

# Resolving Concerns

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**Please Note:** For all concerns related to the Evangelical Churches and Doctrines and conflicts with LDS doctrine, see volume 4 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

## FOREWORD

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During the fall of 2001, I was presiding over the England London South Mission. I had become keenly aware of the daily experiences our missionaries were having in their labors in southern England. I knew they were regularly encountering concerns expressed by investigators or others who are not members of our Church. Some of these were honest questions, asked by sincere investigators with genuine desires to know more about the doctrines of the restored church and gospel of Jesus Christ. Others, however, were posed by those with little interest in the Church except to criticize and torment it. Their spirit was not one of honest inquiry and investigation. Their intentions were not to learn, but rather to attack and criticize. They carried a malevolent and confrontational spirit. Their attacks had become a source of consternation, anxiety, and even fear to some of our missionaries.

I wanted to do something to comfort and inspire these young men and women. I wanted to try to replace their feelings of fear and anxiety with peace and confidence. I decided to try to supply them with simple answers to several of the most common questions and also some of the more commonly heard criticisms of the Church. I therefore gathered materials from several sources and included them in a book I titled *Resolving Concerns*. It was initially distributed to the missionaries in November of that year. It contained discussions of several questions, issues, and criticisms being heard almost daily.

A second edition was produced and distributed in May of 2002. It contained some corrections and a few additions to content of the first edition.

During the intervening years I have developed a desire to make this book available to family and friends in an expanded format. I am still very much interested in helping our missionaries and providing them with resources that may be helpful to them in their proselyting. I have also become aware that there are a few issues that, on occasion, prove to be stumbling blocks even to seasoned members of the Church. I have encountered previously active members who have separated themselves from the Church over doctrinal concerns and doubts. I would like to try to help these individuals as well. I have included several of these potentially contentious topics.

I began my life in the Church as a rather skeptical, stubborn, child and young adult. I was reared in a family whose members were largely “less active.” I had friends whose families were well established in the Church, but I wasn’t about to let them decide for me my feelings about the Church. If I was ever to become committed to the Church, that testimony would have to be based on my own investigations. Now, in the “late afternoon” of my years, I am completely converted and committed to the Church and gospel. I want others to share the peace and reassurance with which I have been

blessed. I feel tangible pain whenever I hear of someone who has left the Church over doubts and questions. I often pray that I might be influential in their lives.

The resource materials for this book have been gathered from several sources. Attributions will be made as we come to them, but I would like to extend special *a priori* acknowledgment and thanks to a few authors. They have written books that were the inspiration for this book while it was still in its planning phase. These include Richard I. Winwood, *Take Heed That Ye Be Not Deceived* (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1995); Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1991) and for another book brother Robinson co-authored with an Evangelical scholar, Craig L. Blomberg, *How Wide the Divide, A Mormon & an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1997). Also, I owe a debt to an old and dear friend, A. Melvin McDonald for his book *The Day of Defense* (Alpha Publishing House, 1979), and finally to Robert L. Brown and Rosemary Brown, and their book *They Lie in Wait to Deceive* (Brownsword Publishing Co. Inc., 1993).

Missionaries and other church members should always avoid encounters with those who would be critical of the Church. This book is not meant to provide ammunition for those potentially contentious or combative souls who might be inclined to carry on a war of words with people of opposing views. The spirit of contention is always un-Christian (see D&C 10:63) and virtually never productive. I do feel, however, it is important that members of the Church in general, and perhaps missionaries more particularly, possess sufficient knowledge and confidence, so that they do not shrink from discussing the gospel of Jesus Christ with anyone. The missionary who does not fear is free to become a fully confident and competent emissary for the Lord.

As alluded to above, missionaries may be required to resolve concerns in different settings. Often an honest investigator may ask for a simple explanation of an eternal truth. In these cases, the Spirit of the Lord is present and the Spirit's presence is likely to be felt even more as the investigator responds to the explanation with a believing spirit. It is hoped that this book will help the missionary organize his or her thinking, presentation, and explanation of the concerns raised by this type of investigator.

At other times a negative spirit prevails, as concerns are expressed by those who would be critical of the Church. In these cases the influence of the Spirit is usually not present. Don't expect this type of "investigator" to experience a sudden change of heart and say, "Oh, I'm sorry. I've been wrong all these years and what I have been told has been distorted and a lie. You are completely correct. How can I arrange to be baptized?" This book is also intended to assist in your discussions with this type of individual. The objective of resolving concerns in these situations is merely to clarify and communicate. It is not so important that they agree with us, but rather that they come to fairly and accurately understand what we believe. These people are not seeking for a spiritual experience. Your expectations should be mainly to make certain

they understand that the eternal truth about the principle you are discussing is a valid option for them.

In discussing the gospel with those who are critical of the Church, there are a few important rules to be kept in mind:

1. Do not take their criticisms personally, and don't become defensive. After all, the criticisms are not being leveled against you. They are aimed directly at the Lord Jesus Christ and his Church and gospel. Your reactions should not be argumentative and defensive, as that tends to stifle meaningful conversation. Keep in mind that Mormons are singled out for persecution by other secular Christian churches not because we are "sinister" or "evil," but, at least in part, because we are "sheep-stealers." That is, we preach to members of other churches and are delighted when they accept the message of the restored gospel and commit to be baptized into our Church. We therefore threaten the economic existence and stability of congregations and professional ministers. The "Christian community" at large has an unspoken agreement not to evangelize each others' members. If we would commit today not to try to convert current members of Christian churches but only preach to the "unwashed masses" who have not committed their lives to Christ, then tomorrow we would be accepted as "Christians" in a heartbeat.

2. Always maintain a friendly demeanor. We actually have much in common with the beliefs of our brothers and sisters of other Christian faiths. We should always try to get past the vocabulary differences and mis-communications to emphasize those things we have in common.

"If you come at me with your fists doubled," said Woodrow Wilson, "I think I can promise you that mine will double as fast as yours; but if you come to me and say, 'Let us sit down and take counsel together, and if we differ from one another, just what the points at issue are, we will presently find that we are not so far apart after all, that the points on which we differ are few and the points on which we agree are many, and that if we only have the patience and the candor and the desire to get together, we will get together'" (*How to Win Friends and Influence People*, 14).

Don't begin by discussing the things on which you differ. Rather, begin by emphasizing—and keep on emphasizing—the things on which you agree.

3. Even though the other man may be totally wrong, he doesn't think so. Don't condemn him. Any fool can do that. Try to understand him. Only wise, tolerant, exceptional men even try to do that. There are reasons why the other man thinks and acts as he does. Seek to discover those reasons, and in that seeking you may establish a relationship.

There is a tendency in each of us, when we are trying to win over others to our way of thinking, to do too much talking and too little listening. It is important to let the other person talk himself out. He knows more about what he believes than you do.

Never assume you know what he believes regardless of what his church may teach. He and his church are not always in agreement. Ask him a lot of questions. Let him tell you a few things. If you disagree with him, you may be tempted to interrupt. But don't. It's dangerous. He won't pay attention to you while he still has a lot of ideas of his own which are crying out for expression. So listen patiently and with an open mind. Be sincere about it. Encourage him to express his ideas fully. This process also allows you to get a better understanding of what is important to him. Ultimately he may disagree with your interpretations, and you may disagree with his. But you should decide to disagree agreeably. It is human nature to give more credence to ideas that we discover for ourselves than ideas that are given to us by someone else. Wouldn't it be wiser to make suggestions and let the other person work out the conclusions for himself?

4. Be careful to define the terms. There is opportunity for serious miscommunication because of the vocabulary. The same theological words have different meanings in different churches. Words like *resurrection*, *salvation*, *saved*, *justification*, *sanctification*, *exaltation*, *creation*, and *Father* all have different meanings to people of different faiths. Rather than use the words, you should ask them to explain in detail what they mean, and you must do the same. Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Clarify and teach by regularly repeating back what you think you heard. "Let me see if I understand . . ." "If I understand you correctly . . ." "So what I think I heard you say is . . ."

5. Keep in mind that the person who asks questions controls the conversation. If you want to stay in control of the conversation, make your last statement a question. Using this principle you can guide the conversation. You can repeat this process over and over.

6. Bear testimony regularly of Jesus Christ, the Church of Jesus Christ, the atonement, and the Bible. Don't simply tell them you are a Christian. Show them you believe by bearing testimony of him. This gives the Spirit an opportunity to become involved in the discussion.

7. Keep in mind that the gospel of Jesus Christ is defined in the Standard Works, by official statements of the First Presidency, or by statements of the Quorum of Twelve when speaking as a group. Anything else is simply commentary ("homily") and of secondary authority. The *Journal of Discourses* is often quoted by critics of the Church and assumed by them to be an authoritative source of LDS doctrine. The *Journal of Discourses* is a collection of sermons written by nineteenth century Church authorities. It contains much that is true and inspirational, but it is not doctrine. Not everything an apostle or prophet utters is intended to be doctrine. There is no doctrine, for example, on such things as Coca-Cola or ice water being part of the Word of Wisdom; the Constitution of the United States to hang by a thread and to be saved by the Elders of Israel; the use of playing cards; or whether or not Christ was married.

8. Remember that in any discussion of Church doctrines, you are likely to know more of what we believe than the other person. You may encounter so-called “experts” on Mormon doctrine who have never been to a sacrament meeting and could not answer many of the simplest questions about the Church or define our most basic terms. Yet they will assume that they know the “real truth” about our doctrine which they often have obtained from anti-Mormon sources. Enemies of the Church are perfectly happy taking quotes out of context or misusing our terminology in order to define what they think we believe. They will invariably place their own interpretations on these quotes. They are not interested in understanding what we really believe, they only desire to demean a doctrine so that others will not listen to its message and judge for themselves. If you are a full-time missionary, please keep in mind you are authorized to teach the basic doctrinal principles of the Church, but you are not expected to know all the answers. Always be willing to say, “I don’t know the answer to that, but I’ll be happy to find out for you.”

Michael J. Preece  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
November 2016

## Introduction for Missionaries of the England London South Mission

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The following notes have been collected for the use of the missionaries in the England London South Mission. Each missionary companionship encounters, almost daily, concerns expressed by investigators or other nonmembers of the Church. Most of these are expressed as honest questions, asked by sincere investigators who have a genuine desire to know about the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A few are leveled against the Church in the spirit of anti-Mormon persecution or derision by those who have little interest in the Church except to torment it.

These materials have been gathered from several sources, too numerous to itemize in detail. Special acknowledgment and thanks, however, is extended to Richard I. Winwood for his publication, *Take Heed That Ye Be Not Deceived*; to Dennis Moore for his article, "Ten Principles in Dealing With Anti-Mormon Literature and Discussions;" to Stephen E. Robinson for his book *Are Mormons Christians*; to an old and dear friend, A. Melvin McDonald for his book *The Day of Defense*; and to Robert L. Brown and Rosemary Brown, and their book *They Lie in Wait to Deceive*, 4 volumes.

Missionaries should never be encouraged to seek for encounters with those who would be critical of the Church. These notes are not meant to provide ammunition for those contentious missionaries who might be inclined to carry on a war of words people of opposing views, for the spirit of contention is always un-Christian (see D&C 10:63). I do feel, however, it is important that missionaries have sufficient knowledge and confidence, so that they do not shrink from discussing the gospel of Jesus Christ with anyone. The missionary who does not fear is free to become a fully confident and competent emissary for the Lord.

Missionaries will be required to resolve concerns in different settings. Often an honest investigator may ask for a simple explanation of an eternal truth. In these cases, the Spirit of the Lord is present and the Spirit's presence is likely to be felt even more as the investigator responds to the explanation with a believing spirit. It is hoped that this collection of notes will help the missionary to organize his or her thinking, presentation, and explanation of the concerns raised by this type of investigator.

At other times a negative spirit prevails as concerns are expressed by those who would be critical of the Church. In these cases the influence of the Spirit is usually not present. Don't expect this type of "investigator" to experience a sudden change of heart and say, "Oh, I'm sorry. I've been wrong all these years and what I have been told has been distorted and a lie. You are completely correct. How can I arrange to be baptized?" These notes are also intended to assist in your discussions with this type of individual. The objective of resolving concerns in these situations is merely to clarify and communicate. It is not so important that they agree with us, but rather that they come to fairly and accurately understand what we believe. These people are not seeking for a spiritual experience. Your expectations should be mainly to make certain they understand that the eternal truth about the principle you are discussing is a valid option for them.

In discussing the gospel with those who are critical of the Church, there are a few important rules to be kept in mind:

(1) Don't take their criticisms personally. Don't become defensive. After all the criticisms are not being leveled against you; they are aimed directly at the Lord Jesus Christ and his Church and gospel. Your reactions should not be argumentative and defensive, as that tends to stifle meaningful conversation. Keep in mind that Mormons are singled out for persecution by other secular Christian churches not because we are "sinister" or "evil," but because we are "sheep-stealers," and we threaten the economic existence and stability of congregations and professional ministers. The "Christian community" at large has an unspoken understanding not to evangelize each other's members. If we would commit today not to convert current members of Christian churches but only preach to the "unwashed masses" who have not committed their lives to Christ, then tomorrow we would be accepted as "Christians" in a heartbeat.

(2) Always begin in a friendly way. We actually have much in common with the beliefs of our brothers and sisters of other Christian faiths. We should always try to get past the vocabulary differences and mis-communications to emphasize those things which we have in common.

"If you come at me with your fists doubled," said Woodrow Wilson, "I think I can promise you that mine will double as fast as yours; but if you come to me and say, 'Let us sit down and take counsel together, and if we differ from one another, just what the points at issue are, we will presently find that we are not so far apart after all, that the points on which we differ are few and the points on which we agree are many, and that if we only have the patience and the candor and the desire to get together, we will get together.'" Don't begin by discussing the things on which you differ. Begin by emphasizing – and keep on emphasizing – the things on which you agree.

(3) Even though the other man may be totally wrong, he doesn't think so. Don't condemn him. Any fool can do that. Try to understand him. Only wise, tolerant, exceptional men even try to do that. There are reasons why the other man thinks and acts as he does. Seek to discover those reasons, and in that seeking you make establish a relationship.

There is a tendency in each of us, when we are trying to win over others to our way of thinking, to do too much talking and too little listening. It is important to let the other person talk himself out. He knows more about what he believes than you do. Never assume you know what he believes regardless of what his church may teach. They are not always in agreement. Ask him a lot of questions. Let him tell you a few things. If you disagree with him, you may be tempted to interrupt. But don't. It is dangerous. He won't pay attention to you while he still has a lot of ideas of his own crying for expression. So listen patiently and with an open mind. Be sincere about it. Encourage him to express his ideas fully. This process also allows you to get a better understanding of what is important to him. Ultimately he may disagree with our interpretations, and you will disagree with his. But you should decide to disagree agreeably. It is human nature to give more credence to ideas that we discover for ourselves than ideas that are given to us by someone else. Wouldn't it be wiser to

make suggestions and let the other person work out the conclusions for himself.

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(5) Keep in mind that the person who asks questions controls the conversation. If you want to stay in control of the conversation, make your last statement a question. Using this principle you can guide the conversation. The six missionary discussions use this principle. They teach a concept and then ask a question. This process is repeated over and over.

(6) Bear testimony regularly of Jesus Christ, the Church of Jesus Christ, the atonement, and the Bible. Don't tell them you are a Christian; show them you believe by bearing testimony of him. This gives the Spirit an opportunity to become involved in the discussion.

(7) Keep in mind that the gospel of Jesus Christ is defined in the Standard Works, and anything else is simply commentary and of secondary authority. That commentary often contains much of what is good, but it is not doctrine. Not everything an apostle or prophet utters is intended to be doctrine. There is no doctrine, for example, on such things as Coca-Cola or ice water being part of the Word of Wisdom; the Constitution of the United States to hang by a thread and to be saved by the Elders of Israel; the use of playing cards; or whether or not Christ was married.

(8) Remember that you are the expert in what you believe. You may encounter so-called "experts" on Mormon doctrine who have never been to a sacrament meeting and could not answer many of the simplest questions about the Church or define our most basic terms. Yet they will assume that they know the "real truth" about our doctrine which they often have obtained from anti-Mormon sources. Enemies of the Church are perfectly happy taking quotes out of context or misusing our terminology in order to define what they think we believe. They will invariably place their own interpretations on these quotes. They are not interested in understanding what we really believe, they only desire to demean a doctrine so that others will not listen to its message and judge for themselves.

Michael J. Preece  
Cobham, Surrey  
November 2001

## Understanding the Anti-Mormon Movement

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### A Brief Review of the Great Apostasy and Restoration

Fundamental to understanding the anti-Mormon movement is an understanding of the history of the apostasy and restoration of the Lord's Church and gospel.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints boldly proclaims that the gospel of Jesus Christ and the sacred authority to administer the ordinances of the gospel were taken from the earth shortly after the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostasy, or "falling away" (2 Thessalonians 2:3), from the true teachings of Jesus Christ is a matter of biblical prophecy and historical record (James E. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy* and B. H. Roberts, *The Falling Away*). It is an accepted matter of history that all the apostles ordained by Jesus Christ, with the exception of John the Revelator, were killed by enemies of the Church. Once these appointed servants were gone, no person on the earth could speak in the name of Christ, nor did anyone have the authority to administer the ordinances of the gospel. Without the benefit of continual revelation from God to his appointed apostles and prophets (Amos 3:7), the children of men struggled to interpret and administer a correct theology. As a result, many doctrines and practices entered into the church of Jesus Christ that were not in concert with the gospel of Jesus Christ as he established it. For example, baptism by immersion was changed to baptism by sprinkling. The doctrine of "original sin" and the practice of the baptism of infants was introduced. The church organization was eventually altered to facilitate a "politically correct" theology. Simple principles of the gospel were mixed with pagan philosophical movements of the day. Thus, the church of medieval times, which resulted from these changes in doctrines and ordinances, became less and less like the church that Jesus Christ established during his earthly ministry.

The Christian church became a political tool during the reign of Constantine the Great. Because of divisive controversy in the church regarding fundamental doctrines, Constantine called more than three hundred bishops together at Nicea (now in Turkey) in AD 325 to reach, through discussion and rhetoric, some theological and doctrinal conclusions. One purpose of this general council was to define who or what God is. There were differing ideas presented and many disputes between the bishops. In the end they arrived at a compromise, known as the Nicene Creed.

The Nicene Creed was slightly modified by another council held at Constantinople in AD 381. The restatement of the Nicene Creed that came out of this second conference has been attributed largely to Athanasius. It has become known as the "Creed of Athanasius" and it persists as a declaration of belief professed by some Christian sects today. It is used today, for example, by the Church of England:

We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is all one: the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son; and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet there are not three eternals; but one eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated; but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty; and yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet they are not three Gods but one God.

This creed became the standard for the church of that day and is the basis of the traditional, or orthodox Christian, understanding of the nature of the Godhead even today.

