals of the day, the product of authors and composers such as Fanny Crosby and Ira Sankey, and although most of these are today considered too sentimental, a few, such as Charles Gabriel’s “Great and Marvelous Are Thy Works,” have survived as favorites in the current hymnal. Original works were also presented, including a particular hymn from among several that had recently been written in Lamoni by two members of the committee, Vida Smith and Audentia Smith Anderson. “The Old, Old Path,” which sings of walking in close companionship with dear friends and with the Master, was to become arguably the best-loved hymn ever to come forth from the Reorganization.

Since there were now two hymnals, The Saints’ Hymnal and Zion’s Praises, in concurrent use in the church, it was felt that it would be more practical to combine selections from both books into a single volume. Responding to surveys of preferences from among the membership, a committee led by musicians Paul Craig and Evan Fry chose 442 hymns from the two books and published them in 1933, continuing the use of the name, The Saints’ Hymnal.

---

27 General Conference Minutes, 1895, 25.
28 Another minor point of departure was that for the fifty hymns at the back without complete musical settings, the committee understandably found it necessary to include the entire first phrase of music rather than just an often-indistinguishable first measure.
The Era of Franklyn S. Weddle

In 1943, a particularly significant event took place, when a musician who had been teaching in Flint, Michigan, accepted appointment as a full-time minister in the RLDS church. Franklyn S. Weddle became the first person to assume full-time leadership of the music and worship life of the denomination. President F. M. Smith had recognized that it was time for the church to set up a department of music, but other church leaders feared the appointment of "specialists." Thus, Weddle's initial assignment was to serve as pastor of the Central Congregation in Kansas City, Missouri, for one year, after which he would organize a General Church music department. 29

Franklyn Weddle soon demonstrated that he possessed a rare combination of musical talent, administrative ability, and ministerial capacity. During his twenty-six-year tenure as church music director, he led the church in major advances in the quality and depth of all aspects of music and worship. The annual nationwide broadcast of Handel’s Messiah reached new heights of excellence, the Independence Symphony orchestra was founded, a 113-rank Aeolian–Skinner organ was added to the newly completed Conference Chamber at the headquarters' Auditorium, musicians throughout the church were organized and offered new opportunities to improve the quality of their work, and the number and availability of resources for the task were significantly expanded.

One of Weddle's primary goals in upgrading the quality of music in the church was the compilation of a new hymnal with elevated musical and theological standards. In 1950, a new hymnal committee began its work,30 and this time the group consisted of not only musicians, but also pastors, missionaries, teachers, writers, theologians, and church administrators. The result of their efforts, a new collection of 583 hymns titled simply, The Hymnal, was published in 1956. The goals of this work were summarized by Weddle: "The committee has endeavored to maintain a high standard for both words and music, without becoming too stilted or formal. Hymns have been chosen not only for their emotional qualities, but for poetical excellence, musical quality, doctrinal soundness, and such other qualities as would promote dignity, order, and true reverence in worship."31

In the application of these standards, many of the more sentimental, toe-tapping gospel hymns, often with repetitive texts and questionable or shallow theology, were abandoned (to the dismay of some of the membership). Along with hymns from other denominations, twenty-nine new tunes and forty-six new texts by RLDS members appeared for the first time in The Hymnal. Many of these were specifically written to meet identified needs, such as for hymns concerning the ordinances. Still other hymns were revised to better reflect the current doctrinal and musical standards. Among the advances of this collection was the degree of thought and organization it demonstrated, including an extensive array of helpful indexes. The desire to include several hymns from the church's heritage that would not meet the new standards was accommodated by adding an appen-

30 The year 1950 also marked the introduction of a Hymnal for Youth, published in conjunction with a youth hymnal printed by the Westminster Press, but containing an addendum of distinctive RLDS hymns. A children's hymnal, published in 1957, contained songs selected for younger members, as well as many hymns from the "adult" hymnal.
dix of Historical Hymns in the back. Included in this historical section was the legendary LDS hymn, "Come, Come, Ye Saints," written in southern Iowa on the trek to Utah. Even though it did not include the verse about finding a place in the West, the hymn was nevertheless deleted entirely by action of the 1958 World Conference, requested by the Utah–Southeast Idaho District. The RLDS Church was still concerned about the distinction between the two denominations. (It might be noted, however, that "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," in a slightly revised version, continues to be a favorite of many Community of Christ members, most of whom do not realize it was written with Brigham Young in mind.)

An interesting anecdote in the history of The Hymnal concerns the fact that, in later printings of the book, a few contemporary authors were allowed to make "second-thought" alterations in their texts. Even though it may have led to a slight improvement in several hymns, this permission was later regretted when several branches who happened to own different editions of the book experienced the disconcerting effect that resulted when part of the congregation tried to sing one version of a particular hymn while the rest held forth on a different rendering.

Current Hymnals of the Community of Christ

Due to health concerns, in 1969 Franklyn Weddle passed the baton (literally) to Harold Neal, who had been serving on the Graceland College music faculty. Neal's desire to continually upgrade the church's music resources led to the establishment in 1971 of a Committee on Congregational Music. There existed some feeling that, regardless of the statement in the preface of the 1956 hymnal, a number of the hymns in that collection tend to be too "stilted and formal." In order to "test the waters" of opinion, the committee published two small supplements, in 1974 and 1976, with twenty-five new hymns in various styles. The response was such that the Committee on Congregational Music soon became the new Hymnal Committee, and the result of their work, Hymns of the Saints, was published in 1981 (the same year, incidentally, that Harold Neal retired). The challenges felt by the committee were expressed in the preface to the work:

The task of hymn selection has been a formidable one. The committee recognized that since the early 1960s organized religion, including our own church, has passed through a sort of crucible characterized by changing theological concepts, the searching eye of historical research, shifting modes of expression, and increased sensitivity to the sanctity of personhood. The committee was also very much aware that the range of musical taste in the church had widened considerably during the past two decades.

The "wider range of musical taste in the church" prompted the inclusion in Hymns of the Saints of a variety of musical styles, including folk and lyrical-style melodic songs. These accompanied-melody songs, meant to be sung in unison, appear alongside the traditional hymn tunes in four-part chordal style that had inspired the long-standing RLDS tradition of robust part-singing. Even a few of the better old hymns and gospel songs from Zion's Praises and other earlier collections were brought back, and several new hymns in the contemporary classical style were introduced, along with songs of diverse national origins.

---

The "increased sensitivity to the sanctity of personhood" referred to another challenge: the problem of inclusive language. The committee endeavored to implement the "Policy of Inclusive Language in Church Publications and Other Written Materials," adopted by the First Presidency in 1978, and, whenever possible, attempted to avoid gender-exclusive language (for example, the use of "men" to refer to "humankind"). Because of this effort, to cite two examples, "Rise Up, O Men of God" became "Rise Up, O Saints of God," and in the Christmas hymn, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," the phrase, "peace to men on earth" became "peace, good will on earth." Other alterations were made in an effort to update archaic language or questionable theology. Thus, for example, in Parley Pratt's "Come, O Thou King of Kings," "all the chosen race" was altered to include "saints of every race." Moreover, the hymn, "For All the Saints," was revised to include living Saints, and its antiquated imagery (such as "through gates of pearl streams in the countless host") updated (to the more expansive "from age to age resounds the countless host"). Among the revisions to "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," mentioned earlier, the assertion that "the wicked who fight against Zion will surely be smitten at last," was changed to the more positive declaration, "The Saints who will labor for Zion will surely be blessed at last."

As a member of this hymnal committee during its early work (until relocating to England for several years), I can personally attest to the high level of effort and care that was devoted, over a period of ten years, to the selection and refinement of the hymns presented in this collection. Often the work seemed to move forward with agonizing deliberateness. As those who have tried it know, it is not easy to make suitable alterations to well-known texts; just the right words or phrases have to be found which will enhance the message of a hymn, but not make it less poetic, less singable, or less distinguished. In spite of challenges such as these, or perhaps because of them, the current hymnal has been exceptionally well accepted, and is certainly one of the most attractive and valuable hymnals yet produced by the church. It is a tribute to the vitality of the organization that, the demanding standards set by the committee notwithstanding, about one in five of the texts and tunes in this collection of 501 hymns were either authored, composed, or arranged by church members past and present.

During the last ten years, two smaller booklets have been produced to supplement *Hymns of the Saints* and fill specific niches or perceived needs. In 1994, in response to the emphasis on peace encouraged by Wallace B. Smith, a collection of forty-six hymns on that topic was published under the title, *Sing for Peace*. In 1999, the church responded to pressure from some of the membership to recognize the popular "contemporary Christian music" style by publishing *Sing a New Song*, a collection of fifty-two titles, including praise choruses and informal songs (twenty-three of them, incidentally, by church members). The tendency of this supplement to favor emotional rather than intellectual content invites comparison with the *Zion's Praises* of 1903. It may be a fair observation that, as with that earlier collection, a number of the selections contained in *Sing a New Song*...
Song would not meet the musical and theological standards held by at least the last two hymnal committees of the church. And, in contrast to the rousing gospel hymns of the Zion's Praises, several of the newer songs would seem to be better suited for solo performance than for confident congregational singing. Whether these kinds of issues indicate a move forward or backward for worship in the church is a fertile subject for debate, and one that will certainly face the next hymnal committee, already overdue for appointment according to the publication pattern of former years.

The heritage of hymnody in the Reorganization is one that has demonstrated considerable passion, creativity, and variety. Following the appearance of The Hymnal in 1956, the interesting perspective of a non-RLDS music scholar was offered by William Leroy Wilkes Jr. As part of his study of LDS hymnals, Wilkes also examined the various hymnals of the RLDS Church and commented on both the “catholic outlook and self-definition” of these collections. In contrast to “the close-knit sacred-secular culture of Mormonism in early Utah, where uniformity and orthodoxy absorbed variety,” Wilkes suggested that the acceptance of diversity in the hymnody of the Reorganization has been a result of the smaller organization’s need for accommodation and for a degree of “unity which did not demand uniformity.” Whatever the case may be, the present challenges facing the Community of Christ certainly include how best to deal with ever more divergent models of worship and music as the church attempts to maintain its integrity, honor its heritage, and at the same time offer ministry to an increasingly diverse body of people throughout today’s world.

MAJOR HYMNALS OF THE LATTER DAY SAINT MOVEMENT

(Not listed are several unofficial hymnals, supplements, youth hymnals, etc. Until 1889, hymnals were pocket-size and, except for Little and Gardner, contained words only.)

1835

1840

1841
A Collection of Sacred Hymns, for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Nauvoo. Emma’s second hymnal. Contained 304 hymns, including the original 90.

36 As an example, number 33, “Lord, I Lift Your Name on High,” would identify the location of heaven by affirming, presumably for the sake of rhyme, that the Lord went “from the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky.”
38 Ibid., 61–62.


The Saints' Harp. Plano and Lamoni. Contained 1,120 hymns; 88 by Mark Forscutt.

Late-Day Saints' Psalmody. Salt Lake City. Original LDS tunes for the texts in the Manchester Hymnal (see 1840).

The Saints' Harmony. Lamoni. Split-page format, music on top, texts (all of the 1,120 hymns of the Saints' Harp) on the bottom.

The Saints' Hymnal. Lamoni. Replaced bulky Saints' Harmony. Contained 300 hymns with texts between the treble and bass clefs.

Zion's Praises. Lamoni. Hymnal for the Sunday school movement, intended to be used along with the Saints' Hymnal.

Deseret Sunday School Songs. Salt Lake City.

Latter-Day Saint Hymns. Salt Lake City. More traditional hymns, to be used along with Deseret Sunday School Songs.

The Saints' Hymnal. Independence. Contained 442 hymns, including selections from the 1895 Saints' Hymnal and Zion's Praises.

Hymns: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Salt Lake City. (Revised edition was published in 1950.)

The Hymnal. Independence. Contained 583 hymns. Increased attention to musical quality.

Hymns of the Saints. Independence. Contains 501 hymns, wider variety of styles.


Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Salt Lake City. Contains 341 hymns and is currently published in 22 languages.
Charles B. Thompson: 
Harbinger of Zion or Master of Humbuggery?

Junia Braby

As a child, I listened in fascination to tales told around the Sunday dinner table of early times in western Iowa. The adults told stories of life in towns with odd names such as Pisgah, Preparation, and Little Sioux. One story I particularly remember was about a religious leader in this area who apparently rode roughshod over his followers, and took little girls’ rocking chairs and gave them to his own small daughter! How could such a thing have happened? Discovering the answer to that question has revealed the story of one man’s greed, a community’s struggle to be faithful to the teachings of their leader, and a movement doomed to failure.

The man was Charles Blancher Thompson. Some thought him a charismatic leader, but others were convinced that he was a charlatan and thief. Both terms describe Thompson at one time or another. Left motherless at the age of three, Thompson’s Quaker father hired him to be kept by the week until he reached the age of eight, then put him out to earn his own living. At fourteen, he learned the tailoring trade. During this sensitive time in his life, he became “deeply impressed with religious sentiments.”

Investigating various churches, he heard a Latter Day Saint elder preach and visited Kirtland, Ohio, to study the new religion. In February 1835, Charles was baptized by Apostle John F. Boynton, confirmed and ordained an elder by Joseph the Prophet, Joseph Smith Sr., and Sidney Rigdon. After a brief, unsuccessful missionary trip back to his native Schenectady County, New York, he returned to Kirtland, where he studied Hebrew and was ordained to the Second Quorum of Seventies. The next year, he was again preaching in New York state, winning new members for the church and a bride for himself.

On 4 December 1836, eighteen-year-old Elizabeth Jencks of Bath, Steuben County, New York, married young Charles. He continued his ministry there, returning to Kirtland with Elizabeth the following spring. For the next year and a half, Thompson was actively preaching, teaching, and baptizing members in the Kirtland area.

Troubles in Kirtland associated with a depressed economy and a failed banking venture resulted in dissent from within the church and more persecution from outside. Lawsuits were filed against church leaders. The destruction of property that followed included the church’s printing press, which must have been a sad memory for Thompson. Early in 1838, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon and their families were forced to leave Ohio for Far West, Missouri. By the summer, hundreds of Saints walked across Ohio, Indiana,
Illinois, and Missouri to join them.\footnote{Howard, \textit{The Church through the Years} volume 1: 224–225.} The two-month walk in the blistering heat must have been particularly difficult for Elizabeth who was newly pregnant.