Soon afterwards, the philosopher Augustine (AD 354-430), while studying the philosophies of the Neoplatonists, was impressed to become a Christian and to work at defining and refining Christian beliefs. The ideas of “original sin” (and, therefore, the ordinance of infant baptism) and being saved wholly by the grace of God—at God’s “good pleasure”—and not by any works of man were not the contributions of Jesus Christ, but of Augustine.

With the invention of the printing press in the mid-1400s, the Bible became available to many people who previously had been denied it. Until then it was forbidden for anyone but a Catholic priest to have or to read the Bible. As a result, people began to note distinct differences between Bible teachings and the doctrines and practices of the established church. People began to form their own ideas of how the gospel ought to be administered and interpreted. This became the foundation of the Reformation (AD 1500s), a “protest” (hence *Protestant*) movement that started with great reformers, especially Martin Luther (Lutheran) and John Calvin (Presbyterian and Puritan).

Amidst this spirit of Protestant reform, King Henry VIII formed the Church of England in AD 1534 when the Pope refused to grant the king a divorce from his wife, Catherine of Aragon. In retaliation, Henry coerced Parliament to pass the Act of Supremacy, which made the king head of the Church in England and denounced the Pope. This act allowed people other than the Pope to reform the church’s teachings and was the catalyst for further reformation by splinter groups attempting to restore the New Testament church. Later, in AD 1559, after many disputes as to whether the Church of England should be primarily Protestant or Catholic, Queen Elizabeth I

effected a political compromise between the two prominent theologies and reinstated the Church of England.

Within the various Protestant groups, there began to be widespread disagreement over points of doctrine, the form of liturgy, church government, and other issues. These disagreements led to the formation of many splinter denominations. For example, the Anglican Church broke away from the Church of England. Then a group of people called Separatists, eventually called Congregationalists, broke away from the Anglican Church, because they did not think they could reform the church from within. Another group of Separatists went to the Netherlands under the direction of John Smyth and became known as the Baptists. Later, in the 1700s, John Wesley, unable to reform the Anglican Church to his satisfaction, began the movement known today as the Methodists.

Some churches seemed to begin spontaneously. Pentecostal churches, for example, originated at revivals in 1901 at a Bible college in Topeka, Kansas, where people spoke in a language they had never learned (that is, they spoke “in tongues”). Today individual Pentecostal denominations differ greatly in interpretations of matters of faith and prophecy. As a result, there are now more than thirty separate Pentecostal denominations in the United States and Canada, each believing in its own approach to worship and evangelism!

Other churches were formed by government acts. For example, the United Church of Canada, established in 1925 following an act of Canadian Parliament, was originally a conglomeration of three theologies: Methodism, Presbyterianism, and Congregationalism. Another church, the Evangelical United Brethren Church, later joined the United Church of Canada.

The above examples are only a small representation of the fragmenting and dividing of churches through reform. By the early 1800s, literally hundreds of churches had been organized to express the individual religious desires and biblical interpretations of the people. As these churches spread to other countries, further reformation produced groups that were markedly different from their parent religious groups. Even through the 1800s and into this century, religious division has continued. This division is a fulfillment of the prophecy in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 that there would be a “falling away” from the church Christ himself established during his mortal ministry.

It is informative to review the attitudes and positions of the great reformers in relation to the movements their protestations founded. Did they seek to establish the one “true church”? They did not. Did they think they had the power to act in God’s name and to administer the ordinances as clearly manifest by the apostles in the New Testament? They did not.

Martin Luther was surprised and disappointed to find that his efforts to reform the Roman Catholic Church had instead founded a new church. Moreover, he did not want his name on any church because he felt that the church should take its name only from

Christ, yet this new church was named after him! Luther simply stated in his writings that he wanted to reform the church according to the Holy Scriptures and that the Catholic Church had failed in its responsibility to preserve Christianity.

First an Anglican priest, then a Puritan sympathizer, Roger Williams, founder of the state of Rhode Island and of the Baptist Church in the Americas, was at heart, a separatist. He firmly believed that the authority to act in the name of God was taken from the earth and that none in his day held that sacred right. Williams had great faith in Jesus Christ and knew that he would not withdraw himself from the world completely, but would, in time, send “new apostles to recover and restore all the ordinances and churches of Christ out of the ruins of anti-Christian apostasy” (Donald Skaggs, Roger Williams, *Dream for America*, 43). He urged his followers to establish an environment that would permit God to “pour forth those fiery streams again of tongues and prophecy in the restoration of Zion” (*Ibid.* 49).

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was an ordained priest in the Church of England who tried to reform the church in accord with biblical principles. His Methodist societies were mere study groups within the Church of England until 1784 when Wesley was forced to begin his own sect in order to provide ministers to the Methodist societies in New England. Like Luther, Williams, and others, Wesley recognized that divine administrative authority had indeed been taken from the earth through apostasy. In his writings, Wesley states:

It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after that fatal period when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian. The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other heathens. This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian church—because the Christians were turned heathens again, and had only a dead form left (Albert C. Outler, ed., “Sermon 89: The More Excellent Way,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, Sermons 71-114, 3:263-4).

After the passing of these and other reformers, their churches were left in much the same state in which they were founded; nevertheless, to preserve and perpetuate their philosophies, each of these religious organizations eventually established colleges where those choosing a career in the ministry could be trained. In these special universities, students were taught the religious dogma of their own faith—doctrines based on a mixture of biblical scripture and the philosophies of men. Once they had been trained for the ministry, these new pastors went forth to expound their individual interpretations and to win converts to their unique brand of religious philosophy.

## **Truth Versus Philosophy**

It is important to understand the distinction between truth and philosophy. There are many religious philosophies in the world. The universe of Christian churches encompasses widespread differences on doctrinal points, ideas concerning worship, and requirements for salvation. Each of these churches presents a separate religious philosophy. For example, most popular Christian churches believe that accepting Christ is essential to personal salvation, but some do not. Some churches believe that infants as well as adults should be baptized. Others say baptism is necessary only for adults. Still others profess that baptism itself is unnecessary. The list of philosophical differences, even within mainline Christian churches, is extensive.

When any religious group or individual attacks another, it is a war of philosophy, not a war of, or for, truth. Claims that Mormon doctrine does not conform to the established Protestant “orthodox” Christian doctrines are true. This is because the LDS Church is the restored Church of Jesus Christ and did not break-off from another church as did the Protestant churches. Its doctrines are not based upon the philosophies of men, but are God’s revealed truths. Keep in mind that a truth seeker is interested in gaining truth and wisdom. He or she does not seek a contest of religious opinion. The apostle Paul said: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

## **Truth Restored**

In 1820 in the midst of the aforementioned religious confusion, Joseph Smith Jr., a fourteen-year-old farm boy in up-state New York, was searching among all the popular churches of the day in an effort to find out which was the true church of Jesus Christ. He visited many revivals and other meetings, but he was confused at the contradictions he heard declared as doctrines. While studying the Bible one evening, Joseph was impressed by a passage in James 1:5 that says wisdom may be obtained from God through prayer. After some considerable preparation, he decided he must “ask of God.” Near the Smith family home was a large and beautiful grove of mature trees. Joseph went into this grove, alone, with a single and simple purpose—to gain wisdom from God our Heavenly Father. In answer to his humble prayer, Joseph received a marvelous vision in which God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him. Their answer to him was clear: All the churches were wrong, and he should join none of them, for, in the words of the Savior, “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof” (JS-H 1: 19). Joseph was also told that if he remained worthy, he would be instrumental in restoring and therefore establishing the true church of Jesus Christ upon the earth again.

A few days after Joseph Smith received this vision, he was in the company of a Methodist minister and, while discussing religion, told the minister about his prayer and the vision he received. The cleric responded “with great contempt, saying [that the vision] was all of the devil, that . . . visions and revelations . . . [and] all such things had ceased with the apostles, and that there would never be any more of them” (JS-H 1:21).

Joseph was treated harshly by all the religious leaders in his community because of his testimony of his vision. In his history, Joseph explained:

It seems as though the adversary was aware, at a very early period of my life, that I was destined to prove a disturber and an annoyer of his kingdom; else why should the powers of darkness combine against me? Why the opposition and persecution that arose against me, almost in my infancy? . . .

My telling the story had excited a great deal of prejudice against me among professors of religion, and was the cause of great persecution, which continued to increase; and though I was an obscure boy, only between fourteen and fifteen years of age, and my circumstances in life such as to make a boy of no consequence in the world, yet men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me, and create a bitter persecution; and this was common among all the sects—all united to persecute me (JS-H 1:20, 22).

The persecutions described by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the early days following his wondrous vision grew in number and intensified as the work Joseph had been given went forth. He was beaten, tarred and feathered, and jailed under hideous circumstances for long periods of time. He was unjustly accused, tried, and condemned by false witnesses and driven from town to town and from place to place. Above all, he was forced to stand by and watch as the people who believed in the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ through him were treated in like manner—all in the name of religion. Finally, he was murdered, along with his beloved brother Hyrum, by a mob of over one-hundred rifle-bearing, blacken-faced men, while the two men were supposedly under the protection of the law at the city jail in Carthage, Illinois.

News of the prophet’s death traveled throughout the world. To his suffering followers, this news was received with disbelief and intense mourning. To his enemies, the prophet’s death was a signal that “Mormonism” had been defeated. One prominent East Coast newspaper reported an account of Joseph’s death and concluded the article with the statement, “And thus ends Mormonism.” However, the Lord’s latter-day restoration would press on.

After the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the sacred authority to act as the mouthpiece of God and chief administrator of the kingdom of God on earth was immediately transferred to Brigham Young, the next senior apostle of the Church. At Brigham Young’s death in 1877, the keys of authority were passed instantly to the next

senior apostle, John Taylor, and so on. So, since the moment Joseph Smith was ordained a prophet of God and president of the Church, there has been a prophet on the earth to give divine guidance to the children of men.

### **A Basic History of the Anti-Mormon Movement**

One of the major reasons for hostility against the Church has been the Church's belief in modern revelation. The theological foundation of the Church rests on the claim by Joseph Smith that he received, in answer to humble prayer, visits from God the Father, Jesus Christ, and angels who instructed him to restore a dispensation of the Lord's gospel.

Those who opposed Joseph Smith and this restoration of Christ's gospel on theological grounds did so because of what they believed about the Bible. They believed that the Bible was the only word of God—that God had spoken, and that he need speak no more. Hence, there was no need for a modern-day prophet or a restoration. The philosophy of these anti-Mormons was, and is, that any theological teaching must conform to their interpretation of the Bible, and that any teaching not fitting their exact rendering of biblical thought must necessarily be rejected—much like the Pharisees and Sadducees in the meridian of time rejected Jesus Christ as the Savior because he failed to live up to their preconceived ideas of the promised Messiah as taught in their scriptures. This concept of doctrines having to conform to myopic interpretations of Bible teachings exists today and forms the basis for much anti-Mormon activity directed from sectarian clergy.

Skepticism about Joseph Smith and his testimony that he'd had a vision was understandable. At the time of Joseph's vision there was much religious excitement in America, and many were claiming new ideas and even visions from God. However, Joseph had not only claimed communication from God and Jesus Christ, but he had produced the Book of Mormon as well, which was evidence of his sacred experiences. Those who opposed the prophet Joseph found Joseph's testimony of receiving this book of "golden" plates—from an angel!—an astonishing claim. However, the book existed and had to be explained in some way. Accordingly, the first anti-Mormon activity was to try to explain away the Book of Mormon and to discredit Joseph and other early Church leaders.

The founder of the Disciples of Christ Church, Alexander Campbell, wrote the first published anti-Mormon pamphlet in 1832. In that pamphlet Campbell concluded: "I cannot doubt for a single minute that [Joseph Smith] is the sole author and proprietor of [the Book of Mormon]." Two years later he withdrew that statement and accepted the newly proposed theory that Joseph Smith had somehow collaborated with Sidney Rigdon, an early church convert and leader to produce the Book of Mormon from a lost manuscript written by Reverend Solomon Spaulding, a theory asserted by Eber D. Howe in his book *Mormonism Unveiled* (sic), published in 1834. This was the original

anti-Mormon book. Howe was a newspaper editor and printer in Painesville, Ohio, who published anti-Mormon writings, among other things (Stanley B. Kimball, *BYU Studies* 10/3 [1970], 343). *Mormonism Unveiled* was produced largely from a manuscript originally written by “Doctor” Philastus Hurlbut. Hurlbut’s reputation was so bad that even those who were anxious for his book to be published were not eager to have Hurlbut’s name associated with it. Hurlbut was once a Methodist but was excluded for immoralities. Then he joined the LDS Church but was excommunicated for immorality. Incidentally, Hurlbut’s title of “doctor” came from his being the seventh son in his family, not from a legitimate, qualifying education. In American folklore such titles were commonly given because of a superstition that the seventh son would possess supernatural qualities. Hurlbut was hired by an anti-Mormon committee to gather signatures on an affidavit attesting to the “laziness” and “indolence” of the Smith family and on the connection of the Book of Mormon to the Spaulding Manuscript. It is interesting to note that the letters Hurlbut produced in support of the connection between Spaulding and the Book of Mormon contained no signatures from the authors or from any authenticator, and all were written in the same style!

In a book entitled *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* published in 1977, the three authors (Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. David, and Donald R. Scales) produce an unsigned letter from Spaulding’s widow, Mrs. Solomon Spaulding Davison. The letter was published in the *Boston Recorder* in 1839. In this letter Mrs. Spaulding tells a long story about how she and her husband met, about early sicknesses and problems, and about how her husband wrote a historical romance, which she is sure is the foundation of the Book of Mormon. Sidney Rigdon, a former Disciple of Christ minister who had substantial religious training, had “ample opportunity . . . to copy it if he chose” (Robert L. Brown and Rosemary Brown, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive*, 2:229). “Thus, a historical romance, with the addition of a few pious expressions and extracts from the sacred scriptures, has been constructed into a new Bible, and palmed off upon a company of poor deluded fanatics as divine” (*Ibid.*, 230).

So eager to publish and broadcast such a juicy piece of “history,” anti-Mormon writers failed to disclose an article from the Quincy, Illinois, *Whig* that appeared shortly after the *Boston Recorder* article. The *Whig* article exposes the Davison letter as a fabrication of D. Austin, of Monson, Massachusetts. Mr. Austin interviewed Mrs. Spaulding Davison, then he wrote the letter the way he wanted it written. In a subsequent interview with the former Mrs. Spaulding, the interviewer asked, “Did you, Mrs. Davison, write a letter to John Storrs, giving an account of the origin of the Book of Mormon?” She replied, “I did not.” “Did you sign your name to it?” Mrs. Davison responded, “I did not, neither did I ever see the letter until I saw it in the *Boston Recorder*, the letter was never brought to me to sign” (*Ibid.*, 232).

Later, when Hurlbut and Howe finally located Spaulding’s manuscript, they discovered that it had no demonstrable connection with the Book of Mormon. The two

men then concocted the theory that Sidney Rigdon had written the Book of Mormon using another Spaulding manuscript, which no one has ever produced.

Of further interest is the fact that Mrs. Spaulding Davison stated that Mr. Hurlbut took her husband's manuscript from her. He told her he would have it printed and give her "one half of the profits" (Robert L. Brown and Rosemary Brown, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive*, 2:229). Later, he wrote to her and told her the manuscript would not be printed. Why? Mrs. Spaulding Davison explained: "I received a letter stating that it did not read as he expected, and he should not print it" (*Ibid.*). Clearly, the manuscript did not prove to be the origin of the Book of Mormon after all. Therefore, it had little commercial value to Hurlbut. In a sworn affidavit by D. P. Hurlbut himself on January 10, 1881, he stated:

In the year [1834] . . . I went from Geauga County, Ohio, to Munson, Hampden County, Massachusetts, where I found Mrs. Davison, late widow of the Reverend Solomon Spaulding, late of Conneaut, Ashtabula County, Ohio. Of her I obtained a manuscript, supposing it to be the manuscript of the romance written by the said Solomon Spaulding, called the "Manuscript Found," which was reported to be the foundation of the "Book of Mormon." I did not examine the manuscript until I got home, when upon examination I found it to contain nothing of the kind, but being a manuscript upon an entirely different subject. This manuscript I left with E. D. Howe . . . with the understanding that when he had examined it, he should return it to the widow (*Ibid.*, 234).

Hurlbut became an anti-Mormon when he was rejected by the Church because of his repeated immoral actions. A proud man, "Doctor" Hurlbut did everything in his power to refute the Church and its founder. His clear motive was to make money from his "insider information" about the Church.

Howe's book formed the basis for much of the anti-Mormon writing of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

I. Woodbridge Riley claimed, in his 1903 book *The Founder of Mormonism*, that Joseph Smith was an epileptic. Riley was also the first to suggest that the books *View of the Hebrews* (Ethan Smith) and *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed* (Josiah Priest) were the sources of the Book of Mormon. In 1930 American historian Bernard DeVoto asserted, in the *American Mercury*, that "unquestionably, Joseph Smith was a paranoid." He admitted later that the article was a "dishonest attack." In 1931 Harry M. Beardsley, in *Joseph Smith and His Mormon Empire*, published in 1931, asserted that Joseph's revelations, visions, and the Book of Mormon itself were simply by-products of Joseph's subconscious. For further discussion of the suggested association of Ethan Smith's book *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon, see chapter , *The Book of Mormon and View of the Hebrews* in this volume.

Fawn Brodie, in her 1945 book *No Man Knows My History*, portrayed Joseph Smith as a “myth-maker” who absorbed his theological ideas from his rural New York environment. Brodie repudiated the Spaulding theory and revived the original Alexander Campbell thesis that Joseph Smith alone was the author of the Book of Mormon. Then, in 1977 a book entitled *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* was published by three anti-Mormons (Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. David, and Donald R. Scales) who asserted that the Book of Mormon has its roots in a second Spaulding manuscript that no one has produced. Hence, after 170 years, anti-Mormon writers have come back to where they started, with nothing to show for the journey.

### **Techniques Utilized by Anti-Mormon Writers**

These techniques are often utilized alone or in combination:

1. They make statements that are false. Who would knowingly publish a lie except as they are guided by the father of lies? It is pitiful that these authors often sink to combating truth with error, misstatements, and lies.

2. They make statements that contain some minor element of truth, often half truths, but they also contain major elements of distortion and sensationalism. In this category, the anti-Mormon writers may use rumor or opinion mixed with proven facts or truth. The truth is often hidden, however, by the distortions, misrepresentations, and half truths.

3. Statements that are basically true, but may contain some element of sensationalism and distortion. These are often highly sacred doctrines. The anti-Mormons’ knowing about them and writing of them constitute an application of the principle of “neither cast ye your pearls before swine” (Matthew 7:6).

4. Occasionally they will use statements that are accurate representations of the truth. Somehow they expect these statements to call forth a negative response from their readers.