The next few months were to be chaotic: moving from place to place in Missouri, looking for peaceful communities in which to settle, and back to Quincy, Illinois, within seven months time. Shortly after their arrival in Illinois, Amelia Elizabeth was born.\footnote{Amelia was born 4 March 1839. See Chase, “Chronology.”} Charles moved his family back to New York, where they could live in relative peace, but Elizabeth was suffering illness or injury related to the expulsion from Missouri.\footnote{\textit{Mormon Redress Petitions: Documents of the 1833–1838 Missouri Conflict}, Clark V. Johnson, editor, Religious Studies Center Monograph Series 16 (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1992), 603. See also Chase, “Chronology.”} She died in August, leaving Charles with a five-month-old daughter “but [he said] I was among friends and I continued my labors in the ministry for four years in western New York.”\footnote{\textit{ZH and BO} 2 (August 1852): 60. See also Chase, “Chronology.”} Thompson clearly understood the impact of the printed word and the vast audience that could be reached with printed material. Scarcely two years after fleeing Missouri with his family, Charles published perhaps his best-known work, \textit{Evidences in Proof of the Book of Mormon}. Extracts from this work published in 1841 in Batavia, New York, appeared in the \textit{Times and Seasons} and were accompanied by a glowing introduction written by editor Ebenezer Robinson.\footnote{\textit{Times and Seasons} 3 (January 1842): 640.} His skill in writing was essential to his later success. It encouraged his movement to grow and shaped his career. His publications, no doubt, contributed to his downfall in regard to broken promises and the unrealistic expectations he promoted. However, Thompson was able to write convincingly about the power of “that mighty engine, the press”\footnote{Ibid.} because he had been there. He had experienced firsthand in Kirtland and Far West the powerful influence of a negative press.\footnote{Howard \textit{The Church through the Years}, volume 1: 224. Published attacks came from the Painesville \textit{Telegraph}, E. D. Howe, editor. Howe developed various accusations and contrived affidavits “into the first book-length attack against the church.” See E. D. Howe, \textit{Mormonism Unvailed} [sic]: \textit{Or a Faithful Account of the Singular Imposition and Delusion from Its Rise to the Present Time} (Painesville, Ohio: Printed and published by the author, 1834).} “Members,” he wrote in \textit{Evidences in Proof} “contended with the prejudices of the ignorant and the pen of the learned . . . [and] we were insulted by mobs . . . while the whole society were banished from the state of Missouri . . . [having been] inspired by the press and pulpit.”\footnote{\textit{Times and Seasons} 3 (January 1842): 640.} It was a lesson he never forgot.

The summer of 1843, Charles moved with five-year-old Amelia from New York to Hancock County, Illinois. Under the direction of Joseph Smith, he settled in Macedonia (now known as Webster), twenty miles east of Nauvoo. He was ordained a counselor to the Macedonia Stake president, John Smith.

Shortly after the death of Joseph Smith in 1844, Thompson met and married Catherine Ann Houck. Not much is known about Catherine other than the fact that she was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was nineteen years old at the time of their mar-
The family moved to Nauvoo where Charles supported the vote of the Church giving authority for leadership to the Twelve.

During the next few months however, his sentiments changed and by the time the church left Nauvoo for "the wilderness" in the west, Thompson remained behind. Not only did he oppose the Twelve, but by this time he was looking to the leadership of James J. Strang and joined this group of former Saints in 1846. Thompson was ordained a high priest in Strang's movement and the August issue of Strang's periodical *Voree Herald* contained a poem written by C. B. Thompson in honor of Strang. Differences in issues of authority and rejection of the Church coupled with the possible disappointment at not being ordained to the "Twelve" prompted Thompson's move to St. Louis, Missouri. It was there that "Jehovah's Presbytery of Zion" and "Baneemy" were first associated with Thompson.

Baneemy was first mentioned by Thompson in print in the first issue of Zion's Harbinger and Baneemy's Organ, January 1849. Under the heading "A Proclamation by The Patriarch and Apostle of the Free and Accepted Order of Baneemy, and Fraternity of the Sons of Zion" he claimed to have received from the Lord Jehovah the pattern and keys of authority to build the temples of His Holiness on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem. The proclamation was signed by "Baneemy" and attested to by "C. B. Thompson, Agent of the Free and Accepted Order of Baneemy." The second issue of the periodical contained "The Word of the Almighty God, to the people of the United States... in answer to their supplications, prayers, and petitions." It contained references to the inspiration of Joseph Smith, rejection of the church, and warnings to obey the law. The message was credited to "the Almighty God" and signed by Baneemy, patriarch of Zion, and attested and communicated by C. B. Thompson. Thompson claimed a vision in which he was instructed to organize a group and authorized to act as agent for Baneemy.

Thompson taught that "Baneemy" was "the messenger sent... to prepare the way"

---

13 Charles and Catherine were married 24 December 1845, Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register. See also Chase, "Chronology."
14 *ZH and BO* 2 (August 1852): 61.
16 *Voree Herald* 1 (August 1846).
17 *Gospel Herald* (September 1848):140–143, (October 1848):148–151. Strang accused Thompson of disappointment in the pages of the periodical. In addition, Thompson believed the Church as a whole suffered rejection as a result of the Nauvoo Temple's unfinished state at the death of Joseph Smith. He also disputed Strang's authority to lead the Beaver Island, Michigan, location for Strang's gathering and his priesthood authority. Thompson's preaching attracted several Strangite families, and they eventually joined Thompson at Preparation, Iowa. They include Jehiel Savage, Milton Stow, George Rarick, Edwin Mitchell, and Moses Chase. William Marks, James M. Adams, James Blakeslee, and Josiah Ells were associated with Thompson early on but did not make the move to Iowa. See Young, *Strangite Mormons*. See also Marks to Thompson, *ZH and BO* 3 (March 1853):20 cited by William Shepard, "James Blakeslee, the Old Soldier of Mormonism," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 17 (1997):126.
18 *ZH and BO* 1 (January 1849):1–2.
20 *ZH and BO* 2 (August 1852):61.
and the successor of Joseph Smith in holding the keys of Mysteries and Revelations. Thompson stated that Smith had appointed him some ten years before Smith’s death in 1844 to lead the church. He also defined Baneemy as the patriarch of Zion who holds the keys of the first order of the holy priesthood and was authorized to organize and cleanse the priesthood in preparation for the coming of Shiloh and the redemption of Zion. The coming of Shiloh (the Lord) was of paramount importance in Thompson’s group, and the idea of preparing the way in readiness for that moment was incorporated in a way that would be a constant reminder to all: by naming the village, “Preparation.”

It had been Smith’s practice to give special leaders fictitious names used as code names during the violent times in Ohio and Missouri. Thompson was most likely familiar with Joseph Smith’s use of “Baneemy” in the 1834 Fishing River revelation as a code name for Sidney Rigdon. He changed the meaning, however, in his movement, and used “Baneemy” to emphasize his position of authority in the new movement, claiming the title for himself.

Materials published by Thompson during these years illustrate the facility and fascination Thompson seemed to have for ancient terms and intricate religious organization. Based on biblical concepts and Smith’s religious teaching, he used the name Ephriam, Shepard and Stone of Israel, Fraternity of the Sons of Zion, and Patriarch of Zion.

Thompson wrote prolifically throughout the Preparation, Iowa, period of his life. His Zion’s Harbinger periodical published both in St. Louis, Missouri, and at Preparation, Iowa, spanned a period of six years. He would also publish several theological books and newspapers. These publications were similar in layout and content to those he knew in Kirtland and Nauvoo.

These early publications provided a platform for Thompson, reporting progress in missionary activity in specific locations, carrying his written word to the Saints, generating enthusiasm for the quarterly assemblies held in St. Louis and creating an invaluable network for the progress of the movement. He recognized the platform that was his in printing arguments of doctrine with Strang and printed an earlier 1848 letter to Strang in the March 1852 issue of The Harbinger and Organ that Strang had answered in his Gospel Herald.

Affiliation with the Presbytery in Iowa required people to sign a covenant declaring their personal worth. One tenth was given to the Lord’s treasury and one day in ten was given in labor for the Presbytery. Monies and notes gathered at this time were used for the purchase of lands and materials to complete the two-story frame building Thompson had designated “The House of the Lord.” Thompson considered the signers of the covenant as members of the “School of Faith,” then the “School of Works.” These were evolving “Schools” taught by Thompson, and when he decided the followers had com-

---

21 ZH and BO 2 (September 1852):69. According to Orson Pratt, Smith had used “Baneemy” as a code name for Sidney Rigdon in a revelation given on Fishing River, Missouri, 22 June 1834.
23 ZH and BO 2 (January 1852):1–3.
24 ZH and BO 2 (March 1852):22 and Gospel Herald (see footnote 17).
pleted one "School," they moved on to the next. Each "School" had a pattern of requirements that evolved over time, becoming increasingly difficult to fulfill. These requirements were closely related to the needs of the community as determined by Thompson and in relation to the response of the group to his demands and revelations. He equated the fulfilling of these "requirements" as a measure of faithfulness and devotion of members. The ultimate reward, he taught, was the possession of lands "for their inheritance."  

After the Schools of Faith and Works came the Order of Sacrifice. Thompson "settled" with them, returning funds paid into the Order of Sacrifice. However, ultimately Thompson's attitudes changed in regard to his early generosity, and he became obsessed with raising cash for land and legal ways to get that land "tied to him."  

Among Thompson's early achievements in missionary activity was the winning of William Marks. Marks, one of the "old-time Saints," became Thompson's first Chief of the Traveling Teachers. His role in the church at Nauvoo had been as stake president and confidant of Joseph Smith. He had been an outspoken opponent of polygamy. Mark's association not only lent credibility to the group, he wrote articles for publication reaffirming his stand against polygamy. This position held great appeal to those who opposed Brigham Young and the Twelve in Nauvoo. Thompson's activities in St. Louis had not gone without notice in Salt Lake City. President Young's disparaging remarks appeared in a letter to Orson Pratt in June 1853: "I do not conceive how it could be possible for any persons who can be deceived by Thompson to become good Saints."  

From the beginning, Marks exercised caution with regard to Thompson's group. He had been deeply disappointed at the lack of support shown him as stake president in Nauvoo after the death of Smith. He had experienced brief association with Strang and was not anxious to jump into another unfulfilling liaison. After attending Thompson's first Solemn Assembly in St. Louis on 6 April 1852, Marks wrote his old friend James M. Adams. He reported that he was investigating this new movement but was hesitant to join, "for I have learned from experience that it is a very easy thing to be deceived." However, by the end of the Assembly, sixty-year-old Marks had accepted appointment to the Location Committee for the Presbytery and would travel more than eleven hundred miles in search of an appropriate new home for the group.  

Marks rode horseback from his home in Shabbona Grove, Illinois, exploring the country and accompanied by the committee, Richard Stephens and Harvey Childs. They were investigating the area in northwestern Missouri and southwestern Iowa. Finding the price of land around St. Joseph, Missouri, high, committee members traveled 150 miles up the Missouri River to Kanesville, Iowa, and subsequently reported that "the country north for one hundred miles was good and [had] but few inhabitants. The soil is the best I
This rich, free farmland seemed a made-to-order location for the fledgling group. In a report to Thompson on 1 September 1852, Marks wrote,

We have come to the conclusion that the best place for a location . . . is at Kanesville, Pottawatamie (sic) county, Iowa, and the region round about . . . There are many places that are vacated, and are for sale in consequence of the great emigration to the West. The land is not in market, it is only purchased by buying the claims . . . from forty to one hundred and sixty acres, and most of them have more or less buildings, (log cabins) and vary in prices . . . The country north of Kanesville, for a great distance is mostly vacant, and good claims can be made there, and timber is more plenty[ful]—the health of the country is very good, but not entirely free from ague and fevers.

Marks continued his responsibilities with the Location Committee, advising many about gathering at the "Bluffs" and the most prudent course to pursue. Despite the time and energy invested in arrangements for the site and settlement of the community, neither Marks nor Adams were to make it their home.

While the Location Committee searched, Thompson remained in St. Louis publishing his paper monthly, supervising the traveling teachers, and raising funds for purchase of the printing press and the eventual move to Iowa. Meanwhile, the group was growing in number. In September 1852, Thompson reported thirty classes being held in various parts of the country, with 251 scholars investigating. In 1853, 118 members were reported scattered throughout New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Missouri. Some had been associated with Thompson in Far West or Nauvoo and/or with Strang in Wisconsin.

In a report after the April Solemn Assembly, Thompson enthusiastically wrote that two years ago "there was but one traveling teacher ordained; now there are near half-a-hundred."

Members of the Presbytery had finally raised the funds necessary to bring the Thompsons and the Washington hand press to Preparation but had not completed the frame residence for the family. Samuel Scott and Edwin Mitchell had arrived the previous spring putting up the buildings. The ground floor would be used for preaching and

---

32 Marks to Adams, 17 September 1852. P23, f61. Community of Christ Archives. Marks reported that this land was not on the market but would have to be purchased by buying claims varying in size from 40 to 160 acres.
33 The Mormon emigration from Nauvoo, Illinois, to the Rocky Mountain West began in 1846 and Kanesville, Iowa, was meant to be "a temporary gathering center for the Great Basin trek." Richard E. Bennett, Mormons at the Missouri, 1846–1852 “and should we die”(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987): 215–216. In addition to the Illinois Saints, great numbers of British Mormons immigrated to the Kanesville, Iowa, area. From 1849 to 1852 more than six thousand British Saints on their way west arrived at the Bluffs by way of Liverpool, New Orleans, and St. Louis. Many small settlements numbering at least 46, spilled over into Mills and Fremont Counties. Bennett reports the population of Kanesville proper at 5,000 in 1852. However, fifty miles to the north of Kanesville, the land was essentially uninhabited.
34 ZH and BO 2 (October 1852):79.
35 ZH and BO 3 (August 1853):63.
36 ZH and BO 2 (September 1852):71.
37 Mormon Redress Petitions, 603. See also Historic Nauvoo Land and Records Research Center property records, Nauvoo, Illinois; Young, Strangite Mormons; and Chase, “Chronology.”
38 ZH and BO 3(April 1853):32.
teaching as well as rooms for the Thompson family. Space on the second floor was reserved for the press. 

When Charles and Catherine boarded the steamboat *El Paso* for the Missouri River trip to Kanesville, Iowa, on 9 September 1853, their final destination was the Iowa wilderness. There they expected to lead this community that had already prepared a house for the family. They expected the group to hold all things in common and work the land, raising a profit so that they could later buy it for the benefit of all.

The trip took a week. They traveled with the four children: Amelia (daughter of deceased Elizabeth and Charles), age fourteen; Eliza, age six; David, age four; and baby Charles, two months old. They left the steamboat at St. Joseph and came overland to Kanesville, Iowa. From there, they went fifty miles north across Pottawattamie and Harrison Counties and three miles into Monona to the Preparation site. There they found the two-story frame house that was to be their home, standing in stark contrast to the two smaller log cabins nearby.

When the Thompsons arrived, the horse-driven mill was operational, and more log homes were under construction. Twenty families in the covenant had gathered, bringing livestock and cattle. Eventually the town would consist of sixty-seven homes, most of which were log cabins and dugouts. Daniel W. Butts reminisced about coming to Preparation as an eighteen-year-old printer: "I well remember... I rode from Kanesville to what is now... Preparation... on a large load of printing material and household goods... the grass... was so high and luxuriant for miles and miles that horsemen might hide from each other at a distance of two hundred yards... Travelers on the trail beyond the Little Sioux River north could travel all day without seeing another person."

Thompson immediately set about doing what he seemed to do best: printing. The first newspaper in the new county was a continuation of Thompson's St. Louis periodical and was published under the date of 15 September 1853. Thompson proudly wrote:

> We salute our readers in this Number from the wilderness of Iowa... we are here now, making Baneemy's Organ speak from the wilderness literally... This place is beautifully situated near the Soldier stream... We have secured by preemption claims all the timber within six miles of this place, for the common benefit of all those who... pay their Tything (sic) into the Lord's Treasury... we have selected this place away from all other inhabitants, that we may... establish a temporal policy... of our affairs for the mutual benefit of all who engage with us in this work of the Father, for the restoration of the covenants to Israel, and for the cultivation and civilization of the Indian tribes."

Thompson advised the brethren to come as soon as possible, bringing all their stock

---

39 Samuel Scott Deposition, SHSI.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 *History of Harrison County, Iowa* (Chicago: National Publishing Company, 1891), 96. A subsequent shipment of type for the printing press was shipped to Council Bluffs, Iowa, on the steamship *Arabia* 5 September 1856. The *Arabia* sank near Kansas City, Missouri, when she snagged a log on the river trip from St. Louis to Council Bluffs. The wooden box of type is now on display in the “Steamship Arabia Museum” in Kansas City. It was addressed to Thompson and Butts, Council Bluffs, Iowa.
44 ZH and BO 3 (November 1853):70.
cattle with them. Settlers were also advised to bring horses, groceries, seeds, and glass, sash and nails for building. Just to make sure those who gathered were dedicated, a certificate of standing in the Presbytery, to be presented on their arrival at Kanesville, was also requested.45

The next spring (1854) the new Monona County was organized with seven of the nine elective offices held by residents of the colony. Charles B. Thompson, county judge; Hugh Lytle, treasurer and recorder; Johnson F. Lane, sheriff; Guy C. Barnum, drainage commissioner; Andrew Hall, justice of the peace; Amos A. Chase, prosecuting attorney; and Homer C. Hoyt, coroner.46

One of the earliest families to be associated with Thompson and “Jehovah’s Presbytery of Zion” was that of Orrin and Rebecca Butts. Orrin, a young Vermont farmer came west in 1845 with Rebecca and their five children. They were baptized and spent the winter in Nauvoo.47 The family moved on to Kanesville in the spring of 184648 and by 1850 had moved again and settled near St. Joseph, Missouri.49 At this point, it is impossible to know why Orrin and Rebecca did not continue west. Many Saints chose to stay in this area where the farmland was rich and free. Some had lost “physical health, personal property, and loved ones. They were out of money, out of patience, and some were out of religion.”50 Whether they were offended by polygamy, or chose to stay for other personal reasons, they were not alone.51 Two years later Orrin had joined the Presbytery under Thompson and had become the Second Chief in the Quorum of Traveling Teachers.

He was in attendance at the first gathering of the Solemn Assembly and shortly afterward traveled to Ohio and Indiana where he was preaching and baptizing. In July of 1852 Orrin wrote to Thompson: “Dear Br. Thompson... I am well both in body and mind... Since I left you... we have organized two schools... in Indiana and obtained three subscribers for the Harbinger and Organ... I had a glorious time with you at the Solemn Assembly, which will never be forgotten by me... I subscribe myself your brother in the New and Everlasting Covenant of ‘Jehovah’s Presbytery of Zion.’ ”52 Six years after these warm remarks were written, Butts and others of the Traveling Teachers rushed home to Preparation to protect their land and other personal property from a hostile takeover by Thompson.

During one of Butts’s first trips as a Traveling Teacher, he visited the area around Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to preach to relatives there. “I came to this place to see my brother-in-law Rowland Cobb... he fought me for two days and a-half like a fierce tiger... but... he yielded at last... and united with us... he being my father in the church

45 ZH and BO 3 (August 1853):63; and 3 (November 1853):70.
46 History of Monona County, Iowa, 180.
47 Susan Easton Black, Early Members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Provo: Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993), volume 1: 792.
48 ZH and BO 3 (August 1853):63.
49 History of Harrison County, Iowa, 613.
51 Richard E. Bennett estimates at least two thousand Saints between 1846 and 1852 did not cross the Missouri River and continue on to the west. See pages 226–227.
52 ZH and BO 2 (July 1852):56.
having baptized me, and having been long and intimately acquainted with me, he would not turn me out of his house."\(^{35}\)

Rowland Cobb was one of the more affluent members of the group, and Thompson learned that he was generous and dependable as well. Shortly after his conversion, Cobb sent funds for payment of debts in St. Louis, for the purchase of a printing press and for other urgent needs. He attended assemblies of the group in St. Louis and later in Preparation before joining Thompson in Iowa.

Cobb returned to Pennsylvania and made preparations to move his wife, Eliza, two adult sons, and two young daughters to Iowa.\(^{34}\) By the time they arrived in 1854, the Cobbs found the people of Preparation had progressed to the Order of Sacrifice. Cobb later testified,

> In November 1854, I moved from Pennsylvania to Preparation. It was then proposed to me to enter into this order of sacrifice... [it] included all the property of any valuation even to the shirts on our backs. I gave Thompson a bill of Sale of everything that I possessed and an inventory was made of the things that I had at St. Joseph and I delivered over $225.00 in money all of which was included in a Bill of Sale to him... The object of this was to purchase lands for an inheritance for the people to live upon who entered into this organization... and for all who would come into the organization.\(^{35}\)

The contract was terse:

Rowland and Eliza Cobb agree and bind ourselves and our minor children to labor faithfully for and under the direction of the said Charles B. Thompson, and to perform such service as he shall dictate, for the space of time including two years from the date of this bond above written: the said Thompson to furnish us and our children with all the necessary board, lodging and clothing, for the time above specified... And we agree that the board, lodging and clothing, furnished us and our children, by said Thompson, need not exceed in current value, the sum of $300.00 per year.

The contract specified a penal sum of $1,000.00 if the contract was not met. The document was signed by the Cobbs and witnessed by Homer C. Hoyt and the young printer, Daniel Butts.\(^{36}\)

The community at Preparation was self-sustaining. Not only did it provide the basic businesses such as a saw and grist mill, cooper, blacksmith, wagon and wheelwright shops; it advertised a teacher of music; an instructor in reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, English, grammar, composition, and elocution; a translator of the German and English languages; a hall for rent; a tailor; a shoemaker; a laundry conducted “on the latest European plan” under which parcels were returned the next day; a millinery shop; a maker of baskets and wicker work; and a soap factory that would make “elegant and deliciously perfumed soaps”\(^{37}\) that bore the labels Soap au Bouquet and Soap a la Rose.

Thompson’s expertise in raising and dispersing funds, drawing up legal contracts,
and organizing corporations seemed to be a natural and largely self-taught skill. His imaginative financial schemes were executed with flair, but these contracts did not always produce the results he envisioned. Members of the colony began to express dissatisfaction shortly after Thompson arrived in Iowa. Many felt he did not share in the self-denial he proclaimed. About half the membership under the leadership of Hugh Lytle finally withdrew from the community in the summer of 1855, settling the village of Belvidere a few miles to the northwest. 58

When the Lytle group withdrew from Preparation, Thompson printed a proclamation denouncing the group for refusing to work, for demanding payment for previous work and goods donated to the common treasury, and for entering what Thompson considered his land. “Whereas, Hugh Lytle, John Thomas, F. D. Winegar, Jacob Paden, Henry Brooke, Albert Clements and others . . . entered upon my land willfully and [they] maliciously . . . and have carried away corn, potatoes, pumpkins and squashes . . . I have notified them by my attorney (sic)—that suit would be brought against them.”59

After the Lytle group left, Thompson tightened control of the community by organizing two legal corporations: the Sacred Treasury of Jehovah’s Presbytery of Zion and the House of Ephriam. 60 The first, owned solely by Thompson, was to establish schools of preparation, colleges, and temples; and to provide cultural development, publish books, and purchase land. It was capitalized at $10,000. The second, designated the House of Ephriam, was to carry on farming, milling, and mechanical business. Thompson was to receive one tenth of the annual increase of the capital stock for his compensation. Each person was given a certificate that could be used to purchase goods or grain in case of actual need. 61

Twenty-three families were organized into the House of Ephriam in late summer of 1855. An inventory was made of all property put into the sacrifice. In order to raise cash for farming expenses and the purchase of land, families were required to do without certain foods that could be sold to the public. Meat, butter, and cheese were advertised for sale in the Harbinger but were not items that would have appeared in the common dining hall in Preparation. 62

Tithing was deducted from the property put into the sacrifice, and an additional one tenth of the amount was deducted for exchanging it into cash. Members were then informed that they would receive script on the House of Ephriam that could be used for farming expenses on the land. Samuel Scott, county surveyor and carpenter, reported that Thompson said he was glad the law of tithing was soon to take place because he needed things to make his family comfortable. “They had but one bed for his whole family; his oldest girl had to lay on some rugs or quilts on the floor. I was to work in and about the house so that I knew what things they had. After he came there he was supported by the people.”63

The stewardship plan was such that when Rowland Cobb worked the land, he bought

58 Samuel Scott, county surveyor, platted the town of Belvidere. Hugh Lytle was one of the proprietors. History of Monona County, Iowa, 245.
60 Charles Perrin Deposition, SHSI.
61 Ibid.
62 Cobb Deposition, SHSI.
63 Samuel Scott Deposition, SHSI.
(with his script) two yoke of steers at eighty dollars per yoke from the common treasury and three cows and grain until he could raise a crop. "I objected," testified Cobb "to selling or parting with the script [but] Thompson told me it should make no difference for the next fall I would have to sacrifice it all again and we did do it. I was under his instructions to do just as he required while in the sacrifice."64

These corporations would be important in deciding ownership of the "lands in controversy" in the legal suit that would be brought against Thompson, because they were used to determine motive in claiming the land as his own. The House of Ephriam was considered a joint stock company intended to be incorporated under the laws of Iowa. But Samuel Scott stated: "Thompson had the articles of incorporation all made out at the Solemn Assembly in August 1855 and read them over at that time. The shareholders never held any meetings. Thompson said when the two years of sacrifice was up we should have our inheritance [but] this House of Ephriam was nothing but a shell he was taking us through."65

Others in the group expressed the same attitudes toward the House of Ephriam. Charles Perrin, a farmer and native of New York state had united with the Latter Day Saints and came to Council Bluffs in 1845. After serving in the Mexican War for two years and panning for gold in California, he returned to Preparation in 1853 and was among the first to locate in the village.66 Perrin testified that Thompson himself had acknowledged that "all of these orders we were passing through was merely to get their property in such a shape that they [the people] couldn't get it back again... and the means in the different treasuries was so mixed up that he [Thompson] could not tell anything about it himself."67 Many in the group agreed with Perrin's final assessment of the situation—"The House of Ephriam was a humbuggery got up to swindle the people."68

Public land sales began at Preparation in the spring of 1856 and as many as could legally were directed by Thompson to take pre-emptions. In order to obtain title, these properties had to be held in member's own names. Perrin raised money needed for purchasing his pre-emption by using cash from the sale of grain and a yoke of oxen. On another occasion, $300 belonging to Perrin paid for land, and at another time, $160 in gold paid the debt. Guy Barnum immediately went to Council Bluffs, and when he returned he reported that he had entered the land with the money.69

In order to retain control of lands now recorded in individual owners names, Thompson called for another full and complete sacrifice after which he issued more script that could purchase goods or grain.70 In this final act of sacrifice, members were again giving their all, and Thompson was claiming not a mere majority, but 100 percent of the stock in both corporations. Members were buying back in script what they had given in sacrifice.

Placing valuable personal items in a common holding area must have been especially difficult for the women and children. Certain items of furniture, clothing, linens, jewelry, and little girl's rocking chairs were considered luxury items and were stored in "The

64 Samuel Scott Deposition, SHSI.
65 Ibid.
66 History of Monona County, Iowa, 392.
67 Ibid., and Perrin Deposition, SHSI.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
House of the Lord.” Smaller items were kept in locked trunks and bureaus, and it was easy to imagine Charles and Catherine using these treasures at their discretion. Not all gave willingly to “the sacrifice.” When Hannah Perrin was required to place her valuables there, she hid her jewelry in jars of mincemeat instead.\(^{71}\)

When payment on pre-empted land was due the following spring, the situation was becoming desperate. The winter of 1856–1857 was known as the “winter of the deep snow.” The storm had dumped three to four feet of snow in forty-eight hours with snow so crusted over that a team could not move a single foot until the crust was broken with spades and shovels. This crust lay for seventy-five miles between Preparation and Council Bluffs, the village’s nearest source of supplies.\(^{72}\) During this severe winter, 100 head of cattle, worth $2,000 had died. The group tried to prove up the best claims, and as land was entered, Thompson directed that it be in his name, and he produced a revelation that so ordered it.\(^{73}\)

Problems were handled by explanations, threats, and promises of better things to come. Members heard Thompson say many times that they had gotten through the Sacrifice and had been true and faithful and the possessions [lands] there were now theirs and their monies had paid for them. He assured them in September 1857 that he was going “right on” in a few weeks to set off their inheritances.\(^{74}\) He also stated in public meetings that property in Preparation did not belong to him but to the people, that he was only steward for them and every man should have an equal share, rich or poor.

But to others in private he was saying he had “studied” how he could get the business with the people legalized and bound up to pay him for his teaching and instruction to them; he believed he had a right to be paid for it.\(^{75}\) In fact, Thompson and Barnum had made arrangements to go to Philadelphia and planned to sell off the loose property and stock and put the lands belonging to the order out of the people’s hands by selling them.

Thompson’s activities with regard to ownership of real estate and personal property continued to be met with growing dissatisfaction and Guy Barnum, Thompson’s associate, advised him to settle with disgruntled members. Thompson’s reply was that the people had sacrificed to God and he [Thompson] had nothing to do with it. If they wanted anything, they must get it by law.\(^{76}\) He was also heard to say that he “didn’t give a damn for one of them, it was the property he was after.” Samuel Scott had the foresight to write these comments in his daybook, and it was later entered as evidence in the 1859 court case of Scott vs. Thompson.\(^{77}\)

The people did just as Thompson had unwittingly suggested: they set about getting their possessions “by law.” They swore out writs attaching Baneemy’s printing press and materials. Thompson got word of this and gathered some documents and papers and took them to Onawa for safekeeping.

In October 1858, Thompson took advantage of the absence of his friends and conveyed all the realty to his wife Catherine Thompson, and to Guy C. Barnum, reserving

---


\(^{72}\) History of Monona County, Iowa, 204.

\(^{73}\) C. R. Marks, “Monona County Iowa Mormons,” Annals of Iowa 3rd Series 7:5:338.

\(^{74}\) Perrin Deposition, SHSI.

\(^{75}\) Butts Deposition, SHSI.

\(^{76}\) James M. Durphy Deposition, SHSI.

\(^{77}\) Samuel Scott Deposition, SHSI.
only forty acres as a homestead for himself. His disciples, hearing of this transaction, returned and immediately called on “Father Ephriam” the “Chief Steward of the Lord” to render an account of his stewardship. Being unable to obtain a satisfactory adjustment of the matter, they notified him that on a stated day they would meet him in Preparation to make a settlement. In the meantime, they sent word to the Lytlelites and all others who had from time to time withdrawn, to appear on the day of settlement and present their claims. Nevertheless, the “Chief Steward of the Lord . . . had not the courage to meet the gathering . . . on that occasion” and was absent in Onawa. “On the next day, however, they started for Preparation hoping that the people had dispersed.”

The people had not “dispersed”; in fact, quite a good-sized crowd had gathered, and they intended to demand a settlement from Thompson. “Sentinels who had been posted on the bluffs saw him coming with Guy C. Barnum in the distance over the Missouri bottom lands. However, Melinda Butts, a daughter of one of the colonists who lived in Thompson’s family and probably was sent by Mrs. Thompson along the road to warn him of the possible danger, met Thompson and Barnum and told them of the crowd assembled.”

About a mile from the village they were met by a young woman . . . who told them not to come in, as the people were all there and would surely (sic) hang them . . . at that moment they saw the men coming from Preparation at high speed on horseback over the hill toward them. They sprang from the wagon they were riding, unhitched the horses, and mounting them bare-back, wheeled about for Onawa. After a lively race of fifteen miles across prairies and over creeks and ravines, the “Prophet” and his “Assistant” arrived about a half a mile ahead of their followers.

“Thompson sought protection among the citizens of Onawa. Negotiations were had seeking a settlement but Thompson made only promises and worked for delay.”