If you read the bibliography of anti-Mormon books, you will find that the authors often make reference to other anti-Mormon writings without regard to how vulgar or unsubstantiated the referenced writings may be. This interrelated and inbred recycling of untruth and prejudice simply tends to preserve their own flawed philosophies. If you wanted to know about the character of Christ, would you accept the statements of the Roman guard at the sepulcher? Or of the Pharisee who rejoiced at the death of the Savior? Or of the anti-Christians? I think not. Why, then, do anti-Mormon writers consistently accept the testimonies of those who murdered the prophet, or of those who are apostates or bitter enemies of the Church or both? Usually those who heed these anti-Mormon authors’ lies are simply not interested in the truth.

## **A Parable for Critics of the Book of Mormon Written by Dr. Hugh Nibley**

The following parable was written by Dr. Hugh Nibley and first published in *Lehi in the Desert and The World of the Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. and FARMS, 1988), 121-22).

A young man once long ago claimed that he had found a large diamond in his field as he was plowing. He put the stone on display to the public free of charge, and everyone took sides. A psychologist showed, by citing some famous case studies, that the young man was suffering from a well known form of delusion. Historians showed that other men have also claimed to have found diamonds in fields and have been deceived. A geologist proved that there were no diamonds in the area, but only quartz. The young man had been fooled by a quartz. When asked to inspect the stone itself, the geologist declined with a wary tolerant smile and a kindly shake of the head. An English professor showed that the young man in describing his stone used the very same language that others had used in describing uncut diamonds. He was, therefore, simply speaking the common language of his time. A sociologist showed that only three out of a hundred and seventy-seven florist assistants in four major cities believed that the stone was genuine. A clergyman wrote a book to show that it was not the young man, but someone else who had found the stone.

Finally, an indigent jeweler named Snite pointed out that since the stone was still available for examination, the answer to the question of whether it was a diamond or not had absolutely nothing to do with who found it or whether the finder was honest or sane; or who believed him; or whether he would know a diamond from a brick; or whether diamonds had ever been found in fields; or whether people had ever been fooled by quartz or glass; but was to be answered simply and solely by putting the stone to certain well known tests for diamonds. Experts in diamonds were called in. Some of them declared it genuine. The others made nervous jokes about it and declared that they could not very well jeopardize their dignity and reputations by appearing to take the thing too seriously. To hide the bad impression thus made, someone came out with the theory that the stone was really a synthetic diamond—very skillfully made; but a fake just the same. The objection to this is that the production of a good synthetic diamond 157 years ago would have been an even more remarkable feat than the finding of a real one.

## **Biographical Facts About Some of the Better-Known Anti-Mormon Authors**

**Eber D. Howe and “Doctor” Philastus Hurlbut.** See the notes above regarding these two men.

**“Doctor” Walter Ralston Martin.** “Doctor” Walter R. Martin was the founder and director of the Christian Research Institute in San Juan Capistrano, California. His books *The Maze of Mormonism* and *The Kingdom of the Cults* have been common sources for the sectarian world to turn to when seeking knowledge about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Martin’s books appear well documented, and his style of writing is to expose the “serious threat” of the Mormon Church to Christian society. His books make entertaining and compelling reading until you go beneath the surface and investigate his claims and credentials.

“Doctor” Martin’s only doctorate was from a non-accredited correspondence school in Southern California. He also claimed a master’s degree in Comparative Religion. For years prior to getting his “doctorate,” Martin was referring to himself as “Doctor.” On both of his most popular books, Martin claimed to have four degrees. His “degrees” are from Stony Brook School (a high school), Adelphi University (which he attended for only one semester), the Biblical Seminary of New York (where he attended a summer session), and New York University (where he received a master’s degree in Philosophy, not Comparative Religion). He does not hold a valid doctorate degree.

Martin commonly claimed to be an ordained Baptist minister of the Southern Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Convention. However, Martin’s only valid ordination was revoked in 1953. Yet, in a 1973 court document relating to his second divorce, Martin claimed, under oath, to be “an ordained Minister of the American Baptist Convention in good standing” (Brown and Brown, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive*, 3:8). In a letter from the executive director of the American Baptist Churches USA, Reverend Linda C. Spoolstra, she stated: “Walter Ralston Martin is not listed in the American Baptist Churches’ Professional Registry, nor is he listed in our Directory of Professional Church Leaders. This means that he has no standing in our denomination” (*Ibid.*, 9). In a letter from the Southern Baptist Agency, Barbara Denman wrote: “We have searched our . . . personnel records for the name of Walter Martin, but are unable to come up with anything. Evidently, he is not Southern Baptist, nor is he ordained” (*Ibid.*, 17).

Martin repeatedly claimed in his books, in his lectures, and on radio shows that he was a descendant of early Mormon leader Brigham Young. In a taped lecture in 1977, he made this statement to his audience:

Wayne Cowdrey [another anti-Mormon] and I are very close because he is a descendant of Oliver Cowdery, who allegedly wrote down the Book of Mormon that Joseph dictated. He is now a reborn Christian. I am a descendant of Brigham Young—successor to Joseph Smith, ruler of the Latter-day Saints’ Church—a born again Christian.

Wayne Cowdrey, as it turns out, was not a descendant of Oliver Cowdrey (note the difference in the spelling of the surnames). Oliver Cowdrey's only surviving child was a daughter who died childless! Nor was Martin a descendant of Brigham Young. That was proven in a public setting in 1984, whereupon Martin changed his claim (*Ibid.*, 69-91). He then said he was related to one of Brigham's brothers—another false claim.

Martin claimed to be an authority on the doctrines and the finances of the LDS Church. In the preface of his book *The Maze of Mormonism*, he stated: "The facts herein contained must be sound and reliable if the conclusions arrived at are to be considered valid. . . . [I] have made every effort to accomplish this goal of accuracy." His claims have proved to be wholly inaccurate. He illustrates "the Mormon threat," by claiming that Mormons own or control major businesses in the United States and have enormous wealth and holdings to create a position of power. These claims have been proven to be erroneous (*Ibid.*, 3:135-78). Martin seemed to depend on the hope that the sensationalism of his claims would prevent his readers from checking his references and disputing his conclusions. The specific claims he made have been shown to be false through a review of the records of the public corporations involved and by a search of widely published industrial statistics.

Martin's Christian Research Institute (CRI), once a small rented suite in a modest business complex, showed \$12,000,000 in gross income from 1979 to 1982. Since it was registered as a "religious" organization, CRI paid no taxes. His book *The Kingdom of the Cults* sold over 300,000 copies at \$14.95 per copy. Obviously Martin's attack on the Church has been profitable for him.

**J. Edward Decker.** Ed Decker, a former Mormon, is the founder of an organization in Issaquah, Washington, named Saints Alive in Jesus Christ, or Ex-Mormons for Jesus, a group of "reformed" Mormons.

Decker has written a few crude pamphlets about the Church that make sensational statements about Mormonism, Church leaders, doctrines, and so on, but his best known works are the film productions *The God Makers*, *Temple of the God Makers*, and *The God Makers II*. In these documentary-style films, Decker and cohort Richard Baer claim to "reveal" the so-called evil empire of the LDS Church to the curious or the unknowing. Decker has stated publicly that controversy and dispute are a part of his nature. The major themes of *The God Makers* are: (1) that the Church's strong family image is false and that the Church actually destroys families and promotes divorce; (2) that the Church is a powerful non-Christian cult that teaches and practices blasphemy and performs occult rituals; and (3) that members work their way to godhood while neglecting Jesus Christ and worshiping Joseph Smith.

Decker's sequel, *The God Makers II* is just as evil and false as the first, representing religious bigotry at its worst. In this latter film, Decker attacks Church leaders, making groundless accusations of sexual immorality. Decker then accused the Church of misuse of Church funds. *The Arizona Republic*, a major newspaper in

Arizona, sent a team of reporters to investigate Church finances, and they concluded that such finances were managed honestly and judiciously.

Decker moved on to “expose” the Church as a seed bed of Satanic worship and child abuse! Finally, Decker took on the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center, saying it is being used as a center for proselyting against a carefully worked out relationship with the State of Israel.

Decker’s deception is clear to those who know the truth. Though it would seem unnecessary to answer his claims, some have taken the time to do so. See, for example, Gilbert W. Scharffs, *The Truth about The God Makers*; James A. Carver, *The New Mythmakers: A Reply to the Film “The God Makers”*; and Brown and Brown, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive*, 4 volumes.

**Dee Jay Nelson.** While Dee Jay Nelson never wrote an anti-Mormon book, he is well-known as an “expert” on Latter-day scripture. He is quoted in numerous anti-Mormon works, including books by Walter Martin, Wayne L. Cowdrey, and Jerald and Sandra Tanner.

Nelson’s primary activity and livelihood for twelve years was giving anti-Mormon lectures to various Christian churches. He primarily focused on the book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price. Nelson alleged that Joseph Smith’s translation of the papyri from which the book of Abraham was translated was incorrect, which allegedly proved that Joseph was not a prophet of God. He also claimed that the LDS Church asked him to study and translate the book of Abraham in the Joseph Smith Papyri and agreed to publish his works.

“Professor” Dee Jay Nelson was never a professor, doctor, or Egyptologist. Nelson was a high school and college dropout who forged his credentials or bought them from a degree mill in Seattle, Washington (Pacific Northwestern University). Pacific Northwestern University was shut down by the state of Washington Attorney General’s office in 1980 (see Brown and Brown, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive*, volume 1 for more information about Dee Jay Nelson’s credentials). He claimed to have been employed by King Farouk, the last monarch of Egypt, and that King Farouk was so impressed with his work that he awarded him “a small collection of Egyptian antiquities” (*Ibid.*, 1:97). Nelson also claimed to have been asked by the Egyptian government to calculate the weight of the inner coffin of Tutankhamen.

Dr. El Zeini, an Egyptologist living in Cairo who was closely associated with the Cairo Museum, was asked about Dee Jay Nelson and his connection to the Museum and to King Farouk. Zeini replied, “It is a well established fact that the late King Farouk was an astute collector. It is quite impossible to think that he would consult a freelance Egyptologist or confide in him his voluminous collection when he could have at hand the expert advice of the top notch Egyptologists of the time.” In the same letter, Zeini writes, “I have inquired from all the veteran Egyptologists who were working in the Antiquities Department in Egypt about the identity of Mr. D. J. Nelson. No one seems to

remember this name or to recollect having seen him participate in any known excavation” (*Ibid.*, 98).

In a lecture in Mesa, Arizona, on February 22, 1980, Nelson said:

Now, before I begin the lecture, I want to say something about my credentials. Since I have been in the valley, there has been much said against me in that respect. . . . You can check my credentials. I make my living as an Egyptologist. I’m paid for it. I’m either an Egyptologist or I’m fooling a lot of people. . . . Well, I think that will be enough on that topic, but if you doubt that I have my degree, and my degree is in Anthropology, not Egyptology, you remember then, write these people that I mentioned, and you will find out the truth of the matter!

Robert L. and Rosemary Brown of Mesa, Arizona, took Nelson’s challenge and put him out of business. They examined carefully Nelson’s credentials in their book *They Lie in Wait to Deceive*. The information they unearthed unravels a remarkable story of deception. While he is no longer in demand as a lecturer or as an expert on Mormon scripture, his works live on in the spurious publications that continue to tout his wisdom, experiences, and credentials.

**Jerald and Sandra Tanner.** The Tanners are hailed by enemies of the Church as scholars and truth seekers. Their attacks on the Church have mostly focused on differences between various historical accounts of early Church events and on changes to LDS scriptures. Their first published book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, is virtually contained in their later, more exhaustive publication *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* This latter work is nearly six hundred pages long and requires a formidable effort just to wade through it. Brother Richard Winwood, who took the time to read it commented:

Those who take the time to read *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* (as I have) will find that the bulk of the material contributing to the volume is simply the same information repeated over and over in different sections of the book. Much of the Tanners’ argument would not be an argument at all if it weren’t for the creative conclusions they put forth and for the imaginative and unethical way they extract material from LDS History and scripture. In the preface to their book . . . the Tanners write: “The fact that [the LDS Church] would allow 65,000 copies to be published without an official response seems to show that there are no real answers to the questions we have raised.” Later in the same paragraph they add: “The truth of the matter is that the Church leaders do not mind controversy if they feel they can come out ahead. We believe, however, that the Church has too many secrets to hide to come out in open opposition to [this book].”

The truth of the matter is that LDS Church leadership will not officially comment on anti-Mormon claims or arguments because expending Church resources and energy in that way would detract from the Church's objective to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Tanners repeatedly use this policy to their advantage, sowing doubt in the hearts of those who are unaware of the Church's policy (*Take Heed That Ye Be Not Deceived* [Richard I. Winwood: Salt Lake City, Utah] 1995).

Brother Winwood commented that he found the Tanners' book to be full of quotations purposefully taken out of context to manipulate and mislead the reader.

Lawrence Foster, a non-Mormon scholar (associate professor of American history at the Georgia Institute of Technology), who has spent many years of work on Mormonism and its history, in his article "Career Apostates: Reflections on the Works of Jerald and Sandra Tanner," (*Dialogue* 17 [summer 1984]: 51) wrote:

Jerald and Sandra Tanner have read widely enough in the sources of LDS history to provide that [larger] perspective, but they do not. Although the most conscientious and honest researcher can overlook pertinent sources of information, the repeated omissions of evidence by the Tanners suggest an intentional avoidance of sources that modify or refute their caustic interpretation of Mormon history.

Foster also wrote:

The Tanners have repeatedly assumed a holier-than-thou stance, refusing to be fair in applying the same debate standard of absolute rectitude which they demand of Mormonism to their own actions, writings, and beliefs.

The Tanners seem to be playing a skillful shell game in which the premises for judgment are conveniently shifted so that the conclusion is always the same—negative (*Ibid.*).

The Tanners are career anti-Mormons. Slandering the Church is how they make their living. They have published numerous writings based on their "impeccably accurate" research and on the research of other associates, which even a non-scholarly review reveals as biased, misinterpreted, and imaginatively distorted.

## Adam-God Theory

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Critics of the Church have accused us of believing the “doctrine” that Adam, in the Garden of Eden, was God the Father. This is based on what is reported to have been said by Brigham Young in 1852.

**Brigham Young’s statement.** On April 9, 1852, Brigham Young made some remarks about the relationship between Adam and God. It is reported that he said:

Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner! When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is MICHAEL, the Archangel, the ANCIENT OF DAYS! about whom holy men have written and spoken—HE is our FATHER and our GOD, and the only God with whom WE have to do. Every man upon the earth, professing Christians or non-professing, must hear it, and will know it sooner or later. . . . When Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, their bodies became mortal from its effects, and therefore their offspring were mortal. When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. And who is the Father? He is the first of the human family; and when he took a tabernacle, it was begotten by his Father in heaven, after the same manner as the tabernacles of Cain, Abel, and the rest of the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve; from the fruits of the earth, the first earthly tabernacles were originated by the Father, and so on in succession (*Journal of Discourses*, 26 volumes [London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854-1886], 1: 51).

**The phrases causing confusion.** A careful analysis of President Young’s statement reveals that there are two specific phrases that are the source of the controversy:

1. The first is said of Adam: “HE is our FATHER and our GOD, and the only God with whom WE have to do.”

2. The second is referring to the father of the mortal Jesus Christ: “And who is the Father? He is the first of the human family.” It is notable that the very next phrase following this one refers to Adam and says, “When he [Christ] took a tabernacle [a body], it was begotten by his Father in heaven, after the same manner as the tabernacles of Cain, Abel, and the rest of the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve; from the fruits of the earth, the first earthly tabernacles were originated by the Father, and so on in succession.”

Latter-day Saints have never been able to completely understand Brigham Young's statement as it has been reported. The reported statement conflicts with LDS teachings before and after Brigham Young, as well as with statements of President Young himself during the same period of time.

**The comments of LDS leaders and scholars.** A few LDS leaders and scholars have commented on President Young's statement.

**Elder John A. Widtsoe (1872-1952) addressed the issue of the so-called Adam-God theory ("What Are the Facts Concerning the So-Called Adam-God Theory?" in *Evidences and Reconciliations*, 68-71).** Elder Widtsoe wrote that even though Brigham referred to Adam as "our GOD, and the only God with whom WE have to do," he did not mean to imply that Adam was God the Father. Elder Widtsoe felt that Brigham wished only to emphasize the nobility of the man Adam:

He [Brigham Young] spoke of Adam as the great patriarch of the human race, a personage who had been privileged and able to assist in the creation of the earth, who would continue his efforts in behalf of the human family, and through whom many of our needs would be met. All this was in contradiction to the common doctrine the world over that Adam was a great sinner, and not to be held in affectionate remembrance. Nowhere is it suggested that Adam is God, the Father whose child Adam himself was.

On this idea, Elder Widtsoe further wrote:

In the discourse, upon which hangs the Adam-God myth, President Brigham Young discussed the earthly origin of Jesus Christ. He denied that the Holy Ghost was the father of Jesus Christ; and affirmed that the Savior was begotten by God the Father. He explained that "Our Father in Heaven begat all the spirits that ever were or ever will be upon this earth; and they were born spirits in the eternal world. Then the Lord by His power and wisdom organized the mortal tabernacle of man." That is, every human being is in direct descent from God the Father. . . .

In the course of his remarks President Young was led to discuss the high place of Adam among the generations of men, for Adam "helped to make and organize this world," and as first man, the father of us all, Adam stands at the head of the human race, and will ever be the representative of his children before our Father in heaven, the Father of our spirits. It was in connection with this thought that the oft-quoted statement was made about Adam, that "he is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do."

Elder Widtsoe then pointed out that in another paragraph in that very same sermon, President Young makes a clear distinction between Adam and God the Father in the following words:

The earth was organized by three distinct characters, namely Elohim, Jehovah, and Michael”—the last previously defined as Adam. There can be no confusion in this passage of the separate personalities of these three great beings.

Elder Widtsoe felt Brother Brigham intended to point out that the father of the earthly body of Jesus was not the Holy Ghost or Adam. Rather, it was another individual who was in Eden with Adam:

The sermon of April 9, 1852, also makes the statement that, “Jesus, our Elder Brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the Garden of Eden, and who is our Father in Heaven.” The dishonest inference has been drawn and advertised widely that President Young meant that Adam was the earthly father of Jesus Christ. This deduction cannot be made fairly, in view of the context or of his other published utterances on the subject. Adam and Eve were not the only persons in the Garden of Eden, for “they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8). President Young undoubtedly had this personage in mind, for he did not say Adam, but “our Father in heaven.”

In many discourses, President Young refers to Jesus as the Only Begotten of the Father, which would not have been true had Adam been the earthly father of Jesus. At one time he declared (*JD*, 1:238), “I believe the Father came down from heaven, as the Apostles said he did, and begat the Savior of the World; for He is the Only Begotten of the Father which could not have been if the Father did not actually beget him in person.” On another occasion (*JD*, 2:42) he said, “And what shall we say of our Heavenly Father? He is also a man in perfection, and the Father of the man Jesus Christ, and the Father of our spirits.” It seems unnecessary to offer more evidence that Brigham Young held the accepted doctrine of the Church, that God, the Father, and not Adam is the earthly Father of Jesus.

Elder Widtsoe concluded his helpful chapter:

The perspective of years brings out the remarkable fact, that, though the enemies of the Latter-day Saints have had access, in printed form, to the hundreds of discourses of Brigham Young, only half a dozen statements have been useful to the calumniators of the founder of Utah. Of these, the sermon of April 9, 1852, which has been quoted most frequently, presents no errors of fact or doctrine, if read understandingly and honestly.

**Elder Mark E. Peterson suspected that *JD*, 1:51 did not accurately report what Brigham Young actually said on that occasion. He wrote:**

Elder Charles C. Rich was not present on the day when President Young gave an address that was wrongly reported as saying Adam was our Father in heaven (see *JD*, 1:51). The sermon was delivered April 9, 1852, and Elder Rich returned April 21. In a personal copy of the *Journal of Discourses*, Elder Ben E. Rich, son of Elder Charles C. Rich, referred to the misquotation as it appears in the *Journal of Discourses*, and in his own hand corrected the statement to read as follows: “Jesus our Elder Brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character who talked with Adam in the Garden of Eden, and who is our Father in heaven.” In this same statement Ben E. Rich wrote: “As corrected above is what President Young said, as testified to me by my father, C. C. Rich.” (This signed statement is in the hands of the Church Historical Department.) On the face of it the mistake is obvious. We find in Genesis 2:15-16 and 3:8-9 that God walked and talked with Adam in the Garden of Eden” (*Adam: Who Is He?* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], 16-17).

**President Joseph Fielding Smith explained Brigham Young’s statement in *JD*, 1:51 (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 90-108).** It is interesting that President Smith both suggests that *JD*, 1:51 may be a mis-quote, but then he proceeds to explain the two confusing phrases in case they were reported accurately:

**Source of Adam-God theory.** President Brigham Young is quoted—in all probability the sermon was erroneously transcribed!—as having said: “[*JD*, 1:51 quoted].”

**Relationship of Elohim, Jehovah, and Michael.** If the enemies of the Church who quote this wished to be honest, they could not help seeing that President Brigham Young definitely declares that Adam is Michael, the Archangel, the Ancient of Days, which indicates definitely that Adam is not Elohim, or the God whom we worship, who is the Father of Jesus Christ.

Further, they could see that President Young declared that Adam helped to make the earth. If he *helped* then he was subordinate to someone who was superior. In another paragraph in that same discourse, President Young said: “It is true that the earth was organized by three distinct characters, namely, Elohim, Jehovah, and Michael.” Here he places Adam, or Michael, third in the list, and hence the least important of the three mentioned, and this President Young understood perfectly. We believe that Adam, known as Michael, had authority in the heavens before the world was framed. He dwelt in the presence of the Father and the Son and was subject to their direction as the scriptures plainly indicate.

**All exalted men become gods.** To believe that Adam is a god should not be strange to any person who accepts the Bible. When Jesus

was accused of blasphemy because he claimed to be the Son of God, he answered the Jews: "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John 10:34-36).

Paul said, writing to the members of the Church in Rome: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14). And to the Galatians he said: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6).

Joseph Smith taught a plurality of gods, and that man by obeying the commandments of God and keeping the whole law will eventually reach the power and exaltation by which he also will become a god (D&C 132:17, 19-25, 29-32, 37, 49).

**How Adam is our God.** The expression that Adam is the only God with whom we have to do, has caused great discussion and the question naturally arises, do we not have to do with Jesus Christ and his Father? Certainly we do, and we are taught to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son, and all that we do is to be done in the name of the Son. To make clear what President Young had in mind, I will give this illustration: The army is composed of a great number of privates and officers of various ranks. The private in the army is, of course, under the captain, and the captain is under the colonel who receives instructions from his superior officers. In other words the only person with whom the private has to do is his captain. This illustration may seem rather crude, but I think it will convey the thought.

President Brigham Young was thoroughly acquainted with the doctrine of the Church. He studied the Doctrine and Covenants and many times quoted from it the particular passages concerning the relationship of Adam to Jesus Christ. He knew perfectly that Adam was subordinate and obedient to Jesus Christ. He knew perfectly that Adam had been placed at the head of the human family by commandment of the Father, and this doctrine he taught during the many years of his ministry. When he said Adam was the only god with whom we have to do, he evidently had in mind this passage given by revelation through Joseph Smith: "That you may come up unto the crown prepared for you, and be made rulers over many kingdoms, saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Zion [i.e. Jesus Christ], who hath established the foundations of Adam-ondi-Ahman; Who hath appointed Michael [Adam] your prince, and established his feet, and

set him upon high, and given him the keys of salvation under the counsel and direction of the Holy One, who is without beginning of days and end of life” (D&C 78:15-16).

**Adam holds keys of salvation under Christ.** This doctrine was also taught by Joseph Smith, who said: “The Priesthood was first given to Adam. . . . He obtained it in the creation, before the world was formed. . . . He had dominion given him over every living creature. He is Michael the Archangel, spoken of in the scriptures. . . . The Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years. The keys have to be brought from heaven whenever the gospel is sent. When they are revealed from heaven, it is by Adam’s authority. . . . Christ is the Great High Priest, Adam next” (*TPJS*, 157-58).

If the keys of salvation have been committed to the hands of Adam, under the direction of Jesus Christ, then is there anything out of place for President Brigham Young to declare that it is Adam with whom we have to do? And yet here is the acknowledgment of the superiority of Jesus Christ. This being true, then the human family is immediately subject to Adam and he to the Redeemer of the world.

Again, to illustrate this point: In the Church we have a presiding officer whom we call the bishop. He has full charge in the ward over which he presides. This bishop is subject to the direction of the stake president, and he in turn to the Presidency of the Church. The only one, in the same sense, with whom the members have to do is bishop, but he is not the superior officer by any means.

**Status of Adam revealed to Joseph Smith.** In another revelation which President Young taught many times, we find the following: “Wherefore, verily I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal; neither any man, nor the children of men; neither Adam, your father, whom I created” (D&C 29:34).

The doctrine taught by the Church in relation to Adam is clearly defined in the following revelation: “Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing. “And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the prince, the archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations

shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever. And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation; and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation” (D&C 107:53-56).

**Status of Adam known by Brigham Young.** From these passages President Brigham Young could very properly say that we are subject to Adam: that he rules over his posterity, and he gives us commandments, even as he receives commandments from Jesus Christ, who directs him in his ministry and will do so to the latest day of time. And this does not detract anything from the power, greatness, and glory of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

Men who harp upon this saying in the discourse of President Brigham Young should know just as well as they know anything—for it has come to their attention hundreds of times—that Brigham Young did not confuse Adam with Jesus Christ or the Father whom he worshiped.

There is a volume published containing the sayings of President Brigham Young in which his doctrine concerning the Father and the Son, and Adam’s relationship to them is clearly declared in many pages. But when men desire to malign and misrepresent, such things count for nothing.

This is from one of the discourses of Brigham Young: “We are all the children of Adam and Eve, and they are the offspring of Him who dwells in the heavens, the Highest Intelligence that dwells anywhere that we have any knowledge of.” Now, if he believed what some people like to interpret him as saying, then he could not say such a thing as that! . . .

**President Young teaches paternity of Christ.** Another ambiguous statement from President Brigham Young—also, quite likely, not recorded exactly as he said it—is torn from its context and used by enemies of the truth to make it appear that he believed something entirely different from the whole burden of all his other teachings. It is: “When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. And who is the Father? He is the first of the human family; and when he [Christ] took a tabernacle, it was begotten by his Father in heaven, after the same manner as the tabernacles of Cain, Abel, and the rest of the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. . . . Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the Garden of Eden, and who is our Father in Heaven. . . . Now, remember from this time forth, and forever, that Jesus Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost” (*JD*, 1:50-51).

The statement by President Brigham Young that the Father is the first of the human family is easily explained. But the expression that he was the same character that was in the Garden of Eden has led to misunderstanding because of the implication which our enemies place upon it that it had reference to Adam. Unfortunately President Brigham Young is not here to make his meaning in this regard perfectly clear. Under the circumstances we must refer to other expressions by President Brigham Young in order to ascertain exactly what his views really were in relation to God, Adam, and Jesus Christ.

**God: first of the human family.** Let me comment first upon the expression that God is the “first of the human family.” This same doctrine was taught by Joseph Smith. It is a fundamental doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. According to the teachings of Joseph Smith, he beheld the Father and the Son in his glorious vision, and he taught that each had a body of flesh and bones. He has expressed it in these words: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us” (D&C 130:22).

He also taught that, literally, God is our Father; that men are of the same race—the race called humans; and that God, the Progenitor, or Creator, is the Father of the human race. “In the image of his own body, male and female, created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created and became living souls in the land upon the footstool of God” (Moses 6:9).

It is a doctrine common to the Latter-day Saints, that God, the Great Elohim, is the First, or Creator, of the human family.

**The Father was with Adam in Eden.** In discussing the statement by President Brigham Young that the Father of Jesus Christ is the same character who was in the Garden of Eden, it should be perfectly clear that President Young was not referring to Adam, but to God the Father, who created Adam, for he was in the Garden of Eden; and according to Mormon doctrine Adam was in his presence constantly, walked with him, talked with him, and the Father taught Adam his language. It was not until the fall, that the Father departed from Adam and no longer visited him in the Garden of Eden.

Surely we must give President Brigham Young credit for at least ordinary intelligence, and in stating this I place it mildly. If he meant to convey the thought that the character who was in the Garden of Eden, “and who is our Father in Heaven,” was Adam, then it would mean that

this expression was in conflict with all else that he taught concerning God the Father, and I am bold to say that President Brigham Young was not inconsistent in his teaching of this doctrine. The very expression in question, “the same character that was in the Garden of Eden, and who is our Father in Heaven,” contradicts the thought that he meant Adam.

**Brigham Young’s teachings about Adam.** Now let me present one or two expressions in other discourses by President Young—of course, the critics never think of referring to these: “How has it transpired that theological truth is thus so widely disseminated? It is because God was once known on the earth among his children of mankind, as we know one another. Adam was as conversant with his Father who placed him upon this earth as we are conversant with our earthly parents. The Father frequently came to visit his son Adam, and talked and walked with him; and the children of Adam were more or less acquainted with him, and the things that pertain to God and to heaven were as familiar among mankind in the first ages of their existence on the earth, as these mountains are to our mountain boys” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 159). . . .

“Our Lord Jesus Christ-the Savior, who has redeemed the world and all things pertaining to it, is the Only Begotten of the Father pertaining to the flesh. He is our Elder Brother, and the Heir of the family, and as such we worship him. He has tasted death for every man, and has paid the debt contracted by our first parents [that is Adam and Eve]” (*Ibid.*, 40).

“The Latter-day Saints believe in Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Father, who came in the meridian of time, performed his work, suffered the penalty and paid the debt of man’s original sin by offering up himself, [they believe he] was resurrected from the dead, and ascended to his Father; and as Jesus descended below all things, so he will ascend above all things” (*Ibid.*, 39).

It is very clear from these expressions that President Brigham Young did not believe and did not teach, that Jesus Christ was begotten by Adam. He taught that Adam died and that Jesus Christ redeemed him. He taught that Adam disobeyed the commandment of the Father, or God, and was driven from the Garden of Eden. He said that Adam was conversant with his Father in the Garden of Eden. This is believed by all members of the Church, and also that the Father was in the Garden of Eden until Adam was driven out for his transgression.

**Adam not Father of Christ.** The statement, “And when he took a tabernacle it was begotten by his Father in heaven, after the same manner as the tabernacles of Cain, Abel, and, the rest of the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, has reference to the body of Jesus Christ.

Adam died as the Father said he would through partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Moses 3:16-17; 4:9, 17; 6:10-12). Adam's spirit and body were separated, and he did not get the resurrection until after the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 26:23; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5). Adam, when a spirit without the body, could not beget a body of flesh and bones, therefore, he could not be the Father of Jesus Christ in the flesh.

Again, Adam was as dependent on Jesus Christ as we are for the resurrection which came through the fact that Jesus had life in himself as his Father did (John 10:14-18). Therefore, he had to have a Father who had body of flesh and bones who was immortal, not a father who was a spirit with a body in the grave, whose body had turned to dust.

**Worship Elohim: not Adam.** We worship Elohim, the Father of Jesus Christ. We do not worship Adam and we do not pray to him. We are all his children through the flesh, but Elohim, the God we worship, is the Father of our spirits; and Jesus Christ, his first Begotten Son in the spirit creation and his Only Begotten Son in the flesh, is our Eldest Brother.

**Professor Stephen E. Robinson at Brigham Young University wrote of JD, 1:51:**

So how do Latter-day Saints deal with [this statement]? We don't; we simply set it aside. It is an anomaly. On occasion my colleagues and I at Brigham Young University have tried to figure out what Brigham Young might have actually said and what it might have meant, but the attempts have always failed. The reported statements simply do not compute—we cannot make sense out of them. This is not a matter of believing it or disbelieving it; we simply don't know what "it" is. If Brigham Young were here we could ask him what he actually said and what he meant by it, but he is not here, and even expert students of his thought are left to wonder whether he was misquoted, whether he meant to say one thing and actually said another, whether he was somehow joking with or testing the saints, or whether some vital element that would make sense out of the reports has been omitted (Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991], 20-21).

Anti-Mormon critics have not only interpreted Brigham Young's remarks—referring to it as the "Adam-God theory"—they have also elevated their own interpretation to the status of "official LDS doctrine." It is a case of our theology being dictated to us by our critics. According to them Brigham Young taught that Adam, the husband of Eve and father of Cain, is identical to that Elohim who is God, the Father of spirits and the Father of Jesus Christ. But for Latter-day Saints this interpretation has

always been simply impossible. It contradicts the LDS scriptures. It contradicts the teachings of Joseph Smith. As mentioned, it contradicts other statements by Brigham Young made during the same period of time. It contradicts the teachings of all the prophets since Brigham Young. And it contradicts the sacred ordinances of the LDS temples, with which Brigham Young was intimately familiar.

The point is that while anti-Mormons can believe whatever they want, the Latter-day Saints have never believed that Brigham Young taught the “Adam-God theory” as explained in anti-Mormon literature, and that whether Brigham Young believed it or not, the concept proposed and interpreted by non-Mormons simply cannot be found in the theology of the Latter-day Saints.

I do not believe it. My friends do not believe it. And no one I know who understands LDS theology believes it. Yet there are few anti-Mormon publications that do not present this “theory” as one of the most characteristic doctrines of the Latter-day Saints. This is certainly a misrepresentation. I believe it is also dishonest. When used to justify a charge that Latter-day Saints aren’t Christians, it is a case of condemning the Latter-day Saints for things they do not believe or teach.

## Blood Atonement Doctrine

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The Church is sometimes accused of believing and teaching the so-called doctrine of “blood atonement.” In most general terms the doctrine of blood atonement has reference to the great sacrifice made by Jesus Christ in the shedding of his blood upon the cross. Through that sacrifice the power of death was destroyed, and all mankind will receive the blessing of restoration to immortality. That is, each will be resurrected and can subsequently die no more. The doctrines of the Church also affirm that the atonement wrought by the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ is fully efficacious in providing the gift of eternal life (living forever in the presence of God). This blessing may be provided for the individual who sincerely believes in the Savior, sincerely repent of his sins, is baptized by one having authority, and receives the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. So in this general way, we do believe in the doctrine of blood atonement. In fact, the entire Christian world believes in a variant of this doctrine.

The phrase “blood atonement” also has a more specific meaning. It refers to the doctrine that a murderer cannot be forgiven without his own blood’s being shed here in mortality. For the willful murderer, the Savior’s sacrifice alone will not absolve the person of the consequences of the sin. Only by voluntarily submitting to whatever penalty the Lord may require can that person benefit from the atonement of Christ.

Several early Church leaders, most notably Brigham Young, taught that in a complete theocracy the Lord could require the voluntary shedding of a murderer’s blood—presumably by capital punishment—as part of the process of atonement for such grievous sin. This is “the doctrine of blood atonement.” It remains, for us, a hypothetical doctrine only. Such a theocracy has not been operative in modern times. Blood atonement is not actually a doctrine of the Church and has never been practiced by the Church at any time.

Early anti-Mormon writers charged that under Brigham Young the Church practiced “blood Atonement,” by which they meant Church-instigated violence directed at dissenters, enemies, and strangers. This claim distorted the whole idea of blood atonement—which was based on voluntary submission by an offender—into a supposed justification of involuntary punishment. Occasional isolated acts of violence that occurred in areas where Latter-day Saints lived were typical of that period in the history of the American West, but they were not instances of Church-sanctioned blood atonement.

## Plurality of Gods

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The doctrine of deification is fundamental to understanding the topic of a plurality of gods. It is discussed in “Deification,” in volume 4, chapter 6 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. It should be reviewed prior to undertaking a study of this chapter.

A missionary may be asked: Are Mormons “monotheists” or “polytheists”? Implicit in this question is an accusation. It is widely known that we believe in a plurality of gods. The term “polytheism” is a negative one that generally has reference to pagan deities to whom reverence, devotion, and worship are given.

We understand, of course, the scriptural concept of “one God.” We declare that there is one supreme God. He is God the Father. He is our God, and we are in subjection to him. Closely associated with him, and subservient to him, are his Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost. These three constitute the Godhead, the governing council of the universe. Each member of the Godhead is appropriately referred to as God. We also understand clearly the concept of a plurality of gods (without a capital “g”). This understanding does not constitute “polytheism” in its usual pejorative sense.

### Categories of “gods”

**Man may become like God, in fact may become a god himself.** Among orthodox Christians, one strong objection to our doctrine of deification is that it implies the existence of more than one God. If human beings can become gods and yet remain distinct beings separate from God, it makes for a universe with many gods.

An understanding of the definitions involved is essential. So let’s be clear on what we Latter-day Saints do and do *not* believe. We do not believe that humans will ever be equal to or independent of God. His status in relation to us is not in any way compromised. We do believe there is only one source of light, knowledge, and power in the universe. If through the gospel of Jesus Christ and the grace of God we some day receive the fulness of God (Ephesians 3:19) so that we also can be called gods, humans will never “catch up” with our supreme God. He will always be our God. We may one day sit on thrones exercising the powers of gods. But those of us who have become gods by God’s grace will remain eternally subordinate to the giver of that grace. They will continue to worship and serve the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost forever, and will worship and serve no one and nothing else.

I have already cited those ancient Christians who believed in the doctrine of deification (“Deification,” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 4, chapter 6). It should be noted that for them, as for the Latter-day Saints, the doctrine of deification implied a plurality of “gods” (small “g”) but not a plurality of Gods (capital “G”). Saint

Clement of Alexandria was surely both a monotheist and a Christian, and yet he believed that those who are perfected through the gospel of Christ “are called by the appellation of gods, being destined to sit on thrones with the other gods that have been first installed in their places by the Savior” (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 7.10). This is good LDS doctrine. If Clement, the Christian saint and theologian, could teach that human beings will be called gods and will sit on thrones with others who have been made gods by Jesus Christ, how in all fairness can Joseph Smith and the Mormons be declared polytheists and non-Christians for teaching the same thing?