Thompson described his dilemma:

Here I concealed myself in the house of a friend (attorney Addison Oliver) and sent for the County Judge . . . but receiving no satisfactory assurance . . . I proceeded to Sioux City for the purpose of appealing to the District Judge . . . but [he] was absent from the state at the time . . . I returned secretly to Onawa and [again] concealed myself in the house of a friend . . . [I also learned] that four men had been appointed . . . or had volunteered their services to kill me if they should ever be able to set their eyes on me . . . They say in their circular . . . published . . . from my press which they had seized, that the people round about had promised to sustain them in their unlawful proceedings.

Judge C. E. Whiting of Monona County, who lived in adjacent West Fork Township, went to Preparation in company with County Sheriff John A. Hittle. They had understood that there was danger of violence to individuals and property at Preparation. When they arrived, “most of the parties plaintiffs to the later suit were distributing among themselves the property they claimed Thompson had obtained from them.” Leaders in the group seemed to be Rowland Cobb, Samuel Scott, C. C. Perrin, Hugh Lytle (who had taken a group to Belvidere), and Orrin Butts. “The manner in which they conducted themselves

---

79 C. R. Marks, “Monona County Iowa Mormons,” 342, 343.
80 Andreas, Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa 1875, 491.
81 Ibid.
82 Charles B. Thompson Deposition, SHSI.
indicated that they intended to take possession of the property and a large number of persons . . . collected in the large room of Thompson's house in which the trunks and chests claimed by Thompson were collected together.” Mrs. Thompson furnished the keys and Whiting says “she was aware that the chests and trunks would be opened whether she furnished the keys or not” and they were “quietly yielded up.” Trunks and chests were separately opened, and their contents distributed among the people claiming the same and “according to my recollection the families of Thompson and Barnum left the place towards evening.”

Most of the articles stored in the trunks were described as “belonging to the female portion of the families” and were sorted through and claimed by the women. They included wearing apparel, household goods, table linens, and towels. One can only hope that the child’s rocking chair given in response to a stern leader’s rigid demands was finally returned to its rightful owner.

Whiting testified that the Thompson and Barnum families appeared fearful of violence and were anxious to get away. He described the general expressions used against Thompson as threatening and further testified that from the language and conduct of people collected there that Thompson would not have been safe from personal violence had he remained at Preparation. Whiting also reported the feelings of the crowd toward Catherine Thompson as “bitter hostility,” but he hardly thought she would have received any personal violence. After she gave up the keys to the chests and trunks, Whiting was satisfied that the danger of violence was over. When asked whether he thought the Misses Thompson and Misses Barnum left Preparation of their own free will or were forced to leave Whiting replied, “I do not think that Misses Thompson and Misses Barnum wished to remain in Preparation or that the people of Preparation wished them to do so.”

Whiting and the sheriff remained at Preparation until the next day when Catherine Thompson, her children, and Mrs. Barnum went to Onawa with a featherbed and a few other household effects.

Thompson remained concealed in Onawa “to await the sitting for the district Court to see if the Grand jury would not take some notice of these proceedings . . . no indictments were returned by the Grand Jury . . . [believing] that my life was in jeopardy I took my family in the night time and, with the assistance of a few friends, made my escape out of the state.”

The Thompson family moved to Neosho, Missouri, where their ninth child was born. In 1860, they returned to St. Louis where Charles attempted to found another religious society. He again turned to the printed word and published a book and the first number of a paper in which he strangely changed his earlier abolitionist leanings to that of pro-slavery. Even though he was forced to leave behind the press through which

83 C. E. Whiting Deposition, SHSI.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Thompson Deposition, SHSI.
88 Thompson Family Papers from correspondence with Virginia Mae Thompson, in possession of author.
Baneemys spoke, he turned again to the printed word as his most powerful tool.

When Samuel Scott first brought the matter of land ownership in Preparation to the Fourth District Court of Iowa on the second Monday of August 1859, Thompson was living in St. Louis. It was there that the depositions of Charles and his brother, Daniel Thompson, were given. Other lengthy depositions were taken at the courthouse in Onawa, Iowa, in fall 1859. Among them were the carefully taken daybook notes of Scott, later presented as evidence of Thompson’s underhanded dealings.\(^9\)

Litigation surrounding the “lands in controversy” lingered in the courts for eight years until December 1866 when Thompson’s conveyances were all declared to be fraudulent and were set aside. The Supreme Court of Iowa ruled that Thompson held the property only as a trustee and not as sole owner.\(^9\)

The property was sold under an order of the court, and the proceeds were divided among the original contributors in ratio to the amount contributed by each. In writing the opinion of the Supreme Court of Iowa, Justice John F. Dillon declared that Charles B. Thompson’s financial transactions were “almost as marvelous as the pretended revelation of Thompson would have been if true.”\(^9\)

By 1879, Thompson had moved to Philadelphia where he published another periodical. Although in 1892 his association with this group was over, he was listed in the Philadelphia directory as C. Blancher Thompson (Rev.). By his death in 1895 most of his eleven children had settled near him. They remembered him as a kindly old gentleman.\(^9\)

When the community at Preparation ended and Thompson left for Missouri, some families left the area, while others decided to wait for the court decision on ownership of land. Population at Preparation had peaked around 1856 with sixty families living there. Two years after the breakup in 1860, only ten families remained in Preparation Township. Others had located nearby at Little Sioux, Pisgah, Magnolia, and Belvidere. These “Baneemyte” and other scattered Saints were visited by early Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS) missionaries E. C. Briggs and W. W. Blair in 1859. Blair wrote that they seemed “like sheep without a shepherd.”\(^9\) After having been “deceived” by Thompson’s rhetoric, members of the “Presbytery of Zion” were in no mood to be converted to yet another religious group. However, some of the more influential members joined the Spring Valley Branch of the Reorganized Church in 1864.\(^9\) Others did not continue any relationship with the Church and were reluctant to admit any connection.

Many family reminiscences of Preparation tended to be apologetic, if indeed they were reported at all. In any event, these former followers of Thompson were not only vindi-

---

90 Samuel Scott Deposition, SHSI.
91 Scott vs. Thompson, et al., SHSI.
93 Internet e-mail correspondence between the author and Alyce Thompson Elliot, great-granddaughter of Charles B. Thompson, May 1999.
95 Early Reorganized Minutes, Book A, 351, 507. Community of Christ Archives.
cated in the Supreme Court of Iowa, but made significant contributions to the RLDS Church after that time. George M. Scott, son of plaintiff Samuel Scott, served as president of the Little Sioux Branch for nearly a quarter of a century and Sheriff Johnson F. Lane’s son Joseph was the first pastor of the Pisgah church. Some remained in western Iowa and saw children and grandchildren grow to adulthood there.

Thompson played dual roles throughout his life. His early success in preaching, writing, and publishing enhanced his ability to lead. As he came to recognize the power of the printed word, he became enamored with his own ability and began to believe his own propaganda. Observing the power of the printed word, he hoped to influence groups along the way, but he was seduced by the idea that he could be financially supported by others. Indeed, Thompson acted both as “Harbinger” and “Humbuggerer.”

The village of Preparation declined over the years and the area that once comprised this site is now filled with rolling hills and rich farmland. The post office and train station are gone, but the “Preparation” name may still be found on a small sign marking the site of the once bustling village and at the entrance of the well-kept cemetery.

---

96 In 1969, the two-acre Preparation town site was sold to the state of Iowa by Martha Perrin as an addition to the adjacent Preparation Canyon State Park, established in the 1930s. *Centennial History of Moorhead, Iowa, 1900–2000*, 16–17.

Roger D. Launius


I wish I could be more positive about _Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise_, but it is astoundingly disappointing. Glen Leonard is a fine historian who has been working on this subject for more than twenty years. This should have been his magnum opus, instead it adds virtually nothing to understanding about the subject and in many areas is a significant step backward. Nearly forty years ago, Robert Flanders published his benchmark study, _Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi_. In that book, Flanders applied many of the themes found elsewhere in Jacksonian American urban history to the Mormon stronghold and emphasized its political and economic development. Unfortunately, it remains the standard work on the subject, although I had hoped that Leonard's study would have superseded it.

The fundamental problem is summarized in Glen Leonard's book title, _Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise_. Nauvoo may have been a beautiful place, as Joseph Smith Jr. thought, but it was never a place of peace. Political, economic, religious, cultural, and social divisions both within and without the church constantly swirled between 1839 and 1846. Some who have spent significant time in Nauvoo, including myself, would conclude that they still exist and rumble just below the surface of a seemingly quiet little town. In addition, there is abundant reason to question the "people of promise" aspect of Glen Leonard's title. Were they a "people" in a unified sense of the term? What promise did they hold?

What the title suggests is that this overview of the history of Nauvoo is a thoroughly faithful construct that seeks to show God working among the Mormons in every aspect of their lives. In essence, it represents a return to an overtly mythic history not seen since the time of Andrew Jensen and B. H. Roberts. In so doing, it significantly reduces the complexity of events, avoids matters that challenge or contradict Mormon myth, views the Mormons as good and their opponents as evil, and all too often ignores the cultural context of the early church. Leonard asserts repeatedly that Nauvoo represented the first major explication of his and his fellow churchgoers' vision of the world. Nauvoo represented for him, and this is what he emphasizes to the exclusion of anything that might be contradictory, the first instance of Mormonism as a new religious tradition substantively different from what had gone before. It was in Nauvoo that Joseph Smith Jr. taught, admittedly to a small group sworn to secrecy, his most unique religious conceptions. In so doing, Leonard suggests, it was at Nauvoo that Joseph Smith Jr. fulfilled his religious mission. With such a perspective, mythic interpretations of the Mormon experience in western Illinois represent the only possibility for this book.

The thesis of this book is that the Nauvoo period was crucial in creating the Church of Jesus

---

2. David E. Miller and Della S. Miller, _Nauvoo: The City of Joseph_ (Santa Barbara, California: Peregrine Smith, 1974) is a much less satisfactory narrative survey, but it does try to explain the social and religious development of the city. It also contains useful sections on land transactions and the operation of city government during its Mormon period but de-emphasizes the political conflict between the Mormons and their neighbors.
Christ of Latter-day Saints as a separate religious tradition. Leonard spends considerable space describing what virtually all but devout Mormons would conclude were bizarre temple rituals and heretical theological conceptions that emerged during the period as uniquely Mormon doctrines. Joseph Smith Jr.'s central role in developing these concepts should not surprise anyone, and Leonard does little to go beyond what is already known about this aspect of the Nauvoo story other than to assert repeatedly that it represented the epitome of God's love for God's people.

The reasons for Leonard's myopic concern with Mormon theology is that the Latter-day Saints do not so much have a theology as they have a history. Confusing theology with history, therefore, requires that believing church members accept a specified set of affirmations that are grounded in the "pure" thoughts and actions of past individuals, especially those of Joseph Smith Jr. Without acceptance of these truths, Mormonism could and probably should fall of its own weight. The perception of truth or falsity about the religion, therefore, rests on what historians say about those who have gone before. Glen Leonard, therefore, is fulfilling the Mormon equivalent of St. Thomas Aquinas by systematizing the Nauvoo "truths" for the faithful.

Unfortunately, this expounding of his thesis leaves the reader wanting, or alternatively frustrated and angry, that the effort is not more sophisticated. As one friend opined about Leonard's Nauvoo, "it is a 'sacred' history of Nauvoo filled with half-truths, unsupported assertions, and Mormon propaganda." And this assessment is kind. Perhaps my difficulty with this work is that I expected so much more from Glen Leonard. He is a scholar of considerable skill who has written excellent history in the past. His overview of LDS history, The Story of the Latter-day Saints, was a singular accomplishment that treads a fine line to be acceptable both to believing Mormons and scholars of religious history. I expected a similar result here.

More to the point, any competent synthesis of the Nauvoo experience of the Mormons in the late 1830s through the mid-1840s must investigate thoroughly and astutely six major aspects of the story that have vexed interpreters since the 1840s:

1. The rise and nurturing of Nauvoo as a political and economic powerhouse in western Illinois. Without question, the Mormons established a theocracy in Nauvoo that threatened the most cherished principles of American democracy. That they intended to expand it was evident in the creation of the secret Council of Fifty of the political kingdom of God, the attempt on the part of Joseph Smith Jr. to gain the American presidency in 1844, and negotiations with several governments for their own independent commonwealth. This aspect of the history of Mormon Nauvoo, more than anything else, led to the conflict of the Mormons with their non-Mormon neighbors.

2. The religious and spiritual life of the inhabitants of Nauvoo. A discussion of this part of the Nauvoo story includes not only the development of unusual theological conceptions—the building of a temple for the practice of secret rituals with a surprisingly close relationship to Masonry, baptism for the dead, and eternal progression to godhood—but also the more mundane expressions of religious devotion.

3. The daily lives of the residents of Nauvoo. How did they live their lives, what kind of work did they do, and how did they spend their leisure time? How were they educated, what did they read, what were their sports, and what philosophies did they embrace or reject and why? What dreams for the future did they have, how did they interrelate as individuals, what were their views on the issues of their time, and what priorities did the community hold? Finally,
were they more alike or different from their non-Mormon contemporaries?

- The origins and development of plural marriage. After the theocratic practices implemented in Nauvoo, nothing was more divisive than the rumors of plural marriage swirling about Hancock County. Numerous permutations of this issue created scandal, outrage, and conflict. One is hard pressed to find positive attributes of its practice anywhere in Nauvoo. Instead, it created a culture of deceit, licentiousness, exploitation of women and some underage girls, and sexual harassment.

- The *Expositor* affair and the murders of Joseph Smith Jr. and Hyrum Smith. Several dissenters from Mormonism’s theological adventures in Nauvoo established the *Expositor* as a rival newspaper to spread the word about what they considered Smith’s apostasy. When Smith used his power to restrict free speech in Nauvoo by ordering the press’s destruction, the act led directly to his incarceration in the Carthage Jail where he was murdered on 27 June 1844.

- The Mormon presidential succession crisis of 1844 and the eventual emigration of many church members from Illinois. The unfolding of this episode represents a difficult tale of diplomatic negotiation, political backstabbing, and failure. It is also the story of those who left Nauvoo for other places. Of course, this included the Mormons who traveled to Utah, but it also included those who refused to go because of belief or circumstance.

So how did Glen Leonard do in dealing with these major areas deserving emphasis?

In the context of politics and economics, his work is rudimentary at best. While Leonard does not ignore the major contours of the story, he fails to probe its essence. At its center, Mormon/non-Mormon relations during the Nauvoo era rested on two differing sets of mythical ideals. Both sets of beliefs were rational from the perspective of those holding them and legitimate within the confines of the two ideologies. Both also presented adherents with philosophical cul de sacs, prohibiting them from achieving coexistence. They had strikingly different visions. As John E. Hallwas has pointed out, the Mormons believed that the good society arose “through a covenant with God that created a people,” while the non-Mormons believed it arose “through a contract among individuals that created a government.” In short, Mormon Nauvoo was “an ambitious theocracy that asserted itself within a Jacksonian social environment deeply devoted to democracy.” When Smith extended his religious ideology into temporal affairs—holding important offices in Nauvoo, controlling its political life, directing the voting behavior of his followers, and planning to establish a political kingdom of God on Earth (with himself in charge)—he placed Nauvoo on a collision course with the non-Mormons in western Illinois. As John Hallwas and I wrote in 1995, “Conflict of some kind was inevitable, and when he condemned dissenters from his movement as enemies and suppressed their civil rights through institutionalized violence, the non-Mormons—politically frustrated and fearing theocratic despotism—resorted to mob action. Other causes, such as lawlessness by some Mormons aimed at the non-believers and economic and social strife, contributed to conflict, but this ideological struggle was central.”