In harmony with widely recognized scriptural and historical precedents, Latter-day Saints use the term *gods* to describe those who will, through the grace of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ, receive of God’s fulness—of his divine powers and prerogatives—in the resurrection. Thus, for Latter-day Saints the question “Is there more than one god?” is not the same as “Is there more than one source of power or object of worship in the universe?” For Latter-day Saints, as for Saint Clement, the answer to the former is yes, but the answer to the latter is no. For Latter-day Saints the term *god* is a title which can be extended to those who receive the power and authority of God as promised to the faithful in the scriptures. But such an extension of that title does not challenge, limit, or infringe upon the ultimate and absolute position and authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

**Angels of God are referred to as “gods” in scripture.** An *angel* may be defined as an individual in our round of creation that is qualified to be on God’s personally-appointed errand. These may be referred to as “gods” in the scriptures, particularly in the scripture as recorded in its original language.

Stephen E. Robinson, referring to glorified man who eventually, through persistent spiritual growth, becomes a god, wrote:

If the Latter-day Saints had chosen to refer to such glorified beings as “angels” instead of “gods,” it is unlikely anyone outside the LDS church would have objected to the doctrine per se. It seems that it is only the term that is objectionable. And yet the scriptures themselves often use the word *god* in this limited sense to refer to non-ultimate beings.

For example, in Psalm 8 the word *gods* (Hebrew *elohim*) is used in reference to the word angels in the King James version: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels [*elohim*], and hast crowned him with glory and honour”(verses 4-5). Though the Hebrew reads “gods” (*elohim*), translators and commentators from the Septuagint on, including the author of Hebrews in the New Testament, have understood the expression to refer to the angels (see Hebrews 2:7). The term *gods* is here applied to beings other than God.

Deuteronomy 10:17, Joshua 22:22, and Psalm 136:2 all insist that God is a “God of gods.” Clearly this doesn’t mean that there are divine competitors out in the cosmos somewhere. Rather, these passages probably also refer to the angels in their divinely appointed roles. If the angels can, in some sense, be considered divine beings because they exercise the powers of God and act as his agents, then the one *God* they serve is correctly considered a “God of gods.” Scholars have long known, and the Dead Sea Scrolls and other literature of the period have now proven, that the Jews in Jesus’ day commonly referred to the angels as “gods” (Hebrew *elim* or *elohim*) in this non-ultimate sense (see, for example, John Strugnell, *The Angelic Liturgy at Qumran-4 Q Serek Sirof ‘Olat Hassabat in Supplements to Vetus Testamentum VII* [Congress Volume, Oxford 1959], (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 336-38, or A. S. van der Woude, “Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt in den neugefundenen eschatologischen Midraschim aus Qumran Höhle XI,” *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 14 [1965]: 354-73). This is not because the Jews were polytheists, but because they used the term *god* in a limited sense to refer to other beings associated with God whom he allowed the privilege of exercising divine powers.

But human beings are also called “gods” in scripture, probably for the same reasons that the angels are—they, as well as the angels, can exercise the powers of God and act as his agents. Thus Moses is designated a “god to Pharaoh” (Exodus 7:1). This doesn’t mean that Moses had become an exalted or ultimate being, but only that he had been given divine powers and was authorized to represent God to Pharaoh, even to the point of speaking God’s word in the first person. If the scriptures can refer to a mortal human being like Moses as a “god” in this sense, then surely immortal human beings who inherit the fulness of God’s powers and authority in the resurrection can be understood to be “gods” in the same sense.

In Exodus 21:6 and 22:8-9 human judges are referred to in the Hebrew text as *elohim* (“gods”). In Psalm 45:6 the king is referred to as an *elohim*. Human leaders and judges are also referred to as “gods” in the following passage from the book of Psalms: “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods . . . I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes” (Psalm 82:1, 6-7 Jewish and Christian biblical scholars alike have understood this passage as applying the term gods to human beings. According to James S. Ackerman, who is not a Mormon, “the overwhelming majority of commentators have

interpreted this passage as referring to Israelite judges who were called 'gods' because they had the high responsibility of dispensing justice according to God's Law" (James S. Ackerman, "The Rabbinic Interpretation of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John," *Harvard Theological Review* 59 [April 1966], 186).

In the New Testament, at John 10:34-36, we read that Jesus himself quoted Psalm 82:6 and interpreted the *term gods* as referring to human beings who had received the word of God: "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" In other words, "If the scriptures [Psalm 82] can refer to mortals who receive the word of God as 'gods,' then why get upset with me for merely saying I am the Son of God?" The Savior's argument was effective precisely because the scripture does use the term *gods* in this limited way to refer to human beings. According to J. A. Emerton, who is also not a Mormon, "most exegetes are agreed that the argument is intended to prove that men can, in certain circumstances, be called gods. . . . [Jesus] goes back to fundamental principles and argues, more generally, that the word 'god' can, in certain circumstances, be applied to beings other than God himself, to whom he has committed authority" (J. A. Emerton, "The Interpretation of Psalm 82 in John 10," *Journal of Theological Studies* 11 (April 1960): 329, 332. This was also the view of Saint Augustine in writing of this passage in *On the Psalms*, 50.2: "It is evident, then, that he has called men 'gods,' who are deified by his grace" (cf. also 97.12) (*Are Mormons Christians?* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991], 66-68).

So, we may easily summarize the LDS view. Whether in this life or the next, through Christ, human beings can be given the powers of God and the authority of God. Those who receive this great inheritance can properly be called gods. They are not gods in the Platonic philosophic sense of "ultimate beings," nor do they compete with God as objects of worship. They remain eternally his begotten sons and daughters—therefore, never equal to him nor independent of him. Orthodox theologians may argue that Latter-day Saints shouldn't use the term *gods* for non-ultimate beings, but this is because the Latter-day Saints' use of the term violates Platonic rather than biblical definitions. Both in the scriptures and in earliest Christianity those who received the word of God were called gods.

When anti-Mormon critics interpret those verses of scripture that contain the word "god," (Exodus 7:1, Deuteronomy 10:1, Psalm 8:5—in Hebrew, Psalm 45:6, Psalm 82:6, or John 10:34-36) they go to great lengths to clarify that these scriptures use the

term *god* in a limited sense. There may be more than one “*god*,” but there is only one God. When they discuss Latter-day Saint writings that use the term *god* in the same sense, however, the critics seldom offer the same courtesy. Instead they disallow any limited sense in which the term gods can be used when that term occurs in LDS sources, thereby distorting and misinterpreting our doctrine. Then they accuse us of being “polytheists” for speaking of “gods” in a sense for which there are valid scriptural and historical precedents.

I will conclude this chapter with an instructive incident in Jesus’s mortal life. It is recorded in John 10:22-38. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus was at Jerusalem during the Feast of Dedication, which took place in the winter. He was walking in the temple, in the area known as Solomon’s porch. At this point “the Jews,” probably the Pharisees, demanded to know “plainly” whether or not Jesus was in fact the Christ, or the Messiah. Responding in a roundabout way, Jesus answered that his good works would tell who he was, at least for those who were receptive to the truth.

But he followed that comment with a strong statement that clearly incensed his audience: He declared, “I and my Father are one.” At this point, the Jews took up rocks to stone him. The Greek word used for “one” here is *hen* which may be translated as “equal to” or “on a par with.” Jesus, here, was not claiming to be “the God” or the Father, but he was claiming to be “a God,” in other words divine.

Jesus then asked, in effect, “For which of my good works do you want to stone me” (verse 32)? His question was obviously and intentionally ironic, and it is clear that he actually knew the real reason for their anger. The Jews responded that they weren’t stoning him for good works, but “because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God” (verse 33).

Jesus then answered their charge by making two points.

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God (verses 34-36)?

The first point is that the unbelieving Jews were silly to assault Jesus for so petty an offense as claiming to be the Son of God when the scripture itself, God’s own word, sometimes speaks of mere men as “gods” or “sons of God.” The second point is built upon that one. He says, in effect, “If there is a sense in which men can be spoken of as ‘gods,’ how much more may the term be used of him whom the Father has consecrated and sent!”

In saying, “is it not written in your law,” Jesus was referring to the Old Testament, Psalm 82. Jesus then returned to the testimony of the good works that he had performed and ended with the declaration that “the Father is in me, and I in him” (verse 38). Thereupon, provoked and angered once again by what they regarded as blasphemy, his audience again assaulted him, but he escaped unharmed.

Let us now look at Psalm 82:1-8, which Jesus cited in his conversation with the accusing Jews.

**1 God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.**

**verse 1** God the Father presides in this “congregation of the mighty” the members of which are called “gods.” What is this “congregation of the mighty”? The Hebrew phrase that is translated as the “congregation of the mighty” might be more accurately rendered as “the council of El” or “the council of God.” Latter-day scripture allows us to suggest that this is likely a heavenly council consisting of the “noble and great ones” (Abraham 3:22-24) who are actually premortal “intelligences”—actually spirit children of the Father. Members of this council are called gods and are given the stewardship of the nations of the earth—to judge and to watch over them. They are presided over and counseled—“judged”—by the Father.

The function of this council is at least in part a judicial one—to judge the people of the nations of the earth.

**2 How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.**

**verse 2** The Father finds need to counsel and correct at least some of the members of the heavenly council.

The word “selah” is a word which simply means a pause in the narrative.

**3 Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.**

**4 Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.**

**5 They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.**

**6 I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.**

**verse 6** By virtue of their elect status, the members of this council are referred to by the Father as “gods.” They are foreordained to be the Lord’s chosen on earth.

**7 But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.**

**verse 7** Their future lot is to inherit mortality and eventually “die like men.”

**8 Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.**

**verse 8** This final verse is the Psalmist’s exclamation after witnessing the proceedings of that heavenly court.

## Kinderhook Plates

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Some anti-Mormons claim that Joseph Smith proved himself a fraud by translating some plates dug up in Kinderhook, Illinois in 1843. The plates were actually planted in the ground as a hoax and in an attempt to embarrass the Prophet by some antagonists of the Church.

A member of the Church who has carefully investigated the matter of the “Kinderhook plates” is Stanley B. Kimball. Herein is reproduced his excellent article (“Kinderhook Plates Brought to Joseph Smith Appear to Be a Nineteenth-Century Hoax,” *Ensign*, August 1981, 66).

A recent electronic and chemical analysis of a metal plate (one of six original plates) brought in 1843 to the Prophet Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois, appears to solve a previously unanswered question in Church history, helping to further evidence that the plate is what its producers later said it was—a nineteenth-century attempt to lure Joseph Smith into making a translation of ancient-looking characters that had been etched into the plates.

Joseph Smith did not make the hoped-for translation. In fact, no evidence exists that he manifested any further interest in the plates after early examination of them, although some members of the Church hoped that they would prove to be significant. But the plates never did.

The complex yet fascinating story behind this little-known event in Church history follows.

**Historical background.** In Nauvoo, Illinois, during the first week in May 1843, the church publication *Times and Seasons* printed an article entitled “Ancient Records” which reported the alleged discovery of six ancient brass plates in an Indian mound near the town of Kinderhook, Illinois, fifty-five miles south of Nauvoo in Pike County, Illinois.

A statement signed by W. P. Harris, M.D., of Barry, Pike County, informed the *Times and Seasons* readers of the discovery:

On the 16th of April last a respectable merchant by the name of Robert Wiley, commenced digging in a large mound near this place: he excavated to the depth of 10 feet and came to rock; about that time the rain began to fall, and he abandoned the work. On the 23rd he and quite a number of the citizens with myself, repaired to the mound, and after making ample opening, we found plenty of rock, the most of which appeared as though it had been strongly burned; and after removing full two feet of said rock, we found plenty of charcoal and ashes; also human bones that appeared as though they had been burned; and near the eciphalon [sic. correctly spelled “encephalon,” or head] a bundle was

found that consisted of six plates of brass, of a bell shape, each having a hole near the small end, and a ring through them all, and clasped with two clasps, the ring and clasps appeared to be of iron very much oxidated, the plates appeared first to be copper, and had the appearance of being covered with characters. It was agreed by the company that I should cleanse the plates: accordingly I took them to my house, washed them with soap and water, and a woolen cloth; but finding them not yet cleansed I treated them with dilute sulfuric acid which made them perfectly clean, on which it appeared that they were completely covered with hieroglyphics that none as yet have been able to read.

The plates greatly excited public curiosity in the area, and within a week of their alleged discovery they were brought to Nauvoo for a short stay. An editorial comment in the same *Times and Seasons* article indicates how important the eager writer felt these brass plates might be:

Circumstances are daily transpiring which give additional testimony to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. . . . The following . . . will, perhaps have a tendency to convince the skeptical, that such things [metal plates] have been used, and that even the obnoxious Book of Mormon, may be true.

The editorial further reported:

Mr. Smith has had those plates, what his opinion concerning them is, we have not yet ascertained. The gentleman that owns them has taken them away, or we should have given a facsimile of the plates and characters in this number. We are informed however, that he purposes returning with them for translation; if so, we may be able yet to furnish our readers with it.

A month and a half later the Nauvoo Neighbor Press published a 12" x 15" broadside entitled *Discovery of the Brass Plates*. This handbill contained a reprint of the *Times and Seasons* story, with the addition of facsimiles of all twelve sides of the six plates. Nothing further regarding the Prophet's opinion of the plates appeared on the broadside—only a statement that “the contents of the plates . . . will be published in the ‘*Times and Seasons*,’ as soon as the translation is completed.”

These two oblique references to a “translation” were followed thirteen years later by a more direct published statement that until recently was wrongly thought to have been written by Joseph Smith himself. On September 3 and 10, 1856, the following paragraphs appeared in the *Deseret News* as part of the serialized “History of Joseph Smith”:

[May 1, 1843:] I insert facsimiles of the six brass plates found near Kinderhook, in Pike county, Illinois, on April 23, by Mr. R. Wiley and others, while excavating a large mound. They found a skeleton about six

feet from the surface of the earth, which must have stood nine feet high. The plates were found on the breast of the skeleton, and were covered on both sides with ancient characters.

I have translated a portion of them, and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the ruler of heaven and earth. (Then followed a reprint of material from the *Times and Seasons* article.)

Although this account appears to be the writing of Joseph Smith, it is actually an excerpt from a journal of William Clayton. It has been well known that the serialized “History of Joseph Smith” consists largely of items from other persons’ personal journals and other sources, collected during Joseph Smith’s lifetime and continued after the saints were in Utah, then edited and pieced together to form a history of the Prophet’s life “in his own words.” It was not uncommon in the nineteenth century for biographers to put the narrative in the first person when compiling a biographical work, even though the subject of the biography did not actually say or write all the words attributed to him; thus the narrative would represent a faithful report of what others felt would be helpful to print. The Clayton journal excerpt was one item used in this way. For example, the words “I have translated a portion” originally read “President J. has translated a portion. . . .”

Where the ideas written by William Clayton originated is unknown. However, as will be pointed out later, speculation about the plates and their possible content was apparently quite unrestrained in Nauvoo when the plates first appeared. In any case, this altered version of the extract from William Clayton’s journal was reprinted in the *Millennial Star* of 15 January 1859, [page 68] and, unfortunately, was finally carried over into official Church history when the “History of Joseph Smith” was edited into book form as the *History of the Church* in 1909.

By 1912, however, at least two items of evidence had come to light indicating that the Kinderhook plates were not authentic. One was a letter written in 1855 (but not published until 1912) by Dr. W. P. Harris—the same W. P. Harris who authored the statement that appeared in the *Times and Seasons* article. In this letter he wrote that in 1843 he had accepted the discovery of the plates as genuine. “I washed and cleaned the plates and subsequently made an honest affidavit to the same,” he said. “But since that time, Bridge Whitton [a blacksmith in Kinderhook, Illinois] said to me that he cut and prepared the plates and he (B. Whitton) and R. Wiley engraved them themselves, and that there was nitric acid put upon them the night before they were found to rust the iron ring and band. And that they were carried to the mound, rubbed in the dirt and carefully dropped into the pit where they were found.”

The other item was a letter written in 1879 by Wilbur Fugate (another of those present at the excavation of the plates) to an anti-Mormon in Salt Lake City. Fugate

declared that the alleged discovery of the Kinderhook plates was “a humbug, gotten up by Robert Wiley, Bridge Whitton and myself. . . . None of the nine persons who signed the certificate [a document included in the *Times and Seasons* article] knew the secret, except Wiley and I.

“We read in Pratt’s prophecy that ‘Truth is yet to spring out of the earth.’ [The quote is from Parley P. Pratt’s 1837 missionary tract *Voice of Warning*.] We concluded to prove the prophecy by way of a joke. We soon made our plans and executed them. Bridge Whitton cut them out of some pieces of copper; Wiley and I made the hieroglyphics by making impressions on beeswax and filling them with acid and putting it on the plates. When they were finished we put them together with rust made of nitric acid, old iron and lead, and bound them with a piece of hoop iron, covering them completely with the rust.”

Fugate then went on to tell how they secretly buried the plates and faked their discovery.

These accounts have generated much controversy for more than a hundred years since the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, the question being twofold: (1) are the Kinderhook plates authentic? and (2) did Joseph Smith attempt to translate them? In general, Latter-day Saint scholars and laymen have sought to confirm the story of the Kinderhook plates, feeling that such authentication would both defend the Prophet and make more plausible the account of the Book of Mormon having been taken from plates of gold. Antagonists, on the other hand, have sought to demonstrate that Joseph Smith was a false prophet.

**The question of authenticity.** Because the whereabouts of the plates since at least 1844 had been unknown, their authenticity remained a matter of conjecture. But in 1920, one of them came into the possession of the Chicago Historical Society. Only then did direct testing become possible.

How the one remaining plate got to Chicago is an interesting story in itself—a story that is consistent with physical evidence (to be discussed later) that this plate is indeed one of the original Kinderhook plates brought to Nauvoo in 1843.

In 1845, a Dr. Joseph Nash McDowell established a college of medicine in St. Louis. The college had a museum of natural history that contained 3,000 items, among them “Antiquities, &c. of our country.” W. P. Harris, in his letter of 1855, said he had heard from a fellow physician “that R Wiley graduated [from the college] since finding the plates . . . and that Dr. Professor McDowell on surgery has the plates now in his office.” It is now apparent that Wiley either sold or gave the Kinderhook plates to McDowell for the museum.

McDowell was a southern sympathizer who left St. Louis to serve the Confederacy as a physician during the Civil War. This made him very unpopular in St. Louis, and when the U.S. Army seized his college in 1861 for use as a prison, the 2nd Iowa Reserve Regiment sacked it. The Chicago Historical Society received one of the

plates in 1920 as a gift from Charles F. Gunther, a noted collector of historical artifacts. Gunther had acquired it on 15 July 1889 from F. C. A. Richardson, M.D. (a member of both the St. Louis and the Chicago Academies of Science). Richardson in turn received it from a Dr. J. W. McDowell (not the same man as Dr. Joseph Nash McDowell), who got it from a soldier in the 2nd Iowa Reserve Regiment.

Since coming to public awareness in 1920, this plate has undergone a number of tests. For example, in 1953 it was examined by two engravers who made an affidavit stating that “to the best of our knowledge this Plate was engraved with a pointed instrument and not etched with acid”—a conclusion which contradicted the letters claiming the plates to be a hoax, and which therefore fueled the hopes of those who wanted the plates to be proven genuine.

A much more rigorous study of the Chicago plate was organized in 1969 by Dr. Paul Cheesman of Brigham Young University. He secured permission from the Chicago Historical Society to bring the plate to BYU for exhaustive non-destructive testing—that is, analytical tests not involving actual damage to the plate. The results of these tests were to be compared with previous tests performed in 1960 and 1966. The plate was examined by physicists, engravers, a jeweler, a metalworker, and several photographers, with mixed results. The physicists concluded that the plate was acid-etched and of non-ancient brass; the others could not agree whether it was etched, engraved, or both. Dr. Cheesman concluded: “It appears we need to have a destructive analysis for further confirmation. Much more testing needs to be done.”

There the matter rested until 1980, when I had the good fortune to secure permission from the Chicago Historical Society for the recommended destructive tests. These tests, involving some very sophisticated analytical techniques, were performed by Professor D. Lynn Johnson of the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at Northwestern University.

Dr. Johnson used a scanning electron microscope (SEM) to examine the grooves that form the characters on the plate to determine whether they were cut or scratched with a tool or whether they were etched with acid. A scanning Auger microprobe (SAM) was used to detect any nitrogen residues that might have been left in the grooves as a result of etching with nitric acid. To determine the composition of the metal, an X-ray fluorescence analysis was done on a small amount of material removed from the plate (a destructive test). And finally, an edge of the plate was ground and polished so that the metal could be examined by microscope for impurities and inclusions (also a destructive test).

The extreme depth of focus and resolution of the scanning electron microscope (SEM) at high magnification makes it possible to clearly distinguish between etching or engraving on metal surfaces. If a character were cut or scratched into the surface, the groove would contain secondary grooves and ridges running lengthwise within it where the engraving instrument forced a flow of metal. This would be especially noticeable at

groove intersections, where metal would be pushed from the second groove into the first. On the other hand, etched lines would show no metal flows or secondary grooves; instead, a roughened, pock-marked etching would be seen.

The irregular, grainy texture characteristic of acid etching was evident, not a striated surface that would have been produced by an engraving tool. A thorough SEM examination of the characters on the plate brought Dr. Johnson to the conclusion that the characters on the plate were indeed prepared by acid etching, not by any form of tooling, scratching, or cutting.

It became apparent during the SEM study that a residue of some kind was present in some of the grooves. The scanning Auger microprobe (SAM) was used to analyze these residues. A clear indication of nitrogen was detected, which would be consistent with a copper nitrate residue and could indicate that nitric acid was used in the etching, as those who reportedly originated the deception had claimed.

The X-ray fluorescence test indicated that the plate was made of a true brass alloy of approximately 73 percent copper, 24 percent zinc, and lesser amounts of other metals. In addition, an examination of the small area of the plate that was ground and polished revealed a basically “clean” alloy – that is, there were very few visible traces of impurities such as particles of slag and other debris that one might expect to find in metal of ancient manufacture.

As a result of these tests, we concluded that the plate owned by the Chicago Historical Society is not of ancient origin. We concluded that the plate was etched with acid; and, as Paul Cheesman and other scholars have pointed out, ancient inhabitants would probably have engraved the plates rather than etched them with acid. Secondly, we concluded that the plate was made from a true brass alloy (copper and zinc) typical of the mid-nineteenth century; whereas the “brass” of ancient times was actually bronze, an alloy of copper and tin. Furthermore, one would expect an ancient alloy to contain larger amounts of impurities and inclusions than did the alloy tested.

Dr. Johnson and I did, however, take into account the possibility that the Chicago plate was only a copy of the original. In reference to this, he reported:

In the course of examining the plate, an interesting anomaly was discovered. One of the characters on the plate has an angular dent near one end. That this is a dent can be verified by noticing that a similar dent exists nearby, close to the edge of the plate. A larger magnification of the latter dent reveals a feature toward the right which would have been produced by a nick in the edge of the instrument that produced the dent. This same nick shows up in the left-hand dent, partially obliterated by the intersection of the dent with one of the vertical strokes of the character. This dent was interpreted in the 1843 published facsimiles of the Kinderhook plate as part of the character. The significance of this is that the facsimile must therefore have been made from this plate, rather than

this plate being a copy based on the facsimile. If the present plate were a copy from the facsimile, this stroke would have been etched in with the other strokes, rather than being added as a dent.

The conclusion, therefore, is that the Chicago plate is indeed one of the original Kinderhook plates, which now fairly well evidences them to be faked antiquities.

**The question of translation.** But what does the above conclusion mean in relationship to the earlier references to a “translation” of the Kinderhook plates by Joseph Smith? Did he actually attempt to translate any of the plates?

To answer that question, it is necessary to look at the events of April and May 1843 in sequence:

The plates were “discovered” on Sunday, April 23, 1843, and taken home by Dr. Harris for cleaning. Then, according to a story in the *Quincy Whig*, they were exhibited in Quincy during the following week.

There is some question about who brought the plates to Nauvoo. The Quincy, Illinois, certificate printed in the *Times and Seasons* article said, “The above described plates we have handed to Mr. Sharp [a Latter-day Saint present at the excavation] for the purpose of taking them to Nauvoo.” However, Wilbur Fugate wrote in his 1879 letter: “The Mormons wanted to take the plates to Joe Smith, but we refused to let them go. Some time afterward a man assuming the name of Savage, of Quincy, borrowed the plates of Wiley to show to his literary friends there, and took them to Joe Smith. The same identical plates were returned to Wiley.”

Charlotte Haven, a somewhat antagonistic non-Mormon who was visiting her sister (a Mormon) in Nauvoo at the time, wrote a letter on May 2 that gives the following account:

We hear very frequently from our Quincy friends through Mr. Joshua Moore, who passes through that place and this in his monthly zigzag tours through the State, traveling horseback. His last call on us was last Saturday [April 29] and he brought with him half a dozen thin pieces of brass, apparently very old, in the form of a bell about five or six inches long. They had on them scratches that looked like writing, and strange figures like symbolic characters. They were recently found, he said, in a mound a few miles below Quincy. When he showed them to Joseph, the latter said that the figures or writing on them was similar to that in which the Book of Mormon was written, and if Mr. Moore could leave them, he thought that by the help of revelation he would be able to translate them.

It is possible, then, that Mr. Joshua Moore was the one who obtained the plates by pretense and brought them to Nauvoo. In any event, the plates had apparently arrived in Nauvoo by Saturday, April 29, and had been shown to Joseph Smith.

William Clayton evidently had access to the plates at some point, for in his journal entry of Monday, May 1, he included a tracing of one of the plates. Whether or not he was present when Joseph Smith saw the plates is unknown. Two days later, on Wednesday, Brigham Young also drew an outline of one of the Kinderhook plates in a small notebook/diary that he kept. Inside the drawing he wrote: "May 3, 1843. I had this at Joseph Smith's house. Found near Quincy."

Very soon afterward the plates were removed from Nauvoo, for the *Times and Seasons* editorial, which was written perhaps on Wednesday or Thursday (May 3 or 4), said:

Mr. Smith has had those plates, what his opinion concerning them is, we have not yet ascertained. The gentleman that owns them has taken them away, or we should have given a facsimile of the plates and characters in this number. We are informed however, that he purposes returning with them for translation; if so, we may be able yet to furnish our readers with it.

The plates were apparently in Nauvoo, then, from Saturday the 29th through Wednesday the 3rd—a period of five days—and were then taken away. Later, however, they were evidently returned to Nauvoo for a time, for by June 24 the Nauvoo Neighbor Press had access to them and was thus able to produce facsimiles for the published broadside. A *History of the Church* entry for Sunday, May 7, says: "In the forenoon I [Joseph Smith] was visited by several gentlemen, concerning the plates that were dug out near Kinderhook." Whether or not the plates were actually returned on that day—or indeed, whether Joseph Smith himself ever had the plates again—is uncertain.

In any case, the translation for which hope had been expressed in the *Times and Seasons* did not appear. In a letter dated April 8, 1878, Wilbur Fugate recalled: "We understood Joe Smith said [the plates] would make a book of 1200 pages but he would not agree to translate them until they were sent to the Antiquarian society at Philadelphia, France, and England." Furthermore, a review of other entries in Joseph Smith's history indicate that he was occupied during the following weeks with mayoral duties, Church business, the Nauvoo Legion, and four different trips to neighboring cities. There is no indication of translating activities. Then on June 23, just one day before publication of the broadside that repeated the saints' hopeful expectation of an eventual translation, the Prophet was abducted by Missourians who tried to get him to Missouri for prosecution on charges of "treason." He made it back to Nauvoo on June 30, but the habeas corpus proceedings took up more than two weeks of his time.

Just when the plates were taken from Nauvoo for the second and perhaps final time is uncertain. But we know that by fall of that same year they were back in Robert Wiley's possession, for on November 15 he wrote a letter to one J. J. Harding suggesting that he was interested in selling the plates to "the National Institute," and

that he was also interested in the “opinions of your different Antiquarian friends.” In reference to having the plates examined by “the Antiquarian society at Philadelphia, France, and England,” Wilbur Fugate went on to say: “They were sent and the answer was that there were no such Hieroglyphics (sic) known, and if there ever had been, they had long since passed away. Then Smith began his translation.” (The reference to Joseph Smith having begun a “translation” of the plates is in error, since they were never returned to Nauvoo. The Prophet died a martyr the following year.)

However, the question of when the plates were taken from Nauvoo is not as important as the fact that they were taken away. In spite of the considerable excitement they generated in Nauvoo after their “discovery” the plates were allowed to leave the saints, apparently without fanfare. No known record exists which intimates that Joseph Smith or those around him ever purchased or attempted to purchase the plates (as were the mummies associated with the Book of Abraham papyrus), even though their owner, Wiley, was prepared to sell them.

That the plates had aroused interest in Nauvoo is evident from two accounts that were not published until years later. In a letter written to a friend on Sunday, May 7, Parley P. Pratt said: “A large number of Citizens have seen them and compared the characters with those on the Egyptian papyrus which is now in this city.” A few lines previously, he had begun his comment on the plates as follows:

Six plates having the appearance of Brass have lately been dug out of a mound by a gentleman in Pike Co. Illinois. They are small and filled with engravings in Egyptian language and contain the genealogy of one of the ancient Jaredites back to Ham the son of Noah. His bones were found in the same vase (made of Cement). Part of the bones were 15 ft. underground.

This calls to mind the statement from the William Clayton journal referred to above:

I have seen six brass plates which were found in Adams County by some persons who were digging in a mound. They found a skeleton about six feet from the surface of the earth which was nine feet high. . . . President J. has translated a portion and says they contain the history of the person with whom they were found, and he was a descendant of Ham through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth.

It seems, then, that there was considerable talk about the plates in Nauvoo—and apparently as much misinformation and hearsay was current among people as there was fact. Pratt heard of a discovery in Pike County; Clayton said Adams County. Clayton said that the find was made six feet underground; Pratt, fifteen. Elder Pratt spoke of a cement vase—an item mentioned in no other account. Clayton mentioned a

skeleton nine feet tall—also unmentioned in any other account. Clayton said that the plates gave a history of an Egyptian; Pratt mentioned a Jaredite.

The elements that these two accounts have in common suggest a basic gist to the hearsay stories circulating in Nauvoo and also that Joseph Smith, with others, saw and wondered about the nature of the material that had been brought to Nauvoo. But there is, obviously, leagues of difference between an actual translation of sacred records and a consideration of artifacts of uncertain origin—the former requiring study, prayer, and revelation; the latter characterized perhaps by an examination for points of similarity, etc., in a setting where various suggestions are likely aired by those present and elaborated on as discussion continued. And the actual presence of William Clayton or Parley P. Pratt in any discussion on the topic with Joseph Smith is simply unknown.

It is hard to imagine that the Prophet Joseph Smith wouldn't have been intrigued by the plates. When they were first shown to him, he may well have noted certain correspondence between some characters on the plates and “reformed Egyptian” and contemplated the possibility of authenticity and translation, as the Charlotte Haven letter suggests. But how much of the conjecture that was current in Nauvoo at the time might be attributable to him would be a speculation in itself, impossible to verify from the available accounts. The one account that was published in the *Times and Seasons*, whose editors were equally as intimate with Joseph Smith as William Clayton and Parley P. Pratt, could only report that, “Mr. Smith has had those plates, what his opinion concerning them is we have not yet ascertained.”

The central issue in the whole question of Joseph Smith's involvement in the Kinderhook plate episode is that the expected “translation” did not appear. And this fact may well explain the characteristic that has made this hoax most interesting—that it was never carried to completion. That the Kinderhook plates were not authentic artifacts is no longer in doubt; but if the plates were faked, why wasn't the hoax revealed right away?

It has been suggested that the whole Kinderhook plate incident was, as Wilbur Fugate said in his 1878 and 1879 letters, a heavy-handed, frontier-style “joke.” On the other hand, the conspirators' objective might have been more pointed—to produce a bogus set of plates and then reveal the hoax in a shower of ridicule after the Prophet made a purported “translation.” In either case, they were frustrated in their scheme because no translation ever appeared. In fact, there is no evidence that Joseph Smith ever concluded the plates were genuine, other than conflicting statements from members who hoped that a translation would come forth—and in fact no evidence that the Prophet manifested real interest in the “discovery” after his initial viewing of the plates. The statement taken from William Clayton's journal didn't appear until September 1856 in Salt Lake City's *Deseret News*. At that point, time itself had eroded away the opportunity for a hearty joke, if that were the hoaxers' intent; and the absence of an actual translation in spite of the Clayton entry in the “History of Joseph Smith”

could only have added to their [page 74] frustrations—assuming that the hoaxers even knew of the *Deseret News* account, which appeared thirteen years later and a thousand miles away.

Another possible explanation for the hoax never having been carried through may lie in Robert Wiley's desire to sell the plates as genuine artifacts. For him to have exposed the hoax before the attempted sale would, of course, have scuttled any negotiations; and to expose it afterward may have landed the sellers and conspirators in jail for attempted fraud—turning the tables and making them the object of ridicule instead of Joseph Smith.

Significantly, there is no evidence that the Prophet Joseph Smith ever took up the matter with the Lord, as he did when working with the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham. And this brings us to the other side of the story, for those of us who believe that Joseph Smith was the Lord's prophet: Isn't it natural to expect that he would be guided to understand that these plates were not of value as far as his mission was concerned? That other members may have been less judicious and not guided in the same way cannot be laid at the Prophet's feet. Many people, now as well as then, have an appetite for hearsay and a hope for "easy evidence" to bolster or even substitute for personal spirituality and hard-won faith that comes from close familiarity with truth and communion with God.

So it is that in the 100-year battle of straw men and straw arguments, Joseph Smith needs no defense—he simply did not fall for the scheme. And with that understood, it is perhaps time that the Kinderhook plates be retired to the limbo of other famous faked antiquities.

## Blacks and the Priesthood

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Regarding the relationship of Blacks and the Church, it is logical that we should be asked, and indeed have been asked, “why did your Church deny your priesthood to the Blacks for so long? Are you prejudiced against the Blacks?”

Since the restoration of the Church in 1830, Blacks have been welcomed to the fellowship of the Church. Several Blacks joined the Church when they were slaves in the 1830s and, after being freed, went west with the great pioneer exodus from Illinois to Utah.

The Church denounces the idea that any particular race of people is superior to another. President Spencer W. Kimball, in speaking of race and racism said: “We do wish that there would be no racial prejudice. . . . Racial prejudice is of the devil. . . . There is no place for it in the gospel of Jesus Christ.” It is the goal of the Church to take the gospel to those of all nations and races. We agree with the teaching of the apostle Paul in the New Testament that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). In the sight of God, race, color, and nationality make no difference, an idea stressed in the Book of Mormon: “He [Christ] inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” (2 Nephi 26:33).

Until June 1978, male black members of the Church could not hold the priesthood, function in callings requiring priesthood authority, or participate in temple or priesthood ordinances. Early in this dispensation, the Lord had revealed that those of the black race were not to receive the priesthood and temple blessings. This revelation did not receive specific scriptural status in the Doctrine and Covenants. We know that not all revelations are made public. In 1949 the First Presidency reaffirmed the Lord’s previous command:

The attitude of the Church with reference to the Negroes remains as it has always stood. It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of direct commandment from the Lord, on which is founded the doctrine of the Church from the days of its organization, to the effect that Negroes may become members of the Church but that they are not entitled to the priesthood at the present time (see statement of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 17 August 1949, Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah).

The reasons for this restriction have not been given by the Lord. Generally, however, it has been felt that Blacks have been denied the priesthood because of their

lineage. According to the book of Abraham, the descendants of Cain were to be denied the priesthood of God (Abraham 1: 21-27).

The gospel has not always been sent to all people. From the beginning, the Lord has sent the gospel to people according to his priorities, and the priesthood has been given selectively. Why the Lord, in his wisdom, chooses to withhold certain privileges or blessings from certain people for a period of time are not generally known. During the fourteen centuries from Moses to Christ, only the descendants of the house of Israel had the gospel (actually that portion of the gospel known as the law of Moses). Only the tribe of Levi was permitted to hold the Aaronic priesthood, and a few others were chosen to hold the Melchizedek priesthood. During the mortal ministry of Christ he preached the gospel only to the lost sheep of the lineage of Jacob or Israel, and he so commanded his apostles (Matthew 10:6). He did make a few minor exceptions because of the faith and devotion of some Gentile people. One woman from Canaan was willing, figuratively, to eat the crumbs that fell from the Master's table. This caused him to say to her, "O woman, great is thy faith" (Matthew 15:28; Mark 7:27-28). It was only after Jesus's death and ascension that Peter received a revelation from the Lord directing him that the time was right to take the gospel to the Gentiles (see Acts 10 and 11).

But why? Why do some have to wait longer than others for the blessings of the gospel and priesthood? We can only presume that the reason lies in our obedience and diligence in support of the gospel and of Jesus Christ during our life in our premortal existence.

On June 1, 1978, after some years of prayer and meditation, President Spencer W. Kimball, in the Salt Lake Temple prayed to the Lord. Three members of the First Presidency and ten members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles were present (Elder Mark E. Peterson was in South America, and Elder Delbert L. Stapley was in the hospital). After President Kimball prayed, the answer came by the power of the Holy Ghost. The Lord revealed to all present that the time was now at hand for extending the blessings of the priesthood to the Blacks. This revelation was announced to the membership of the Church eight days later on June 9, 1978. On September 30, 1978, President N. Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency, under the direction of President Kimball, read a letter from the First Presidency dated June 8, 1978 to the membership of the Church in General Conference. This letter and the report of its being read to the Church was later canonized and is found in the Doctrine and Covenants as Official Declaration—2.