Glen Leonard comes to grips with this aspect of the story only superficially. For example, he downplays the ire created by the Mormons as Joseph Smith Jr. played politics with his voting block. Leonard tells the story of the 1843 Congressional election in which Joseph Smith Jr. promised his support to Cyrus Walker, a Whig from nearby McDonough County, who had provided

---


legal assistance to Smith, most assuredly in exchange for what he believed was Mormon political support. At a meeting in Nauvoo just before the August 1843 election, Smith told his followers to listen to the counsel of his brother about who to vote for, rather than to his own. "Brother Hyrum tells me this morning that he has had a testimony [revelation] to the effect that it would be better for the people to vote for [Joseph P.] Hoge," Walker's opponent in the election, Smith told the Nauvoo congregation, "and I never knew Hyrum to say he ever had a revelation and it failed. Let God speak and all men hold their peace." The Mormon block favoring Hoge probably decided the election, for he was elected by a plurality of only 574 votes but enjoyed a plurality of 1,355 in Hancock County.

Leonard tells this story as a legitimate aspect of Mormon politics, rather than as bald-faced political shenanigans by Joseph Smith Jr. to ensure that Walker lost the election. Block voting has been a difficult aspect of politics in the United States since the birth of the republic and groups that engage in it inevitably draw the hatred of many others. The double-dealing present here, totally ignored by Leonard, just exacerbates this problem. Outsiders viewed it as an abuse of theocratic leaders bent on controlling Hancock County. Joseph Smith Jr.'s course here, and in other instances, deserves serious analysis and criticism, something lacking in this study.

Likewise, Leonard's discussion of the most controversial aspect of Mormon politics, the highly secret Council of Fifty—which had started planning for the creation of a political kingdom of God in America and had ordained Smith as king in a coronation ceremony—is tellingly brief and superficial. He claims that the Council of Fifty was merely "an advisory committee under the jurisdiction of the First Presidency and the Twelve" that was only "symbolic" of a later millennial kingdom of God (page 326). This secret organization was charged with the responsibility of setting up a political kingdom of God on Earth, with Smith as its chancellor. But he stops short of demonstrating his assertion about the benign nature of the Council of Fifty. With all of the countervailing evidence, however, one is forced to conclude that Leonard distorts the record to downplay the Council of Fifty and its central role in the development of Mormon theocracy, Smith's presidential election campaign, church succession, and relocation of the church to the Great Basin.

Why is Leonard so short on this important subject? After all, less startling interpretations of the Council of Fifty and its role in Mormon history have been offered. Collectively, they de-emphasize the interpretation that the Council of Fifty was a shadow theocratic government seeking to overthrow the United States. The only answer I can deduce is that any extended discussion of the

---


Council of Fifty is anathema to Mormon leaders, and it accordingly enjoys short shrift in this semi-official synthesis of the Nauvoo experience. This omission, and others like it, raises questions about the role of *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise* as a major contribution to knowledge.

Glen Leonard does better when he explores the religious and spiritual life of the inhabitants of Nauvoo, but here again the record is incomplete and frighteningly inaccurate in some instances. He engages in a disturbingly linear discussion of theological developments in Nauvoo, always quick to point up the revelatory nature of them, tracing current practices back to the 1840s even when the connections are tenuous. In the process, he draws a direct link from the present-day temple experience, including the recently dedicated Nauvoo Temple, with the early Mormons of the 1840s. The experience was different for both, as anyone with knowledge of the evolution of the temple ceremony would attest, and the major philosophies underlying them may have evolved.

He also fails to discuss connections that others have noted between temple rituals and Masonic practices. There have been several important discussions of this subject in recent years, pointing up the relationships between Mormonism and Masonry rooted in Joseph Smith Jr.'s enthusiasm for the kabala and all things mystical. In all, Leonard's discussion of Masonry in Nauvoo is contradictory and unsatisfying. On the one hand, he takes a conservative position on the lodge's origins among the European trade guilds of the seventeenth century. On the other hand, he explains away parallels between Masonry and temple ordinances introduced in Nauvoo by noting that both go back to common "ancient" origins. Which is it? This is faulty logic; you can't have it both ways. If one read only this account of the origins of temple ceremonies, and the possible connections they might have with Masonry, a misleading story emerges.

The Mormon temple concept as it emerged in Nauvoo seems to have possessed many of the ingredients historians have identified with the various popular fraternal lodges of the era. How many of the theological conceptions that emerged in Mormonism's temple ceremonies resulted from efforts to secure traditional gender roles in a society in flux in Jacksonian America? Was the all-male priesthood headed by Joseph Smith Jr. instituting these ceremonies because of status anxiety?


virtually all the cherished ideals about life and home and family were altered in some way. Mark C. Carnes has argued in a uniquely convincing book that the popularity of fraternal lodges in the Victorian era were motivated at a rudimentary level by the desire to restore order and to resecure the patriarchal authority lost in the Industrial Revolution and its attendant social upheavals. He commented that the centrality of women in the home, and their encroachment into a variety of male social and political concerns, prompted the creation of lodges as a haven from women. “Fraternal members built temples from which women were excluded,” Carnes wrote, “devised myriad secrets and threatened members with fearful punishments if they should ‘tell their wife the concerns of the order,’ and created rituals that reclaimed for themselves the religious authority that formerly reposed in the hands of biblical patriarchs.”

The priesthood, of course, was an all-male club from the founding of the church, but the temple rites accented these special connotations. The secrecy, the ritualistic washings and anointings, the incantations, and the all-night vigils in the Kirtland Temple’s upper rooms bear a striking resemblance to the lodge experiences Carnes analyzed. These commonalities were even more apparent in Nauvoo. The rituals became more complex; the emphasis on secrecy; the preoccupation with Old Testament images, especially those associated with the biblical patriarchs; and the elaborate rites all share linkages to the religion of the lodges so prominent in larger American society. Could similar concerns for status, and security have prompted the development of temple rituals?

One fundamental difference between the lodges and Mormon temple rites bears directly on the study of gender in Mormon history: Joseph Smith Jr. admitted women into the temple. His was an extremely selective admittance, however, and it came only after sixteen months of all-male activity. Entrance to the temple was expanded to both sexes after his death, but it might have not gone so far had he lived. After all, there is good reason to believe that Smith always thought in terms of setting up hierarchies where he was supreme, with a select few disciples placed just beneath him. He was never interested in equality, regardless of gender. Indeed, the idea of eternal exaltation where faithful Mormons would “inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions,


all heights and depths” implies that others must be subservient. The temple rituals, I would argue, always mandated a second-class position for women beneath their priesthood-holding husbands. The mother in heaven concept and the assertion that Mormon women would be queens and priestesses to their husbands that was explicit in Nauvoo Temple ceremonies might well have been attempts to secure a patriarchal hegemony vis-à-vis female Mormons. Perhaps the temple ceremonies of sealing and secret names and entrance into celestial glory only if the husband called were an effort to reinforce traditional gender roles and to ensure the place of the male as the dominant member of society.

Perhaps most Mormons are unwilling to consider this type of analysis in the development of the temple ceremony, and Leonard would probably have found himself in trouble with the keepers of official position had he broached such an approach. Fine! There are other explanations that Leonard might have offered that would be acceptable to believing Mormons. Section 124 of the Doctrine and Covenants may be cited as evidence that the LDS temple ceremony was not derived from Masonry. This section was written on 19 January 1841, more than one year before Joseph became a Mason, yet makes mention of many of the key elements that would later be found in the Nauvoo Temple. These include baptism for the dead (verses 32–33, 39), washings (verse 39), anointings (verse 39), the keys of the holy priesthood (verses 34, 95, 97), memorials of Levitical sacrifices (verse 39), solemn assemblies (verse 39), oracles, conversations, statutes, and judgments (verse 39), ordinances that have been kept hidden (verses 40–41), and the fullness of the priesthood (verse 28). Based on this list, Leonard could have concluded that temple ceremonies emerged without Masonic influence. He could also have argued, as did E. Cecil McGavin: “The Prophet was so busy with Church matters that he never took an active part in lodge work. It seems from the meager records that are extant, that Joseph Smith Jr. attended as many meetings on those two days as he did during the rest of his lifetime [about six total]. Initiated in haste and hurriedly promoted through three degrees, he learned scarcely nothing about the secret practices and elaborate ritual of the Masons.”

Furthermore, Leonard might have argued that Freemasonry had many forms, different branches, and numerous twists on the various rituals. To demonstrate a clear connection, one must be able to trace a specific form to a specific time and place and show a clear transfer of the ritual from Masons to Joseph Smith Jr. The connections made thus far in historical literature are tenuous and only sketchily developed. Glen Leonard chose not to deal with this important subject.

Concerning the daily lives of the residents of Nauvoo, Leonard does a credible job in telling how they lived and worked and played and worshiped. This is the most satisfactory part of his study. He raises some important and provocative questions about the social construction of Nauvoo and the nature of everyday life. He maintains that with all their apartness from mainstream American society that Mormons explicitly established for themselves in 1840s Nauvoo, they still lived their lives very much like those around them. While they may have been ordinary Americans...
Jacksonian era in most respects, Leonard never lets anyone forget that they were Mormons first, and he argues the centrality of religious life to them in Nauvoo. He emphasizes that they did not separate society, economics, politics, and culture from religion in Nauvoo.

Glen Leonard also expends considerable energy explaining the origins and early development of plural marriage in Nauvoo. Once again, it is an overtly mythic story in which there are good and evil actors and essentially no one in between. He plows little new ground on this topic, relying on the work of others, especially Danel Bachman and Todd Compton, and offering a conservative explanation of the practice’s origins. In essence, Joseph Smith Jr. began the practice of plural marriage because it was the will of God. That message had come as early as 1831 and had been practiced in fits and starts over the years, but it was only taught to an inner circle of Joseph Smith Jr.’s lieutenants in Nauvoo. A statement commanding this practice came in 1843, but it was still not well known even among the faithful.19

Some who did know of it were opposed to it. Leonard discusses at length the role that John C. Bennett played in this episode, using the practice of plural marriage to seduce young women in Nauvoo, and dismissing him as a scoundrel and conniver.20 He labels Bennett an apostate who turned from the truth of Mormonism and became one of its most fierce opponents in 1842. The Bennett story has been told and retold in Mormon history circles with considerable glee over the years, perhaps because he was indeed a scoundrel; as F. Mark Mc Kiernan liked to say, there is not an adjective derogatory enough to characterize John C. Bennett.

The same does not hold true for others who opposed plural marriage on moral grounds, but Leonard also characterizes them in essentially the same way as apostates. He never ponders the possibility they may have been motivated by a greater commitment to the gospel than those who went blithely along with Joseph Smith Jr.’s sexual experimentation. In many ways, polygamy served as the litmus test of Joseph Smith Jr.’s prophetic leadership, and he came up wanting as far as such individuals as William Law, a counselor to Joseph Smith Jr. in the First Presidency in the early 1840s, were concerned. Law and other prominent Mormons had much to lose and little gain by dissent, but they left the movement anyway because they were convinced that the organization was departing from the restored gospel.21

Joseph Smith Jr.’s polygamous difficulties occupy only a little of Leonard’s narrative. He discusses briefly the origins of the practice, an encounter characterized by Oliver Cowdery as a “dirty nasty, filthy affair of his and Fanny Alger’s” in 1835.22 This proved only the beginning, Leonard notes, as Joseph Smith Jr. married some thirty-three women, by Todd Compton’s count, before his death in 1844. In every instance, Leonard reminds us, Smith entered the practice because God commanded it. He says little about Smith’s public denials of all charges despite his long practice of taking plural wives and his issuance of a revelation that justified polygamy. Moreover, those who

20 A recent study on the subject offers a more sympathetic portrait of Bennett. See Andrew F. Smith, The Saintly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).
22 The quote is from Oliver Cowdery to Warren A. Cowdery, 21 January 1838, Oliver Cowdery Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
accused him—including William Law—were defamed as "persecutors," "false swearers," and "wolves," whose charges were "of the devil."

In a strikingly overt set of half-truths, unproven assertions, and outright deceptions, Smith delivered a speech on the plural marriage issue in Nauvoo on 26 May 1844, which was deeply mythic. He depicted himself as the innocent leader of "a virtuous and good people," who was surrounded by the wicked. Of course, once the Mormons accepted the myth of persecuted innocence, they were incapable of criticizing Smith's behavior or of detecting his deceptions. Moreover, Smith encouraged them to verify his guiltlessness experientially, by appealing to their deeply held belief in his inherent innocence. As he said: "I am innocent of all these charges, and you can bear witness of my innocence, for you know me yourselves." That is an example of equivocation. The words "innocent" and "innocence" have two different meanings in his statement. What Smith was saying was this: because you know I am inherently innocent (as all Mormons are, as God's chosen people), you therefore know—and can bear witness—that I am innocent of the polygamy charges. Of course, they actually knew no such thing, and he was in fact guilty, but his followers felt they were somehow witnesses to his innocence. Such is the power of myth.

While a thorough discussion of Mormon myth is beyond the scope of this review essay, some commentary is essential to understanding the unfolding of the *Expositor* affair and the death of Joseph Smith Jr. In particular, the myth of innocence, which is ubiquitous in the Mormon documents of this period, reveals that the retreat from American religious pluralism to the theocratic separatist community of Nauvoo represented an escape from moral ambiguity, from the fear of making the wrong choices. As a religious city-state under tight control, Nauvoo was a haven where the followers of Joseph Smith Jr. had their most important choices—what they should do to serve God—made for them. They went on missions, worked on the temple, and served in various church offices at the prophet's direction. Also, he defined their devotion to the Mormon millennium, and their identity as God's chosen people was assured through him. Their innocence was thus guaranteed, and their sense of potential for evil was minimized. As is common in such situations, the threat of evil was projected onto others—in this case the non-Mormons, who were regarded as ungodly enemies. Another way of saying the same thing is that a chosen people always defines itself against an unchosen opposite, and through that mythic dichotomy differences in human culture (beliefs, values) are transmuted into differences in human nature (the good versus the evil). Hence, at Nauvoo the innocent children of God realized their identity through their struggle against the evil followers of Satan, who dominated American society everywhere else except in the city of the Mormons.

24 See also Hallwas and Launius, *Cultures in Conflict*, 111-172.
In addition, Joseph Smith Jr. revealed his deep anxiety about William Law and the Reformed Mormon Church. As the *Expositor* made clear, the dissenters had criticized Smith, not the Mormon people, but the prophet continually told his followers that they were under attack and he was their selfless defender. That strategy was developed precisely because he feared that Law and his new church might succeed in separating more Mormons from his leadership. As Smith said toward the close of his speech, “When I shrink not from your defense, will you throw me away for a new man who slanders you?” Of course, neither Law nor any other dissenter had slandered the Mormon people—nor did the people need any defense, but convinced by such remarks that the wicked were at the gates ready to destroy them, the Mormons rallied around their champion. And Smith soon orchestrated the community’s attack on the new religious group.27

Plural marriage, of course, was responsible for the last dramatic act of Joseph Smith Jr.’s life, the destruction of the *Expositor*, leading directly to his assassination by a mob in Carthage, Illinois, on 27 June 1844. These dissidents worked to expose what they considered the evils of the church in this newspaper. On 7 June 1844, they issued the paper’s only number, and it contained a number of affidavits about the practice of plural marriage by church officials. At a fundamental level these dissidents were protesting what they viewed as erosion of the rights of the Mormons to direct the church. The editors affirmed that they “know of a surety, that the religion of the Latter Day Saints as originally taught by Joseph Smith, Jr., which is contained in the Old and New Testament, Book of Covenants, and Book of Mormon, is true; and that the pure principles set forth in those books, are the immutable and eternal principles of Heaven, and speaks a language which, when spoken in truth and virtue, sinks deep into the heart of every honest man.” Although accepting the purity of the movement at the beginning, these Saints asked Smith to function more democratically within the church. They claimed that he had become a tyrant who did as he pleased without the regard for others that a man of God must have. They added that he was mixing religion and politics, even to the extent of declaring himself a candidate for the presidency of the United States in the 1844 election. Furthermore, they complained that Smith had started teaching doctrines, plural marriage was only one of them, which were contrary to the gospel of God they had accepted in joining the church. Any who opposed Smith’s actions, they suggested, were dealt with harshly by ecclesiastical authorities. Moreover, the *Expositor* challenged the myth of persecuted innocence on which the gathering of the Saints at Nauvoo had been based. If the zionic community had serious shortcomings, as the publishers asserted, Nauvoo was part of an imperfect America after all—not a bastion of virtue in a corrupt nation, but a place where moral, social, and political problems existed and public pressure could bring change. Hence, the opposition newspaper offered a view of the community that the prophet could not tolerate. His concept of Nauvoo as a God-led, separatist theocracy was at stake.28

He does note that the publication of the *Expositor* raised a furor in the community, and Smith, acting as mayor of Nauvoo, ordered that city authorities silence the press. Leonard fails to conclude what only seems logical, that the purpose of the city council meeting where the decision was made to destroy the *Expositor* was neither seeking truth nor administering justice, but one convened to eliminate critics and to purge from the community an influence that was heretical. Nothing else that the Mormons did revealed so convincingly to the non-Mormon community around Nauvoo the threat to democracy present in Joseph Smith Jr.’s theocratic government.

More important, during the proceedings all sorts of slanderous remarks were made about the

---

28 *The Expositor*, Nauvoo, Illinois (7 June 1844.)
publishers that were unrelated to the contents of the *Expositor* and unsupported by evidence. That reveals much about the Mormon mythic consciousness for which guilt and innocence were matters of belief, not of evidence. Moreover, the entire council meeting was deeply influenced by psychological projection. Aspects of the self—and of the community, approved by the conscious self—that were disturbing to the Mormon mind (such as multiple sexual relationships and false swearing) were attributed to the dissenters, thereby relieving the inner tensions of the accusers. When council member Orson Spencer said, "We have found these men covenant breakers with God, with their wives!! &c.," he unconsciously put his finger on the repressed anxieties that haunted the Mormon mind. The council meeting was, in fact, an act of blame making, a psychological purgation or a casting out of "iniquity" by attributing it to others. When council member Levi Richards exclaimed about the press, "Let it be thrown out of this city," he was expressing symbolically what everyone really wanted, the casting out of the dissenters for whom the press had spoken. Within two days of the council meeting, that had been accomplished.29

William Law immediately went to Carthage, the seat of Hancock County, to swear out a complaint against Smith for inciting a riot and unlawfully destroying property. State authorities arrested Smith on this charge, as well as some other charges drummed up later, and while incarcerated in the county jail, a mob lynched him and his brother on 27 June 1844. In an irony of the foremost magnitude, whether one believes that all the charges levied by William Law against Smith matters not, the prophet was vulnerable to the mob because he had been arrested for exercising injudiciously the very power Law accused him of exercising injudiciously.30

Leonard, instead, offers a ritualized recitation of the murders of Joseph Smith Jr. and Hyrum Smith. It is a solid account, of course, but decidedly within the genre of the standard Mormon faith story. He characterizes the assassinations as a sealing of the brothers' testimony in martyrdom. And their followers were tried and found acceptable in the crucible of this tragedy.

Finally, Glen Leonard deals with the succession question and the removal of the Mormons from Nauvoo following the death of their founding prophet. He seeks to be fair and evenhanded in this process, but always in this narrative I have the impression that Leonard viewed Brigham Young's leadership as inevitable. To his credit he spends considerable space talking about alternative directions, and seeks to give a sound presentation of the Reorganized Church's position on the matter. Of course, few issues have been more controversial than the nature and practice of presidential succession in the Latter Day Saint movement. The individuals caught up in these various episodes have invariably found them trying and disruptive to the church.

Despite the conflict between the Restoration churches over succession, recent historians have found that the issue was far from "cut and dried" at the time of Joseph Smith Jr.'s death, casting doubt on the legitimacy of one method of succession over another as the appropriate means of determining the "truth" of any given faction. The issue was most assuredly unclear and based on prophetic declaration, organizational evolution, priesthood authority, and scriptural precedents. There were at least eight ways in which an individual within Mormonism could legitimately claim succession to the presidency. In a brilliant essay on the 1844 succession crisis, D. Michael Quinn concluded that "by the summer of 1844 [at the death of Joseph Smith Jr.] there was no explicit outline

---

29 *Nauvoo (Illinois)* Neighbor (19 June 1844).
of presidential succession in print. From the confusion of this issue, it would be easy to see how so many different individuals and eventually Restoration churches, each with legitimate claims, could come forward to assert that they were the continuation of the early Latter Day Saint church. The Reorganized Church was only one such organization that drew some of its legitimacy from these methods. Two basic approaches to succession were used by the Reorganization in the nineteenth century to legitimize its position: by a descendant of the prophet and by special appointment. Both came together for Reorganization leaders to point to Joseph Smith III as the appropriate successor in the period after 1844.

From the perspective of the Reorganized Church, there can be little doubt that Joseph Smith Jr. believed in the right of lineage, as “Old Testament” an idea as ever there was, and numerous statements abound about this particular aspect of his belief system. Using scriptural precedent, Smith called numerous members of his family to high priesthood offices in the church. These included making his father presiding patriarch; his brother, Hyrum, a counselor in the First Presidency; his brother, William, a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, others brothers and brothers-in-law various other General Authorities, and cousins of both near and distant relations such as Amasa Lyman and George A. Smith were made apostles. In fact, there is considerable reason to believe that Smith perceived that the church hierarchy should be an extended family and encouraged the intermarriage of the families of leading officials. In this environment, it would be difficult to argue that Joseph Smith Jr. did not wish to see his sons eventually enter the church’s leadership.

The lineal succession doctrine was so well understood and accepted that in 1863, when some members of the Reorganized Church were demanding the replacement of Joseph Smith III with David H. Smith, his youngest brother, in the prophetic office, David responded with one of his most eloquent poems arguing that this was not God’s will. Lineal succession, he advocated, extended by order of birth. In the poem “A Word of Advice to Those Who Look for Me to Be the Prophet,” published in the True Latter Day Saints’ Herald, David wrote in part:

Joseph is the Chosen Prophet
Well ordained in God’s Clear sight;
Should he lose it by transgression,
Alexander has the right.

Joseph, Alexander, David,
Three remaining pillars still;
Like the three remaining columns
Of the Temple on the hill!
Joseph’s star is full and shining,
Alexander’s more than mine;
Mine is just below the mountain,
Bide its time and it will shine.

33 David H. Smith, “A Word of Advice to Those that Look to Me to Be the Prophet,” True Latter Day Saints’ Herald 3 (April 1863): 199.
Alexander, the middle brother between Joseph and David, was, according to the doctrine of lineal succession, the next in line for the presidential office, not David.

While Glen Leonard emphasizes the lineal succession argument in discussing the Reorganized Church, he spends less time on the other major succession mode used in the church, special appointment through prophetic revelation. Joseph Smith III, however, consistently emphasized the divine aspects of his call to preside over the Reorganized Church. He spoke and wrote about his development between 1844 and 1860, especially about his spiritual experiences confirming the rightness of his place at the head of the church. His memoirs, his editorials in the church newspaper, and his private writings attest to the importance of these events heralding Smith’s commitment to a life of prophetic ministry.34

These concerns and angles of vision contributed to Smith’s emphasis on the role of appointment by revelation through the previous president as a significant determinant of succession in the Reorganized Church. This was one of the eight methods of succession identified by D. Michael Quinn. Although others had advanced this method of succession (indeed Joseph Smith Jr. had designated several different people to succeed him at various stages of his career), in the case of Joseph III, it revolved around blessings on him by his father. There does not seem to be much question that Joseph Jr. did bless his son to succeed him; too many references to the incident are extant.35 But numerous factors came into play to prohibit his succession in 1844, and Leonard does mention one, the fact that he was a boy not yet in his teens and could never have provided the church the strong leadership it required in that troubled period.

An area Leonard does emphasize, overemphasize from my perspective, is what comes across as a straightforward acceptance of Brigham Young as president and his role in leading the Mormons west. The debate was intense and the politics brutal in the latter half of 1844 and on through 1846. No fewer than fifteen different groups emerged out of Mormonism during the succession crisis of 1844, each legitimately claiming one or more of eight methods of succession.36 Indeed, Sidney Rigdon, who had been a leader in the church since 1830 and who had broken with Joseph Smith Jr. over the attempted seduction of his daughter in plural marriage, returned to Nauvoo in August 1844 to challenge for the overall leadership of the church. In a climactic public meeting on 8 August, Brigham Young was able to secure effective control of the administrative machinery in Nauvoo, but only in Nauvoo.37

Problems over the church’s leadership did not end there. Young never captured the majority of the church’s membership. He did gain the support of most Nauvooans, but in January 1844 Joseph Smith Jr. boasted that the church had some 200,000 adherents. Only about 50,000 went to Utah during the first decade of colonization. Even if we assume that Smith’s count was inflated by a factor of two, then some 50,000 Mormons chose to do something other than to accept the leader-

34 I cannot allocate the space in this review essay to a detailed examination of this issue, but comments on the important spiritual events that led him to the Reorganized Church in the 1850s have been described in Roger D. Launius, Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 97–114.
37 This is one of the pivotal events of Mormon history. It has been recorded from the perspectives of the two chief protagonists in biographies. See F. Mark McKiernan, The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer, 1793–1876 (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1971), 125–131; Leonard J. Arrington, Brigham Young: American Moses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 113–117.
ship of Brigham Young. This dichotomy in the church’s membership would suggest deep fissures in the level of acceptance that Brigham Young enjoyed. And even in the church’s hierarchy, there were important divisions. Three of the Twelve Apostles refused to accept Young’s leadership and went elsewhere. The presiding patriarch, several members of the Nauvoo Standing High Council, and the only surviving member of the First Presidency also rejected Young’s control. Regardless of the religious beliefs of the historian, this is not a story that should ever be told as a fait accompli.

In the end there is a wealth of detail in this lengthy book on the history of Nauvoo. It is not the historiographical triumph that I had hoped. Glen Leonard seems to attribute virtually all positive developments in both Nauvoo’s history and the evolution of the church to inspired leadership by Joseph Smith Jr. or Brigham Young and to the righteousness of the rank and file. Any negative developments, and there were many, Leonard too often blames on “apostates” and anti-Mormons with sinister intentions. In that context, he accepts virtually without question, the Mormon myth of persecuted innocence. Leonard’s Nauvoo is far too black and white for any historian to accept, and I would hope that the non-historians interested in the subject would be more discerning as well. Leonard also steps away from the role of the historian as analyzer to moralize on the tragic results of sin and rebellion against Joseph Smith Jr.’s authority.

At sum, for all of his knowledge, Leonard fails to appreciate that Nauvoo represented so much more for Mormonism than just a stage on which Joseph Smith Jr. pronounced his esoteric religious conceptions. To a great extent, the Nauvoo experience represented a conflicting set of ideals. It was both triumph and tragedy, the lessons of which Mormons might apply. They might be attracted to the success and image of the city; it was the closest approximation the church had to the ideals of Zion carried in scripture and doctrine. The political power and secular authority might also serve as reminders of the ultimate goal of the church, the merging of church and state into a benevolent theocratic democracy. At the same time, all should be repelled by the darker side of political power—corruption, influence-peddling, and the hardness of political choices. Much the same was true when considering the other aspects of the Nauvoo experience in such realms as the development of theology, the growth and development of church institutions and ecclesiastical quorums, the treatment of individuals toward others both in terms of group loyalty and dissident elements, and the promotion of peace versus the warrior mentality. It would be appropriate to consider Nauvoo in all of these contexts in future studies. I await the time when a truly benchmark history of the Nauvoo experience will appear.
Book Reviews

Paul Edwards’s Angel Acronym is designed specifically for those who are familiar with his personality, his methods of expression, and his tendency to “disturb the waters.” It probably will have little appeal to a general readership and may be disappointing to those who are expecting a mystery. The subtitle, “Volume 1 in the Non-Prophet Murder Series” is the not-too-subtle hint of what will follow. It is portrayed as fiction but is actually a portrayal of friction. The usual disclaimer is expanded to say that “any resemblance to persons, procedures, pieces of paper, policies, and plots, living or dead, is purely coincidental—especially the character of Toom Taggart.” This seems to invite the reader to identify with the people and setting.

Accuracy is evident in the use of sites, institutions, organizations, and history. The reader is thus inclined to suspect that the presentation of the other ideas is also accurate. One may feel that the Edwards analysis is based on truth but disguised by this iconoclast who won’t pull a painful tooth because the cavity would be an embarrassment.

The mystery is introduced in the concoction of a fake manuscript that was or was not inserted in the Book of Mormon. These pages were lost and found and the possession of them is the crux of the “murder.” The composition of the story is compatible with typical mystery genre and contains a rather technological solution of the identification of the murderer but leaves a question to the location of those original mystery pages that may lead to volume two in the series. There is a minor sexual reference that adds nothing of consequence to the story.

Toom Taggart is the “good-guy” detective with intellectual skills but ambivalent faith in the institution of the Community of Christ organization. Other protagonists include Pincer and Russ. Pincer can be tagged by one quote, “The myths are what have kept us alive as a church and we’re sterilizing them as if they were bacteria” (91). Toom, as the central character, is less easily distinguished by his portrayed thoughts and dialog. In relation to the Mormon church and its “dabbling at historical sites,” he says, “And speaking of historical reconstruction on the hoof, how long before they make an offer . . . for the Kirtland Temple (92). Toom is shown with some strengths in decision making, but he wavers in clear presentation of his inner beliefs while searching for the solution as to what his final stand will be. In the meantime, he is outmaneuvered by church officials who are portrayed as self-serving hypocrites. The story is a critique of hierarchal-intended incompetency. Toom says, “I believe we’ve gone way beyond mediocre. We’ve become the standard against which all others might judge incompetence” (119). He also notes, “The organizational disquiet comes, I think, from the fact that we no longer worship. The closest we come is to memorializing.” He continues, “What I believe in, and what I think most of us believe in, is not the same as what the organization believes in or talks about or proclaims” (122). Russ sums up their conversations with, “That’s why you stick with it even when you don’t like some of it. You’re decent—but it’s not the sacredness that calls you.” But much more damning is the Toom question, “Why the big daddies—the apostles, I guess—are really believers, how can that be?” Russ’s an-
swer is, "It's a job—a pretty good one, a way to use their skills, ply their trade—and their reward for financial freedom, power recognition. . . . They're loyal, but they'd be lured away fairly easily if another environment proved to be user-friendly and offered more strokes. I believe Edwards states his own position (worded by Russ), "My heart is still in the backwater of their history, but they don't own me anymore" (153).

A subplot concerns Toom refusing to write a book on angels and the Aaronic ministry of angels. He vehemently declines the task but the book is issued under his name through conniving of leadership and a faithful (?) secretary. The textbook on angels turns out to be a hodgepodge of writing that has been done through the years and is highly touted. Toom does not have the strength of character to refute his authorship, thus "going along" with the bosses. The date of issue was chosen as April 6, 2003, and in itself is a tweak of the historical background of Mormonism.