Today, black Latter-day Saints enjoy all of the blessings of Church membership and leadership enjoyed by anyone else.

## Man May Progress to Become Like God

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**Concern** You should be ashamed of yourselves. It is blasphemous to believe that man can become a god.

**Discussion** Before reading this article, please see “Deification,” in volume 4, chapter 6 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

Neither Jew nor Christian, from their scriptures, can give you, either from the Old Testament or the New Testament, a definite authoritative answer saying just what is God’s purpose in creation – what the purpose and design of God is in the creation of man! David’s great question, in Psalm 8, and repeated by Paul in Hebrews 2:6-8 remain to this day unanswered from their scriptures either by Jew or Christian. “What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” asks David in the Psalm 8. But what is the answer? There is no plain and authoritative declaration from scripture. Such an answer is not to be found in the Bible. The nearest approach to such an answer is in the following scriptures: “O Lord . . . thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:11). “Bring my sons from far . . . everyone . . . for I have created him for my glory” (Isaiah 43:6, 7). So, we may say that all things were created for the “pleasure” of God and for his “glory,” but where does man appear in all that?

In this last dispensation God, by revelation, has made known three very definite things:

(1) “Behold, this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

(2) “All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things; Adam fell that men might be [i.e. exist as men]; and men are that they might have joy” (2Nephi 2:25).

(3) “Man is spirit; the elements are eternal: and spirit and element inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy; and when separated man cannot receive a fulness of joy. The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples” (D&C 93:33-35).

In these newly revealed doctrines is disclosed the importance and purpose of human life: God is engaged in bringing about the “immortality and eternal life” of man; the existence of man that he might have joy; the inseparable union of eternal spirit with eternal element, necessary to that joy; and this God seeks to promote.

A basic doctrine of the Church is that we are the *children* of God. This doctrine is taught over and over again in the Bible. For example, “All of you are children of the most High” (Psalm 82:6) and “We are the offspring of God” (Acts 17:29). If we are his children, then he is our Father. Many so-called Christian sects today belittle this doctrine – that we are literally sons and daughters of God. Out of this great truth spring other truths. All men are brothers – we should seek to look after and not injure one

another. We are entitled to feelings of self-worth and dignity. Also, since we are his offspring, then we may come to become like him. We are of the same species. Every living thing in creation follows the pattern of its parentage.

In the Church, we readily acknowledge that here on earth we seek to grow and progress in personal righteousness and in acquiring the attributes which God possesses. The Lord commanded, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). This command is not simply idealistic nonsense; it is a literal commandment. We strive to be like him. This truth has been regarded as a sacrilege by others. They accuse us of aspiring to inappropriate heights beyond the reach of the human family.

The Bible teaches the doctrine of eternal progression and becoming like God.

Romans 8:16-17 reads, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together."

With Christ, we may inherit, through our choices, all that the Father hath and we may become like God. Joseph Smith defined the expressions "heirs of God" and "joint heirs with Jesus Christ," saying the righteous are to "inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a God, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before" (*TPJS*, 347). When you have all that the Father has, then you are as the Father is.

2 Peter 1:3-4 reads "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Note that we have been given "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" and that we may become "partakers of the divine nature."

Revelation 3:21 reads "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." God empowers those who overcome trial and temptation to become like him; the righteous become exalted beings, sitting as kings upon heavenly thrones. Enoch said to God, "Thou hast made me, and given unto me a right to thy throne, and not of myself, but through thine own grace" (Moses 7:59). Similarly, Jesus promised the twelve Apostles "twelve thrones" (Matthew 19:28).

We do not, of course, equate ourselves with God nor seek to supplant him in any way. We strive only to grow up to reach our God-given potential according to his will. We do not believe that humans will ever be equal to or independent of God.

A fascinating and helpful insight has been afforded us by those who have studied the doctrines taught in the early Christian church, the church of the first few centuries A.D. In 1980 a church member, Keith Norman wrote a doctoral dissertation at Duke University (reproduced as *Deification: The Content of Athanasian Soteriology* [Provo, Utah FARMS, 2000]). Soteriology, by the way, is the study of the salvation of man. Brother Norman's subject was an early Catholic Bishop, Athanasius, who was Bishop of Alexandria (in Egypt) about 350-370 A.D. He was a crucial figure in the formation and

maintaining of the mainstream doctrines of the Christian, actually Roman Church. Dr. Norman analyzed Athanasius's writings and points out that he believed that the salvation of man involved the man's becoming like God.

More recently another thesis has been written by Jordan Vajda, a Dominican Catholic priest. It is entitled *Partakers of the Divine Nature: A Comparative Analysis of the writings of the early Christian Fathers and Mormon Doctrines of Divinization* (written at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley). Father Vajda finds that the writings of the early Christian Fathers contain, unmistakably, the idea of humans progressing to become like God – in fact becoming gods themselves. He writes of those who read his paper: “Members of the LDS Church will discover unmistakable evidence that their fundamental belief about human salvation and potential is not unique or a Mormon invention. Latin Catholics and Protestants who read this paper will learn of a doctrine of salvation that, which relatively foreign to their ears, is nevertheless part of the heritage of the early Catholic Church of the first millennium. This doctrine is that salvation in Christ involves our becoming “partakers of the divine nature.”

Father Vajda concludes his paper with a reference to the anti-Mormon propaganda film “The Godmakers.” He says:

The Mormons are truly “godmakers.” As the LDS doctrine of exaltation explains, the fullness of human salvation means “becoming a god.” Yet what was meant to be a term of ridicule has turned out to be a term of approbation, for the witness of the early Fathers of the Church . . . is that they also believed that salvation meant “becoming a god.” It seems that if one's doctrine of salvation cannot accommodate a doctrine of human divinization, then that doctrine has rejected the heritage of the early Christian church and departed from the faith of the first millennium Christianity. . . . Thus, ironically, those who would excoriate Mormons for believing in the doctrine of exaltation actually agree with them that the early church experienced a “great apostasy” on fundamental doctrinal questions. And the supreme irony is that such persons should probably investigate the claims of the LDS Church, which proclaims that within itself is to be found the “restoration of all things.”

There is other evidence from non-LDS sources which supports deification, or man's progressing to become like God, as a legitimate Christian doctrine. Consider the following definition of *deification* from the *Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*:

*Deification* (Greek *theosis* or *apotheosis*) is for Orthodoxy the goal of every Christian. Man, according to the Bible, is “made in the image and likeness of God” (cf. Genesis 1:26), and the Fathers commonly distinguish between these two words. The *image* refers to man's reason and freedom, that which distinguishes him from the animals and makes him kin to God, while *likeness* refers to ‘assimilation to God through virtues’ (St. John of Damascus). It is possible for man to become like God, to become deified, to become god by grace. This doctrine is based on many passages of both OT and NT (e.g. Psalm 82:6; 2 Peter 1:4), and it is essentially the teaching both of St. Paul,

though he tends to use the language of filial adoption (Romans 8:9-17; Galatians 4:5-7), and the Fourth Gospel (John 17:21-23). (Symeon Lash, ed. Alan Richardson and John Bowden [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983], 147.)

An ancient Christian leader, Clement of Alexandria (about A.D. 215) wrote:

And the Word Himself now speaks to you plainly, putting to shame your unbelief, yes, I say, the Word of God speaks, having become man, in order that such as you may learn from man how it is even possible for man to become a god. (English rendering from G. W. Butterworth, trans., *Clement of Alexandria* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953], 23.)

## What's Up with Revelation 22:18?

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This particular chapter will consider the specific verse of scripture—Revelation 22:18. It will then briefly discuss the need for additional scripture other than the Bible. The issue of additional scripture is further discussed in another chapter in this volume (see “Scriptural Canon—Should it Be Open or Closed?”). For additional discussion of and justification for our modern-day scripture, see that chapter.

Revelation 22:18 is thought by some orthodox Christians to support the notion that there should be no additional scripture. That verse reads: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18). This verse is located near the end of the book of Revelation and thus near the end of the New Testament—one of the final verses in the Bible. Some contend that it refers to the entirety of the Bible and warns against trying to add any scripture to the Bible.

A careful reading of Revelation 22:18, in its context, shows clearly that John the Revelator was speaking only of the book of Revelation and not of any collection of other sacred writings. Moses used a similar expression in speaking to ancient Israel when he said: “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it” (Deuteronomy 4:2). Additionally, Deuteronomy 12:32 reads: “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.”

We would not, of course, suppose that in these words Moses laid down a prohibition against all subsequent revelations and against all books which might be called scripture in years to come? Did he have the power to silence all future prophets and forbid them to speak or write as God intended that they should? Of course not, or we would be without most of the Old Testament and would have none of the New Testament at all. Obviously these passages all make it clear that the Lord does not want any of his revelations tampered with by man. Man is not to add to or take away from the revelations of God. But God certainly does not say that he will not give more. It was the same with John the Revelator. In warning against additions to the book of Revelation he spoke of that book only, insisting that no one attempt to change or corrupt what he had said.

Scholars suggest that John's letters and probably also the Gospel of John were written after the book of Revelation, and if this be true it becomes another indication that John had no thought of precluding other writings but only of protecting his book of Revelation from change or corruption. Furthermore, there was no such thing as a New Testament when John wrote the book of Revelation. In fact the earliest list of the twenty-seven books that constitute our present New Testament was not compiled until

Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria did so in AD 367. Therefore, John could not possibly have been referring to the Bible or to the New Testament. He was referring only to the book of Revelation.

The thoughtful observer will conclude that there is a need for additional scripture today. Would it not be reasonable to think that a devout Christian would have the desire and feel the necessity of hearing more of the words of God? It is one thing to doubt the authenticity of any new communication, but an entirely different matter to suggest that new scripture is not needed or desired. The fact that there are hundreds of churches which interpret the same Bible differently hints, at a minimum, that further clarifying information would be useful.

The apostle Paul acknowledged the law which stated that in the mouth of two or three witnesses should every word be established (Deuteronomy 17:6). He said, "This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1). The Book of Mormon is another witness of Jesus Christ, indeed a vital second witness.

The Book of Mormon prophet, Nephi, warned that many important truths would be removed from the Bible which would cause many to stumble spiritually:

Wherefore, thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God. And after these plain and precious things were taken away it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles; and after it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles, yea, even across the many waters which thou hast seen with the Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity, thou seest—because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God—because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them (1 Nephi 13:28-29).

Nephi then saw in vision important latter-day scriptures which would clarify those areas in which the Bible is unclear:

And the angel spake unto me, saying: These last records, which thou hast seen among the Gentiles [latter-day scripture], shall establish the truth of the first [the Bible], which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them; and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved. And they must come according to the words

which shall be established by the mouth of the Lamb; and the words of the Lamb shall be made known in the records of thy seed, as well as in the records of the twelve apostles of the Lamb; wherefore they both shall be established in one; for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth (1 Nephi 13:40-41).

It is clear that God can add, as he wishes, to his own word, but that man cannot add to or alter the words of God in the scriptures. Nephi's father, Lehi, saw in vision an important latter day prophet (Joseph Smith, Jr.) through whom important scripture would come forth in our day:

But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins—and not to the bringing forth my word only, saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them. Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord (2 Nephi 3:11-12).

Through the prophet Nephi in the Book of Mormon, the Lord warned the people of our dispensation who would reject additional scripture:

Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough! For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have (2 Nephi 28:29-30).

Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews? Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth? Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one

nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also (2 Nephi 29:6-8).

Nephi also described how the scripture given to all nations would work together for the clarifying of his doctrine:

And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews (2 Nephi 29:13).

Today in the Church we use the Bible differently than do the traditional Judeo-Christians. We use it in concert with other scriptures and modern revelations. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, "When the Bible is read under the guidance of the Spirit, and in harmony with the many latter-day revelations which interpret and make plain its more mysterious parts, it becomes one of the most priceless volumes known to man" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 83).

## Danites

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Author: Whittaker, David J.

Following the violence in northwestern Missouri in 1838, the Mormon dissident Sampson Avard, star witness in a court of inquiry weighing evidence against LDS leaders, charged that the Church had organized a band of armed men bound by secret oaths who had engaged in illegal activities against non-Mormon neighbors (Document, pp. 97-108). With the 1841 publication of the court proceedings, Avard's account became the foundation for all subsequent non-Mormon "Danite" accounts. Thus was born the legend of the Danites

Though no Danite organization was known in Nauvoo or in Utah, the stereotype persisted, becoming a part of national discussion about Utah and the Latter-day Saints and for decades a staple of dime novels (see *Mormons, Image of: Fiction*). By 1900 at least fifty novels had been published in English using the Avard-type Danite to develop story lines of murder, pillage, and conspiracy against common citizens. Arthur Conan Doyle (*A Study in Scarlet*) created Sherlock Holmes to solve a murder committed by Danites. Zane Grey (*Riders of the Purple Sage*) and Robert Louis Stevenson (*The Dynamiter*) were among the authors who found the image of the evil Danites well suited for popular reading audiences who delighted in sensationalism (Cornwall and Arrington). The image became so pervasive that few readers were willing to question the accuracy of such portrayals.

The reality of Danites in Missouri in 1838 is both less and more than the stereotype. Contemporary records suggest something fundamentally different. In October 1838, Albert Perry Rockwood, an LDS resident of Far West, Missouri, wrote in his journal of a public Danite organization that involved the whole Latter-day Saint community. He described in biblical terms companies of tens, fifties, and hundreds (cf. Ex. 18:13-26)-similar to the organization the pioneers later used during the migration to the Great Basin. Here the Danite organization encompassed the full range of activities of a covenant community that viewed itself as a restoration of ancient Israel. Working in groups, with some assigned to defense, others to securing provisions, and still others to constructing dwellings, these Danites served the interests of the whole. This was not the secret organization Avard spoke of; in fact, Rockwood's letters to friends and family were even more descriptive than his journal (Jessee and Whittaker).

In the fall of 1838, with old settlers in Missouri swearing to drive the Mormons out rather than permit them to become a political majority and with LDS leaders declaring that they would fight before again seeing their rights trampled, northwestern Missouri was in a state of war (see *Missouri Conflict*). Sparked by an effort to prevent LDS voting, violence erupted in August and soon spread. On both sides, skirmishes involved

members of state-authorized militias. Evidence suggests that during this time of fear, clashes, and confusion, Sampson Avard, probably a captain within the public Danite structure and a militia officer, subverted the ideals of both by persuading his men to undertake the criminal activities he later argued were the authorized actions of the whole community. Encouraged perhaps by the firmly stated intentions of leaders to meet force with force but apparently without their approval, Avard used his Danite and military positions to mold a covert renegade band to avenge anti-Mormon outrages. He succeeded because after weeks of responding to violence with strictly defensive measures, Avard was not alone in feeling that the time for forbearance had passed. Others of the time in late reminiscences recalled that clandestine meetings were held, which were subsequently reported to Joseph Smith, who then denounced Avard, removed him from his official command, and disbanded the maverick body. Though short-lived and unauthorized, this covert organization, thanks to Avard's distorted and widely publicized testimony, usurped the former usage of "Danites," and the once honorable appellation became a synonym for officially sanctioned secret lawlessness. In contrast, when five hundred men in the Caldwell County (Mormon) militia later took the offensive in response to two months of unrelenting violence and depredations, there was nothing secretive about it. In mid-October, with supplies running low, they left defensive positions to forage and to punish enemies—a very public effort to improve security by preemptive forays. Two weeks later, facing increasing numbers of volunteers and a militia emboldened by the governor's Extermination Order, they surrendered their arms in defeat.

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

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

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DAVID J. WHITTAKER

## The Danite Band of 1838

Leland H. Gentry

Near the conclusion of the Mormon occupation of Missouri, late in 1838 to be exact, several leading men of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were arrested and charged with treason. The court hearing that followed produced abundant testimony regarding the existence in Mormon circles of a secret, oath-bound organization known as the "Danite Band."

But most of the corroborative evidence concerning the existence of the group came from men opposed to Joseph Smith and his close associates in the leadership of the Church.

The Danites made their appearance during a very troubled period in Mormon history. For this and other reasons, one finds much difficulty in isolating the many threads in order to lay bare the facts. One major purpose of this paper is to examine the Danite Band in terms of its origin, purpose, and organizational structure. A second objective is to show who was responsible for the formation and perpetuation of the movement and why.

## The Rise of the Dissenters

Prominent among the causes for the emergence of the Danites was the financial condition of the Church. By and large the Saints were poor, a condition aggravated by the repeated insistence of their non-Mormon neighbors that they find new locations for settlement.

Moreover, unwise financial ventures served to create problems. The failure of the so-called Kirtland Bank in Ohio was a prime cause for trouble in Missouri. Many of the

leading Saints lost heavily in this scheme, among them Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, the former an Associate President of the entire Church, and the latter President of the Church in Zion. They, together with some members of the apostolic Quorum of the Twelve, blamed Joseph Smith and his closest supporters for their financial distress. The resulting saga is one of the unpleasant stories in LDS Church history.

Coterminous with these Ohio events were those taking place in Missouri. To help procure money for land purchases in northern Missouri, Thomas B. Marsh and Elisha H. Groves were sent by the members in Missouri to scattered branches in Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Their efforts netted some fourteen hundred dollars.

These funds were placed in the hands of John Whitmer and W. W. Phelps, members of the Presidency in Zion. Instead of using the money as intended, however, the two presidents bought lands in their own names and attempted to sell the same to their impoverished brethren at a small profit. Such action brought immediate protest from many quarters, members insisting that the two men were only agents appointed to act in behalf of the Church. Phelps and Whitmer, on the other hand, insisted that they were entitled to the profits for their time and trouble.

Action Taken against the Dissenters During the winter of 1837–38, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Lyman E. Johnson moved from Kirtland, Ohio, to Far West, Missouri. Not long after their arrival, “a general system of slander and abuse was commenced” by them, allegedly “for the purpose of destroying the character of certain individuals.”

In time, David Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer were rejected by the Church in Missouri as its presidents. Shortly thereafter, proceedings were instituted to try them and others for their membership in the Church.

The resultant trials did nothing to allay the bad feelings that already existed, but only served to inflame them. In time the Saints of Caldwell County determined to rid their community of these men. The first official encouragement given to removing these “dissenters from Caldwell County came in the form of a speech by Sidney Rigdon on Sunday, 17 June 1838. Familiarly known in church history annals as the “Salt Sermon,” Rigdon’s address remains one of the controversial events of the period.

One who heard the speech, John Corrill, wrote concerning it, President Rigdon delivered from the pulpit what I call the “Salt Sermon;” ‘If the salt have lost its savour, it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the feet of men,’ was his text; and although he did not call names in his sermon, yet it was plainly understood that he meant the dissenters or those who had denied the faith. He indirectly accused some of them with crime.

While it cannot be shown beyond dispute that Rigdon’s sermon was the prime cause for the dissenter’s rapid departure from the county, there is little doubt that it

played a significant role. The Saints of Caldwell seem to have felt that it was a greater crime to tolerate the dissenters longer than it was to drive them out.