There are many references to the proclaimed history and its influence on membership, the leaders, and the world. Any reader with the persistence to read the whole book will be mystified by the contents and intent. However, it may be a test of "faith" and a measure of "why" one espouses the Restoration (no matter what church name a person is now under). Possibly that is the basic reason for Paul Edwards having penned this "different" book.

Norma Anne Holik
Independence, Missouri


I first became interested in the Mountain Meadows Massacre while studying the military career of James Henry Carleton and the writings of Juanita Brooks. Will Bagley has, through his recently published book, put it all into a proper historical context for me and for other scholars of the American West.

Being a researcher myself, I am always interested in authors' source materials. Mr. Bagley has built his study on a large number of both published and unpublished original sources that are spread over several depositories in a number of states. Many of the authors cited are known to me through my own research. He has used their works properly and without bias or the pre-conceived perceptions that sometimes have hurt researchers in Latter Day Saint historiography. I was particularly pleased to note the use of Major Carleton's official reports and his short essay on Mormons as reprinted in The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. I was also pleased to see that there was good use of specific Internet sites, too often missing from current historical research.

Bagley also makes good use of secondary works. His use of the groundbreaking works of Juanita Brooks was of particular interest. He acknowledges her studies and gives her due credit. It might have been appropriate to comment on her address before the Fancher Party Memorial Service on the one hundredth anniversary of the Massacre, as reprinted in William

The book is very well written. Once begun, it is truly difficult to put aside. Few historical monographs can boast of that quality. Bagley writes the story clearly and documents all of his conclusions. The number of endnotes is prodigious and informative. It might have served his research readers if the notes appeared at the bottom of each page as footnotes, rather than the end of the book, but that’s a trivial point and does in no way deter from the book’s quality. His research goes well beyond anything else written on the subject, closes loopholes that have been open for many years, dispels old rumors, and arrives at new and, in some cases, startling revelations, not the least of which was the involvement of the Mormon leader, Brigham Young.

There are two very interesting statements that are worth quoting here. Taken together, they summarize the author’s personal attachment to his topic and the recognition that sometimes good people do bad things.

The murders at Mountain Meadows raise larger questions about the human condition, particularly how decent men can, while acting on their best and firmest beliefs, commit a great evil. We must not forget that humanity is capable of both great evil and enlightened heroism—and we should note the conditions that inspire both. This work attempts to do just that, as honestly and [as] accurately as possible. In this quest, I share the hope of my forebears: The truth is mighty and will prevail.

All students of Western American History, as well as those involved in Latter Day Saint history, would do well to add this volume to their libraries, it has certainly earned its place in mine.

Henry H. Goldman
Huntington Beach, California

---


The purpose of this book is to document and describe all the houses in which Brigham Young or his immediate family resided. The book is an enjoyable, informative read, complemented with many black-and-white illustrations of the changing architectural and environmental landscape of Latter-day Saint (LDS) history. Of particular interest are photographs of some of the still existing carpentry work created by Brigham Young when he lived as a young man in New York state, engravings of important landmarks of the journey across the plains, and contemporary photographs of no longer standing Salt Lake City structures, such as the Gardo House.

Starting off with a helpful introductory chapter by Jeffrey Johnson on the details of Brigham Young’s marriages and wives, the book, in a series of essays, then chronicles more than fifty residences that Brigham Young called home from his birth in Vermont to his death in
the Lion House in Salt Lake City. Along the way, the reader catches glimpses of the LDS community from a domestic and civic perspective. We learn, for instance, from Judy Dykman and Colleen Whitley about the difficult material requirements for crossing the plains, and that many desperate families ignored them by necessity and suffered accordingly on their journeys. We sense some of the daily rhythms of rural family life when Hyde describes Young's Chase Mill farm.

From this perspective, we also see the long journey of a man who started his adult life as a boarder and ended it in the midst of building a house purported to be among the most magnificent residences between Illinois and California. As would be expected in a project of this scope and purpose, the reader never really gets a clear sense of the inner person at the heart of the story. Instead, we witness the communal creative and practical energy sparked and sustained by him. Young was an able carpenter—as noted in the preface—his most cherished titles were "carpenter, painter, and glazier" (viii). He was a man living in a community and a period that regarded the home as not only the foundation of society, but as a foreshadowing of heaven. Though for most of his life Young did not have what we would consider to be the ideal, physical home, one of his life's driving purposes was to create ideal, home-centered communities. Almost all the essays either directly or indirectly highlight this central paradox of Young's life history. It would have been fascinating to hear even more on this subject.

As a by-product of these investigations, the book also elucidates the gradual but steady emergence of historical, biographical interest within the LDS community. The first chapters describe—often hypothetically—the early homes of Young. Documentary evidence is scarce. By the time Young had risen to prominence and the LDS community had time to consider his origins, most of his childhood contemporaries were gone or had forgotten the details. Move forward a century and his last dwelling place is a meticulously restored museum documented in essays dedicated to establishing a comprehensive domestic history of Young.

Susanna Morrill
Chicago, Illinois

By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion.


Since the late-nineteenth century the modern historical–critical methods of biblical scholarship have been taken seriously in much of American Protestantism. Like the Protestant fundamentalists, Latter Day Saints of all branches were reluctant to embrace "modernism," possibly because it threatened some fundamental Mormon teachings. Church members have
been especially slow in engaging in historical—critical scholarship on the Book of Mormon, perhaps because research too often leads to the conclusion that Joseph Smith was the author rather than the translator of the book that “launched a new world religion.”

For Mormons, the Book of Mormon has always been an important sign of Joseph Smith’s prophetic calling, yet from the beginning of the Restoration movement until recently, the founding document of the Mormon religion has not been used a lot by the faithful. We knew the book was true, but many of us had not bothered to read it. This changed for the Latter-day Saints (LDS) during the presidency of Ezra Taft Benson (1985–1994) who gave “unprecedented attention and respect” to the Book of Mormon and warned that an 1832 condemnation for neglecting the book was still in force (Givens, 241).

At about the same time that the LDS Church was lifting up the Book of Mormon, some members of both the LDS and Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS)—now Community of Christ—churches were applying historical—critical methods to the study of the book and challenging traditional Mormon understandings of this “most perfect book,” as Joseph Smith modestly called it.

In recent years, Signature Books has played the leading role in bringing historical—critical Book of Mormon scholarship to the attention of the Latter Day Saint community. *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* is their third collection of essays on the subject in recent years. In 1990, Signature published *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture*, edited by Dan Vogel. Six of these essays concerned the Book of Mormon. Two years later, Brent Metcalf edited *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*. Terryl Givens, the author of the other book under review here, agrees with Louis Midgley that the 1992 Metcalf collection was “the most sophisticated attack” on the Book of Mormon (145). *American Apocrypha* should be seen as supplementing the earlier volumes.

*By the Hand of Mormon*, written by Terryl Givens, is extremely well researched and well written. Much of the book deals with the importance of the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the search for evidence from Mesoamerica, and the theology of the book. His coverage of these topics is thorough. This will be an important source for serious Book of Mormon students for a long time.

When I began reading Givens’s book, I saw no mention of his religious affiliation. I had not seen his name in Mormon studies before, and in the opening chapters, he sounded like a detached outsider. So I was delighted that Oxford University Press had published a full-length treatise on the Book of Mormon. But as I read further, I began to notice that Givens tends, like Hugh Nibley, “to give the Book of Mormon the benefit of the doubt” (124). Finally I concluded that he has to be a Mormon—a and that Oxford had let him hide his religious identity. Now I learn that he is not only a member, but is currently in his second year as the bishop of his local ward. I still felt fine, because we Mormons have always appreciated it when secular publishers release histories written by scholars affiliated with the Mormon community.

Givens suggests that Dan Vogel’s 1990 collection, *The Word of God* “is just one example in a rising tide of revisionist essays on the Book of Mormon, authored largely by Mormon dissidents” (167). I wondered on what basis a retired RLDS apostle (Geoffrey Spencer), a retired RLDS Church historian (Dick Howard), and the current World Church Secretary (Bruce Lindgren) are considered “dissidents.”
Givens views non-orthodox scholars with skepticism. David P. Wright is not a mere skeptic, he is a “determined” skeptic (156). Edward H. Ashmont’s article is only “seemingly impressive” (135), Book of Mormon anachronisms cited by scholars are “apparent anachronisms” (173), and Sterling McMurrin was a “gadfly” (153). Givens says Thomas Stuart Ferguson had “completely renounced his faith in the Book of Mormon,” but his evidence is Ferguson saying only that he had “lost faith in Joseph Smith as one having a pipeline to deity” (255, note 136). Some Latter Day Saints reject the Book of Mormon as historical yet accept it as scripture. It is unfair for Givens to characterize them as people who regard Joseph Smith’s religious contribution as “useless and mischievous” and the church’s founders as “a corrupt bunch of religious sociopaths’ enmeshed in illicit sex, graft, deceit, and duplicity” (178).

Givens inaccurately claims that the RLDS Church (now Community of Christ) has moved beyond de-emphasis on the Book of Mormon to “virtual repudiation” of the book and based on a highly inaccurate article by Diane Butler Christensen in the 15 September 1991 Utah County Journal (Provo). Givens claims that the pastor of the Orem congregation was removed from his position for emphasizing the Book of Mormon and that he was warned to cease mentioning Joseph Smith’s name from the pulpit” (183). Based on my own studies of the RLDS schism, including the Orem branch, I find Givens totally inaccurate regarding the Orem branch. The reasons for the dismissal were other than those stated by the deposed pastor.

Givens labels Fawn Brodie’s biography of Joseph Smith as a “psychohistory” (161). Although Brodie much later became known for her psychobiographies of Thomas Jefferson and Richard Nixon, her 1945 biography of Joseph Smith was not in that category. Her second edition in 1971 was almost unchanged except for a twenty-one–page supplement that did delve briefly into psychological analysis of the Mormon martyr. Givens becomes more and more the apologist as the work progresses. He tends to put labels like “excellent” (300, note 65) or “important” (210) on orthodox writings. He contends that “naturalizing the origins of the Book of Mormon is to emasculate its efficacy as Mormon scripture” (182). Didn’t the early Protestant fundamentalists make the same charge with regard to the modernists’ conclusions about the Bible?

Givens is impressed with orthodox LDS scholars use of “chiasms” as evidence for the antiquity of the Book of Mormon. But the fact that the Book of Mormon sometimes uses a literary device also found in the Bible, especially in Isaiah, does not seem to me to be weighty evidence that it is an ancient document. Nor is the apparent existence of a variety of literary styles in the Book of Mormon. Since the Book of Mormon copies about one-third of Isaiah, and relies on other parts of the Bible, as well as other sources, possibly Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews, it should be no surprise that a variety of styles are found in the book.

Givens ignores some of the tough issues in Book of Mormon scholarship. Absent are discussions of the racial views and the apparent anti-Catholicism in the book. Also absent is a discussion of its patriarchal worldview, wherein only a handful of women are mentioned by name in the entire book.

Such defensiveness of Mormon orthodoxy is not to be found in the nine essays in American Apocrypha. Metcalf and Vogel suggest in the introduction that if the Book of Mormon was a history of Hebrew migration to America it would have been verified by now (vii). David P. Wright contends that the Book of Mormon’s Isaiah is intricately and fully tied
to the King James Version (157). Its language, Joseph’s revisions of passages where the King James Version had italicized words, the King James Version’s translation errors retained in the Book of Mormon’s Isaiah, and other factors support Wright’s contention that Joseph Smith wrote Isaiah into the Book of Mormon. The most serious problem, of course, is the fact that much of the Isaiah material used in the Book of Mormon was written after Lehi allegedly departed from the Old World in 600 B.C.E. But Givens labels this issue as part of “the notorious authorship questions that touch on Isaiah scholarship” (136).

Few, if any, are better acquainted with early Mormon sources than co-editor, Dan Vogel, who authored two of the nine essays. He critiques Richard L. Anderson’s conclusion that the eleven witnesses’ published testimonies “must be taken at face value” (81). Vogel concludes there is ample evidence—from David Whitmer and Martin Harris—that “their vision was internal and subjective” (89). In his other essay, he challenges Richard Bushman, Michael Quinn, Blake Ostler, and Daniel C. Peterson on whether the Book of Mormon is anti-Masonic, with Vogel arguing that it is.

The publication in this volume of Thomas W. Murphy’s “Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics” threatens to cost the author his membership in the LDS Church, as news stories in major U.S. papers reported in December 2002. Murphy finds no DNA evidence that links Native American Indians to ancient Israelites: “to date no intimate genetic link has been found between ancient Israelites and indigenous Americans, much less within the time frame suggested by the Book of Mormon” (48). Scott Dunn’s essay suggests that the process known as “channeling” or “automatic writing” provides the best model for understanding the translation of the Book of Mormon (33). Automatic writing is “the ability to write or dictate text in a relatively rapid, seemingly effortless and fluent manner with no sense of control over the content” (18). Dunn cites highly regarded writers such as Charlotte Bronte and Pearl Curran, who used this method.

George Smith’s essay discusses how B. H. Roberts, sometimes seen as the greatest intellectual in the first century of Mormonism, became very skeptical of the orthodox claims for the Book of Mormon. In later years of his life, Roberts continued to publicly defend the book while his private studies produced serious doubts as to its historicity (133). He shared his research with the LDS General Authorities and was frustrated that their replies were testimonies that had no relevance to his research.

Edward Firmage Jr. wrote a personal story of his beginning as a fan of Hugh Nibley. However, as a result of close reading of the Book of Mormon text he, over time, lost faith in the book as an ancient document.

For this reviewer, the two essays that were refreshingly new were those by Susan Staker and by Robert Price, the latter the only non-Mormon author. Staker looks at the importance of the concept of “seer” in the Book of Mormon. She notes that there is “no continuous line of church leadership or civic leadership” in the Book of Mormon, but there is one unbroken line through seer characters who pass records from one generation to the next and are consistently portrayed as conduits for God’s power and secrets” (236). She notes that Mosiah 8:15 asserts that “a seer is greater than a prophet” and controls access to God’s secrets (239). Mosiah 8:17 continues: “But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come; and by them shall all things be revealed” (239). Is it any wonder that Book of Mormon fanatic Jeff Lundgren, consumed with a desire to prove himself, identified more with the title of “seer” than that of “prophet”? Staker’s footnote comment on Harold
Bloom should have been included in the text: Bloom’s “admiration for and self-identification with Smith’s audacity leads him to overlook just how male-identified Smith’s imaginative world is” (272, note 30).

Robert M. Price’s essay proposes looking at the Book of Mormon as pseudepigrapha “scriptural texts penned under the name of an ancient author” (327). The book of Daniel in the Hebrew Bible and the Pastoral Epistles in the New Testament would be examples. Faced with a closed canon, Joseph Smith penned the story of the Nephites, Lamanites, and Jaredites in the name of ancient authors, in order to claim authority for his text. The Book of Mormon presents Mormon Christianity as not merely a restoration of the primitive church, but as “an improvement on the original” (353).

This reviewer found these essays thought provoking. Others will see them as provoking. Several of these essays, especially those by Dunn, Staker, and Price, do not fit the label as “attacks” on the Book of Mormon that Givens and Midgley applied to the earlier Signature Books collection of essays edited by Metcalf. Givens doesn’t say that the Book of Mormon is historical, but By the Hand of Mormon is a lengthy, though subtle, defense of Mormon orthodoxy regarding the Book of Mormon. I doubt that his stake president will schedule a disciplinary hearing for him.

It is good that the appearance of Givens’s book would coincide with Signature Books’ publication of American Apocrypha. Let the Book of Mormon debate continue.

William D. Russell
Lamoni, Iowa

Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith. Gary James Bergera.

Conflict in the Quorum is an exhilarating book about “interpersonal conflict and group dynamics” within the ruling body of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) during the first part of the nineteenth century (vii). The featured personalities in this compelling history are the members of the LDS hierarchy, particularly church president Joseph Smith Jr. and apostles Orson Pratt and Brigham Young. Gary Bergera refutes the belief that “harmony prevails with the First Presidency and the Council of Twelve Apostles” (vii).

Orson Pratt and Brigham Young are the chief protagonists in this drama. In the author’s judgment, Pratt, one of early Mormonism’s foremost intellectuals, constantly questioned established church dogma, while Brigham Young, by virtue of his position as church president emphasized a “dynamic theology” that downplayed any evident “contradictions” in the religion. Not surprisingly, these two self-assured men clashed over many theological issues. Pratt desired a religion that stressed “love, mercy, justice, and knowledge” (92), one that fostered gaining further knowledge, while Young’s teachings focused more on staying the course with traditional Mormon canon.

Initially, the principle of plural marriage tried Orson Pratt’s faith, causing him to be at
odds with Joseph Smith Jr. and other early Latter-day Saint leaders. Eventually Pratt reconciled himself to polygamy, eventually marrying several wives. Having gotten past that obstacle, however, the often-recalcitrant apostle frequently chose a path that brought him into conflict with Brigham Young.

The two frequently battled over what was acceptable church doctrine. Pratt, the intellectual, often dwelled on the mysteries of God, while Young, doggedly the religion’s standard bearer, eschewed such speculation leaning instead toward doctrinal conservatism. Interestingly, this leading promoter of polygamy comes off as a conservative when judged against Orson Pratt. Their conflict erupted in earnest while Pratt served as the editor of the *Seer*, a Washington, D.C.,-based Mormon periodical. As editor of the newspaper, Pratt speculated on such topics as the “pre-existence of man” and the “nature of God” (98). Unfortunately, Orson Pratt’s published views in the *Seer* did not coalesce with those taught by Brigham Young. In fact, the *Seer* often contained far-reaching views (penned by Pratt) that were “veiled rebuttals” of Brigham Young’s teachings (99). At a private prayer meeting of the LDS General Authorities during the mid-1850s, Young reproached Pratt for teaching false doctrine. Then, in March 1857, Young openly admonished “our brother philosopher Orson Pratt” for espousing false doctrine (131).

With *Conflict in the Quorum*, Gary Bergera serves up Mormon intellectual history at its finest. In this book, the ideas of Orson Pratt and Brigham Young, and to a lesser degree that of Joseph Smith, receive scholarly, balanced treatment. The intellectual-versus-traditional controversy within the nineteenth-century LDS Church as spelled out in Bergera’s work may, intentionally or not, ring true for today’s students of Latter-day Saint history. Anyone currently engaged in Mormon studies will be well rewarded by reading this fine book.

M. Guy Bishop
Woods Cross, Utah


Grant H. Palmer’s concise and well-documented anthology of scholarship from the New Mormon History focuses on the traditional understandings of Mormon origins. Scholars will find no new information or previously undocumented sources. However, Palmer stated that his audience is “church members [LDS] who have not followed the developments in church history during the last thirty years.” His goals are to: (1) introduce the New Mormon History, and (2) provide an understanding of “historians and religious teachers like myself.” For such an ambitious purpose, the book is seriously flawed.

First, the book fails to introduce the New Mormon History. Palmer presents what he has decided is the “near-consensus” of historical research in Mormon history. He fails to explain the methods of historians and their limitations and uncertainties as D. Michael Quinn did in
the “Editor’s Introduction” to *The New Mormon History.*

Second, the task and the focus of the historian and the religious teacher are different. Historians work with limited, ambiguous, and often contradictory evidence. They find all possible information, sort it, evaluate its merits, and draw hypotheses and tentative conclusions. Religious teachers help students explore the relationship between the Divine and human. They focus on finding a faith-full understanding of the people and historical events. While the traditional story of the origins of Mormonism may no longer suffice, Palmer has made no attempt to reinterpret or present a balanced historical account. Church members who are unfamiliar with current historical methodology will not be able to sift through Palmer’s mass of data because of a lack of balance in several areas:

* Motives of people supportive of the movement are scrutinized and debunked, while testimony of opponents seems to be accepted as unbiased truth without comment. While Joseph and his associates are deemed to be products of their time, detractors seem to be held to be as objective and unbiased as modern observers.
* Hearsay seems to be accorded equal status with eyewitness testimony; while firsthand accounts are not always accurate, every layer of retelling introduces increased chances for distortion.
* Accounts recorded years later are presented as being equal with contemporary versions. Reflection sometimes aids interpretation, but also allows for wishful or experiential shading. Joseph’s later accounts of his first vision are deemed suspect, while Brigham’s reflections from decades later are accepted without question.
* Proximity to or availability of source material is presented as proof of use despite the lack of evidence from supporters or detractors. The bias that secular sources, however improbable, must be the basis for inspired works simply acknowledges the historian’s inability to deal with the transcendent.
* Scripture that seems to be in conflict with current church doctrine is deemed suspicious regardless of the circumstances under which it was brought forth. If religious history teaches anything, it is the loss of faithfulness to the defining revelation of a religion over time. Joseph’s primary justification for starting a new church was alleged apostasy within the Christian faith. Abandonment of earlier doctrine requires clear and compelling justification.

Religious history always involves a dimension many modern historians are ill-equipped to handle: divine inspiration and faith. Modern historical methodology is a product of the Enlightenment and the rise of the scientific method in the Western world. It deals only with the human side of the Divine/human encounter. The New Mormon History, by the nature of its methodology, deals with Mormonism origins that are explicable in human, rational terms. This problem has only recently begun to be addressed by the academic community. Historians and religious teachers must appreciate the difficulties of doing comprehensive religious history. The historical issues raised are real and must be faced by both religious teachers and faithful members. But they need to be explored comprehensively and with sensitivity by the LDS General Authorities, theologians, and religious teachers of the church, as well as historians and academicians.

Robert A. Gunderson
The Netherlands

---

That Robert Remini, a distinguished professor emeritus at the University of Illinois at Chicago, non-Mormon, and nationally renowned Jacksonian scholar would choose to write on Joseph Smith would lend credence to the assertion that Mormon historical scholarship has come of age, reflective of efforts to reach readers beyond the narrow confines of the Latter Day Saint community. Remini, noted for his definitive multi-volume biography of President Andrew Jackson and winner of the National Book Award, has produced a compelling, sympathetic biography of Joseph Smith. Despite its brevity, totaling a mere 190 pages—a limit imposed by the constraints of the Penguin Lives Series of which this biography is a part—Remini skillfully places the Latter-day Saint leader within the context of Jacksonian American society. “To a large extent Smith and his Church were products of a uniquely American milieu. The Jacksonian age with its democratic trust and reach for perfection provided the conditions and impetus for sudden and massive changes throughout the country” (181).

Remini is even-handed and empathetic in presenting Joseph Smith as the religious leader he claimed to be. In the words of the author: “After considerable thought, I decided to present his [Smith’s] religious experiences just as he described them in his writings and let readers decide for themselves to what extent they would give credence to them. I am not out to prove or disprove any of his claims. As a historian I have tried to be as objective as possible in narrating his life and work” (x).

Utilizing this approach, Remini effectively discusses Joseph Smith’s background, specifically, his family’s strong religiosity, their economic difficulties, and other adversities. Remini carefully presents Joseph Smith’s early life, devoting seventy-four pages (some 40 percent of his text) to Smith’s activities prior to 1830 and the formation of the Church. The author provides keen insights into young Joseph’s behavior and complex personality. He succinctly describes the factors that made Smith a successful religious leader, specifically his charisma, and what Remini terms his “administrative skills” (96). At the same time, the author carefully outlines and discusses the many varied reasons why “Joseph and his Mormon brethren [were] hated with such intensity as to provoke mob violence and murder” (175).

Despite its strengths, Remini’s biography is not without flaws. Among the most significant is its superficiality of analysis and, most disturbing, its numerous errors of fact. Such problems stem from the apparent haste in which the book was researched and written. The author failed to consult and utilize crucial primary sources written by Joseph Smith and his associates as contained in the LDS Church Historical Archives in Salt Lake City and the Community of Christ Archives in Independence, Missouri. Instead Remini relied on the published writings of Joseph Smith and his mother along with previously published biographies by Fawn M. Brodie, Richard L. Bushman, Donna Hill, and Heidi S. Swinton. While drawing from the published books of certain scholars, including Richard Lloyd Anderson, Leonard Arrington, Milton V. Backman, D. Michael Quinn, and Grant Underwood, Remini ignored the important works of other writers in the field of Mormon studies, causing his biography to
appear incomplete and, all-to-often, inaccurate.

Such problems are evident in Remini’s treatment of Joseph Smith and polygamy. The author is incorrect in his statement that “Most of his [Joseph Smith’s plural] wives were teenagers” (154). Confusing is his conjecture concerning the “number of wives” Smith took “under this new covenant.” In the author’s words, “the exact figure is still debated; but it is ‘at least twenty-seven,’ according to one Mormon historian.” Further obscuring the issue, Remini then states that “other historians have guessed” that Smith had a number that “might be as low as a few or as high as eighty-four” (153). Remini’s confusion stems from the simple fact that he failed to consult the most recent scholarship on the topic, specifically Lawrence Foster, Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981); Carmon Hardy, Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), and especially Todd L. Compton, In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997). Compton, through meticulous research, has narrowed the estimate of Joseph Smith’s plural wives as numbering between thirty-three and forty. Of this total, just ten were teenagers at the time of their marriages.

These problems notwithstanding, Robert V. Remini’s Joseph Smith is a noteworthy work, deserving the attention of scholars and interested lay readers concerned with Mormon—Restoration studies. On the positive side, Remini’s biography is a lively, well-written revisionist account standing in contrast to Fawn Brodie’s equally-readable but more hard-edged No Man Knows May History. To some extent Remini’s work builds on the more recent, positive biographies of Donna Hill, Richard Bushman, and Heidi Swenton. But the significant shortcomings of Remini’s Joseph Smith dramatizes the fact that the truly definitive biography of Mormonism’s founder remains to be written.

Newell Bringhurst
Visalia, California


Walker, Whittaker, and Allen have produced Mormon History as a companion to their massive bibliographic work that included more than 16,000 titles, Studies in Mormon History, 1830–1997 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000). Mormon History was written to describe and interpret Mormon historiography. The authors’ ambitious goals include: “describing what has gone on in the past, including the various methods, themes, and interpretations that historians have used . . . sketching the background and work of leading LDS writers; and by suggesting the pitfalls and strengths of previous writing, with an eye toward improving our professional trade” (ix).

The book is divided into two parts: “interpretive chapters and two appendixes containing descriptive essays” (ix). The first part of the book includes chapters discussing nine-
teenth-century historiography, the transitional period encompassing the first half of the twentieth century, the New Mormon History, writing Mormon biographies, and an insightful essay on the state of social science literature on the Mormons by guest author and noted sociologist Armand L. Mauss. The first appendix “describes the development and nature of Mormon imprints,” while the second appendix discusses the numerous bibliographies, encyclopedias, essays, theses, dissertations, and books that have dealt with aspects of Mormons and Mormon-related literature.

Of particular interest to members of the John Whitmer Historical Association are the references to the history of the Reorganization, its major historians, and their significant works (74–77 and 258). Unfortunately, while the discussion concerning historiography of the Reorganization is interesting and well-written, it encompasses a total of approximately 4 pages out of 263 pages of text and end notes. What is more, the emphasis of the discussion concerning Reorganization historiography is from a Latter-day Saint perspective.

This drawback notwithstanding, Mormon History is well thought-out and written. It makes an excellent companion to the authors’ massive bibliographic work or is nice as a stand-alone work and is worth adding to any serious scholar’s collection.

Craig L. Foster
Layton, Utah


Roger D. Launius
Crofton, Maryland


Lewis Barney was a common man who led a full and interesting life, according to author Ronald O. Barney. His life validated Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis of an ever-expanding Western frontier. The Barneys were also representative Jacksonian Americans. A Protestant minister on the Missouri frontier around 1831 used the phrase “one side by himself” to describe people like the Barneys, moving westward regularly, looking for vacant lands, rearing large families, and when it was felt that their current location was getting over-
crowded, picking up and moving on, ever westward. According to Ronald Barney, such a cycle was the "trademark" of Lewis' existence (26).

The Barney family's initial religious inclinations ran toward the Primitive Baptist Church. Primitivists like the Barneys were part of a religious subculture in America to "distill Jesus' religion to its ancient New Testament antecedents" (26). In 1840, while residing in Henry County, Iowa, just west of the Mississippi River, Lewis and his family encountered Mormonism. Luther, Lewis' brother joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the year before. When the Mormon missionaries came to Henry County in 1839–1840, "curiosity" led Lewis to attend a Mormon meeting (53). The claims he heard about the power to heal the sick, cast out devils, and other gifts of the Spirit identified with ancient Christianity, sparked an interest. After visiting Nauvoo and meeting the prophet, Joseph Smith Jr., Lewis "presented myself for baptism" in the spring of 1840.

The Barneys conversion to Mormonism brought a restructuring of their worldview. Lewis and his family, always dwellers on the hinterland of society, moved to urban Nauvoo. This prospect of city life was somewhat unnerving—a stumbling block that the author successfully depicts. As fate would have it, Lewis became a witness to Nauvoo's finest moments and its demise. Following the murder of the Smith brothers and the church members' evacuation of their beloved Nauvoo, the Barneys transformed themselves into westering pioneers.

Ronald depicts the hardships faced by the family with this depiction of the "death" of their six-month-old infant, Joseph Smith Barney, while crossing central Iowa in 1846. While walking by his wagon and carrying the baby, who was suffering from malaria, Lewis believed that the child had died in his arms. "Consigned to the child's death," the author writes, "Barney, matter-of-factly told his wife, the child is dead." Clutching the babe to her breast, his mother cried in agony to the Lord. Miraculously, "the child opened its eyes and commenced to recover and continued to get better and better until it was entirely well!" (91).

Lewis was also a community builder. He helped to settle Monroe, Wellington, and Manti, Utah, along with Mancos, Colorado. When Monroe in central Utah's Sevier County seemed settled in 1881, Lewis chose to "pull up stakes" and move on. His kinfolk began to refer to him as a "wanderer." Ronald contends that they "misinterpreted" Lewis's actions (253). It was not irresponsibility or even wanderlust that drove him. It was, Ronald argues convincingly, the never-ending quest for freedom and greater opportunities. In his early eighties and just three years before his death, Lewis moved in 1891 to Mancos, Colorado, another Mormon community. He was now "slowed physically" and struggled with many "limitations" (281). Lewis was never an ecclesiastical leader among the Latter-day Saints. Still he was tireless in his devotion to his faith.

This thoroughly-researched and well-written biography won the Mormon History Association's 2002 Best Biography Award and deserved it. The author writes with a grace and flair that other biographers would do well to emulate. One Side by Himself is truly a pleasure to read. This is a top-notch biography of an ordinary man—something that Mormon studies could use more of.

M. Guy Bishop
Woods Cross, Utah