According to John Corrill, “the Church, it was said, would never become pure unless these dissenters were routed from among them. Moreover, if they were suffered to remain, they would destroy the Church.”

The second step taken against the dissenters came at this same time in the form of a lengthy document rehearsing the supposed sins of the dissenters and ordering them to leave the county or face the consequences. This “Greeting” was drawn up in the form of a solemn warning and was addressed to “Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, and Lyman E. Johnson.” The first paragraph reads in part as follows:

Whereas the citizens of Caldwell county have born [sic] with the abuse received from you at different times and on different occasions, until it is no longer to be endured. Whereas the citizens of Caldwell county have born [sic] with the abuse received from you at different times and on different occasions, until it is no longer to be endured; neither will they endure it any longer, having exhausted all the patience they have, and conceive that to bear any longer would be a vice instead of a virtue. We have borne long and suffered incredibly; but we will neither bear nor suffer any longer; and the decree has gone forth from our hearts, and shall not return to us void. Neither think gentlemen, that in so saying, we are trifling with you or ourselves; for we are not. There are no threats from you—no fear of losing our lives by you, nor by anything you can say or do, will restrain us; for out the county you shall go, and no power can save you.

The foregoing document was signed by eighty-four Caldwell citizens, but its author remains unknown.

Sampson Avard, founder and perpetuator of the infamous Danite Band, was the first to sign. It is possible that the document was drawn up by him and presented for signing at one or more Danite meetings. Several of the signatories were known Danite members.

### History of Sampson Avard

Little is known of Sampson Avard prior to his arrival in Far West about June of 1838. He was born 23 October, year unknown, on the Isle of Guernsey, St. Peter’s Parish, England.

Sometime prior to 1835, he migrated to the United States and settled at Freedom, Beaver County, Pennsylvania, where he engaged for a time as a Campbellite preacher.

Precisely how he came in contact with the Church is not known, but there is evidence of interest as early as October of 1835.

He was baptized about this time by Orson Pratt, who immediately ordained him an elder and set him apart as president of his local branch.

While still engaged in that capacity, Avard did some missionary work near his home with Elder Erastus Snow.

Avard moved to Kirtland late in 1836. Shortly after his arrival, he applied for and received a patriarchal blessing from Joseph Smith, Sr.

One year later, in October of 1837, Avard's license as a high priest was revoked by his quorum in Kirtland.

Although the nature of Avard's offense is not specified, B. H. Roberts asserts that it consisted of going to Canada sometime after his arrival in Kirtland and presenting false credentials to John Taylor, then the presiding elder, claiming that he had been appointed president of the branch in Taylor's place. Roberts concludes that Avard went to Canada at the behest of the "apostates" in Kirtland who wished to replace Taylor with someone less loyal to Joseph Smith. Later, when Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon made a visit to Canada, the matter was cleared up. The Prophet is said to have rebuked Avard severely for his course, and in consequence Avard lost his license.

By June of 1838, Avard was in Far West. On 2 June, Oliver Cowdery wrote to his brothers Lyman and Warren in Kirtland as follows: "Avard Danite Band of 1838 arrived sometime since. He appears very friendly, but I look upon him with so much contempt that he will probably get but little from me." Avard was excommunicated from the Church at Nauvoo on 17 March 1839, along with George M. Hinkle, John Corrill, Reed Peck, W. W. Phelps, Thomas B. Marsh, Burr Riggs, and several others.

All evidence indicates that the Danite order originated about the same time Sidney Rigdon gave vent to his feelings in his "Salt Sermon." The original purpose of the order appears to have been to aid the Saints of Caldwell in their determination to be free from dissenter influence. John Corrill, present for at least one of the group's earliest meetings, states that "an effort was made to adopt some plan to get rid of the dissenters." He, with others, allegedly opposed the formation of a band for that purpose, but to no avail. Said he, I think the original object of the Danite band was to operate against the dissenters; but afterwards it grew into a system to carry out the designs of the Presidency; and, if necessary to use physical force to build up the Kingdom of God, it was to be done by them. This is my opinion as to their object; and I learned it from various sources connected with the band.

Avard, first among those to testify at the hearing in Richmond in November 1838, agrees. According to his account, the original intent of the band "was to drive from the county of Caldwell all that dissented from the Mormon Church."

With the flight of the dissenters on 19 June 1838, the Danites lost their reason for existence.

A new purpose had to be found to justify their continuation. The warlike threats continually breathed against the Saints by their Missouri neighbors furnished just the

objective, namely, protection against mob violence. Reed Peck, present at a meeting presided over by Avar, claims that he was told that the major purpose of the Danite organization was that its members “might be more perfectly organized to defend ourselves against mobs.”

Sidney Rigdon later maintained that “the Danites were organized for mutual protection against the bands that were forming and threatened to be formed.”

Luman Andros Shurtliff, onetime member of the order, wrote that the Danite organization “was got up for our personal defense; also of our families, property, and our religion.”

In time, the order, under the leadership of Avar, assumed a third purpose, one entirely foreign to the spirit of the Church: retaliation against those who committed depredations against defenseless Saints.

According to information received by Joseph Smith following the demise of the Danites, Avar secretly taught his troops, Know ye not, brethren, that it will soon be your privilege to take your respective companies and go out on a scout on the borders of the settlements and take to yourselves spoils of the goods of the ungodly Gentiles? For it is written, the riches of the Gentiles shall be consecrated to my people, the house of Israel; and thus you will waste away the Gentiles by robbing and plundering them of their property; and in this way we will build up the Kingdom of God.

The Question of Names for the Order In the course of its existence, the organization went by several names. It is entirely possible that the names were changed as the purposes for the organization also changed. At its inception, the band was known as the “Brothers of Gideon.” Reed Peck, one-time member of the order, claimed that the Danites were originally under the command of one Jared Carter, the “terrible Brother of Gideon,” so called because Carter had a brother by the name.

W. W. Phelps testified that he overheard Sidney Rigdon say in a Danite meeting that whoever was caught speaking against the First Presidency would be delivered “over to the hands of the Brother of Gideon.”

John D. Lee alleged that on the first Sunday he attended Church in Far West a man entered the House of God without removing his hat. Whereupon, says Lee, “the Prophet ordered the Brother of Gideon to put that man out for his presumption.”

When the Danites entered their second phase, serving as protectors against mob attack, they became known as the “Daughters of Zion.” Sampson Avar claimed that this was one of the band’s more common names.

The term “Danite” appears to have been applied to the order in its third and last stage, namely, stealing from and plundering those who stole from and plundered the Saints. Summarizing the question of names, John Corry wrote, They [the Danites] sometimes went by the name of the “Big Fan;” this, I supposed, was figurative of their intentions to cleanse the chaff from the wheat. They also assumed the name

“Daughters of Zion,” and afterwards were called “Danites.” Why they assumed these last names I never knew, but always supposed that they took them from the scriptures, which speaks of them, the first prophetically, the last historically. (See Micah iv., 13, read the whole chapter; also Judges, xvii and xviii chapters.)

### **The Nature of the Danite Society: Its Teachings and Practices**

The teaching and practices of the Danite order gave it identity and uniqueness. Joseph Smith referred to it once as a “secret combination,” thus linking it with the satanic organizations mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

Recruitment for the band appears to have been by personal contact, and admission to membership was exclusively select. William Swartzell, resident of Adam-ondi-Ahman, relates how he sought to attend a Danite meeting on one occasion only to find his way blocked by sentinels “armed with pistols, swords, and guns.” When the meeting was over, however, Swartzell was allegedly approached by a friend and asked if he could “eat strong meat.” When Swartzell replied that he could providing the meat had a “good scent,” he was temporarily dropped from consideration. Sometime later, however, he was again approached, this time by another Danite member who said: Ah!! Brother Swartzell, you should have been at the meeting; you should have heard all about the Daranite [sic] business. . . . I dare not tell you what was said or preached, but never mind; next Saturday is another Daranite [sic] meeting, and then I will cause you to come in, too, to learn this mystery, provided no one objects to your being a MAN OF WAR!

The most important aspect of the Danite society, apart from its apparent exclusiveness, was its secret nature. As previously noted, meeting places were carefully guarded to prevent unwanted intruders from entering. Moreover, those who did come to the meeting were said to be “well armed, some had swords, some had pistols, and others had guns and cow-hides.”

Initiates were instructed to settle all differences with prospective Danite brothers prior to accepting full membership, thus lessening the risk of exposing Danite secrets in unguarded moments of anger. The secrets of the order were further protected by means of solemn oaths and covenants that each initiate was required to assume. According to Avard, the oath of secrecy was administered so that all members might be “bound together by covenant, that those who revealed the secrets of the Society should be put to death.” The oath, as given by Avard, was as follows:

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, I do solemnly obligate myself ever to conceal and never to reveal the secrets of this society called the Daughters of Zion. Should I ever do the same, I hold my life as the forfeiture.

Swartzell’s version, although somewhat different, was as follows:

Now I do solemnly swear, by the eternal Jehovah, that I will decree to bear and conceal, and never reveal, this secret, at the peril of committing perjury, and [enduring] the pains of death, and my body to be shot and laid in the dust. Amen.

According to John Clemenson, "Dr. Avard further taught that if anyone betrayed the secret designs of the society," he was to be "killed, laid aside, and nothing said about it."

Swartzell added that he was personally told that if any member of the society should try to run away and betray the secrets, "though he should be five thousand miles distant, the 'Destroying Angels' would pursue him and take his life."

The Danites had their own system of punishment. If the so-called Constitution is be trusted, punishments were "administered to the guilty in accordance with the offence." However, no member was to be punished "without law." Moreover, members of the order were sworn to protect each other at any cost from all forms of law and order except those that were part of the Danite system. According to Swartzell, all Danites were taught as follows:

If any brother should have stolen a horse, or committed any offence, and is arraigned before a justice of the peace for trial, you must, at the risk of your lives, rescue him and not permit him to be tried by the Gentile Law; but bring him before our tribunal and let him be tried by our council.

John D. Lee, also a member of the band, wrote, The members of the Order were placed under the most sacred obligations that language could invent. They were sworn to stand by and sustain each other. Sustain, protect, defend, and obey the leaders of the Church under any and all circumstances unto death; and to divulge the name of a Danite to an outsider, or to make public any of the secrets of the Danites, was to be punished by death.

Whether the supreme penalty was ever invoked is open to question. No evidence whatever has been found to show that it was, although Sidney Rigdon is quoted as having said in a Danite meeting "that one man had 'slipped his wind' yesterday, and had been thrown aside into the brush for the buzzards to pick, and the first man who lisped it should die."

That members might be able to recognize one another at all times, let the circumstances be as they might, signs of recognition were taught. John D. Lee states that the principal purpose for these signals was mutual protection in times of distress, means by which a fellow Danite could call for help without using his voice. According to Lee, When the sign was given, it must be responded to and obeyed, even at the risk or certainty of death. That Danite that would refuse to respect the token and [did not] comply with its regulations, was stamped with dishonor, infamy, shame, and disgrace, and his fate for cowardice was death.

The sign or token of distress is made by placing the right hand on the right side of the face, with the points of the fingers upwards, shoving the hand upwards until the ear is snug up between the thumb and fore-finger.

Rigdon and Shurtliff agree in substance with the foregoing.

Reed Peck and John Corrill add that a Danite was under oath to help a brother in distress without taking time to inquire into the reason for or the nature of the difficulty.

Avard's Character and Methods Nothing demonstrates the nature of Sampson Avard's character more than the quickness with which he broke his Danite oath and "told all" after he was captured. He alleged that "Daniteism was an order of the Church," he merely acting under the orders of the Mormon First Presidency.

His testimony was readily accepted by all who opposed Mormonism.

General John B. Clark, who captured Avard, reported the following to Governor Boggs: "I will here remark that but for the capture of Sampson Avard, a leading Mormon, I do not believe I could have obtained any useful facts. No one disclosed any useful matter until he was brought in."

Considering the secretive nature of the Danite order and the fact that Avard was the chief proponent of the same, it is easy to see how he was able to supply so many "useful facts." There is abundant evidence to indicate that Avard was untruthful. Nancy Rigdon, one of the few permitted to testify in behalf of the Mormon prisoners, said that she had personally heard Avard say "that he would swear to a lie to gain any object; that he had told many a lie and would do so again."

While awaiting trial, Avard allegedly told Oliver Olney that "if he [Olney] wished to clear himself, he must swear hard against the heads of the Church, as they were the ones the court wanted to criminate. . . . I intend to do it . . . for if I do not, they will take my life."

Joseph Smith charged that Avard taught his captains that he would "swear a lie" to clear any of them of an accusation, and they should do the same.

From Lyman Wight's journal we get the following:

November 12th. Court opened this morning and Sampson Avard was sworn. He was a man whose character was perfectly run down in all classes of society, and he being a stranger, palmed himself upon the Mormon Church, and in order to raise himself in the estimation of the Church, invented schemes and plans to go against mobocracy, which were perfectly derogatory to the laws of this State and of the United States, and frequently endeavored to enforce them upon members of the Church, and when repulsed by Joseph Smith, he would frequently become chagrined. At one time he told me that the reason why he could not carry his plans into effect was that the First Presidency of the Church feared he would have too much influence and gain the honor which the Presidency desired for themselves. At one time he said to me that he would 'be damned' if he did not carry his plans through. More than once did he raise a conspiracy against them (the Presidency) in order to take their lives, thinking that he

might then rule the Church. Now when he was brought before the court, he swore that all these treasonable purposes (which he had sworn in his heart to perform) originated with us.

Morris Phelps, one-time Danite who spent the winter of 1838–39 in jail for alleged misdeeds, wrote, He [Avard] at length turned conspirator and sought to make friends with the world and save his neck by testifying false against the lives of the innocent. This modern Sampson was one that crowded himself into the company of Mormons that declared they would no longer bear the insults of a mob and was determined to fight them in defending themselves, and he figured largely when there was property to be found in vacated house of the mob. But when coming up to face the enemy, [he was] like Sampson of old contending for his rights. Three days after he was found by the mob several miles from danger, as was supposed, in a brush thicket, he was brought into their camp and was a good fellow, well met.

It is apparent that Avard's abilities as a persuader were of no mean order. Moreover, his ability to make use of familiar and sacred concepts for his own purposes was as ingenious as it was perverse. In his instructions to his Danite captains, for example, he allegedly taught that stealing was not wrong providing one did it in support of the kingdom of God.

Having particular reference to the subject of plundering the enemies of the Church, Avard said, In this way we will build up the Kingdom of God, and roll forth the little stone that Daniel saw cut out of the mountain without hands, and roll forth until it filled the whole earth. For this is the very way God destines to build up His Kingdom in the last days.

As part of his imposition upon the credulity of his brethren Avard taught his devotees to manifest an outward allegiance to the Church by consecrating all plunder taken from the Gentiles to the bishop's storehouse.

John Clemenson testified at the hearing that Dimick B. Huntington, a Danite, personally informed him that the Missouriians at Gallatin took the goods from the store of one Jacob Stollings, piled them outside, and then set fire to the building, ostensibly to blame the Mormons for the deed.

While the Missouriians were gone for wagons in which to haul the goods off, however, the Danites arrived, piled the property into their wagons, and drove off. Said Clemenson, I understand that the goods were deposited with the Bishop of the Church at Diahman as consecrated property of the church. A great deal of property was brought into the Mormon camps, but I do not know where it came from, but understood it was consecrated property. It was frequently observed among the troops that the time had come when the riches of the Gentiles should be consecrated to the Saints.

Avard taught his followers that if they were faithful, the Lord would protect them in time of war. According to Joseph Smith, Avard pictured for his followers "a great glory

that was then hovering over the Church and would soon burst upon the Saints as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

Reed Peck adds that “victories in which one would chase a thousand and two should put ten thousand to flight were portrayed in the most lively manner, ” while the “assistance of angels was promised” if the need arose. Everything, Peck says, was said to inspire the Danites with zeal and courage and to make them believe that God was soon to “bring to pass his ‘strange act,’” of which the Danites were to be the chosen instruments.

John D. Lee concurs. He charges that the Danites were taught that if they faithfully consecrated their wealth unto the Lord, “the Lord . . . would fight their battles and save them from their enemies.”

Avard appears to have been most skillful in convincing his followers that he had the sanction of the heads of the Church for his operations. To prevent their inquiring for themselves, however, he bound them to maintain “everlasting secrecy to everything which should be communicated to them by himself.” Meetings were held daily and consummated with such speed that “mature reflection upon the matter” was nearly impossible. In the process of indoctrinating his captains, Avard allegedly said, If any of us should be recognized [i.e., by an enemy], who can harm us? for we will stand by each other and defend one another in all things. If our enemies swear against us, we can swear also. Why do you startle at this, brethren. As the Lord liveth, I would swear to a lie to clear any of you; and if this would not do, I would put them [i.e., the enemy] under the sand as Moses did the Egyptian; and in this way we will consecrate much unto the Lord and build up His kingdom; and who can stand against us? And if any of us transgress, we will deal with him among ourselves. And if any one of this Danite society reveals any of these things, I will put him where the dogs cannot bite him.

Naturally Avard’s followers were dismayed by some of his teachings. Such instructions ran counter to their understanding of the manner in which God’s kingdom would be built. Avard tried to calm their apprehensions by asserting that while such deeds may be unlawful in man’s sight, “no laws were executed in justice” on earth anyhow; and even if they were, they would not be binding upon the Saints, because those of the Church belonged to a new dispensation, a period of time when “the kingdom of God was to put down all other kingdoms, and the Lord Himself was to reign, and His laws alone were the laws that would exist.”

Avard’s motives for organizing the Danites are not entirely clear. At first he may have been prompted by a sincere desire to help protect the lives of the Saints and to preserve the principles of liberty that they valued. But he used the organization for other ends. Joseph Smith inclined toward the opinion that Avard “was secretly aspiring to be the greatest of the great and [to] become the leader of the (Mormon) people.” Said the Prophet, At a time when mobs oppressed, robbed, whipped, burned, plundered, and slew, till forbearance seemed no longer a virtue and nothing but the grace of God

without measure could support men under such trials—[Avard sought] to form a secret combination by which he might rise a mighty conqueror, at the expense and overthrow of the Church. This he tried to accomplish by his smattering, and winning speeches, which he frequently made to his associates, while his room was well guarded by some of his followers, ready to give him the signal on the approach of anyone who would not approve of his measures.

### **The Danite Constitution**

The secret nature of the Danite order makes it difficult to ferret out the truth in every particular. The so-called Constitution is a good example. Of those who testified at the hearing, none but Avard seemed to know of its existence. He charged that the original copy was read at a Danite meeting held in the home of Sidney Rigdon and was “unanimously adopted” by those present “as their rule and guide in the future.” Avard also swore that he was ordered by the organization’s “Council” at a later date to destroy the document because its existence would be evidence of the highest incrimination. This he did not do. Instead, he produced the following before the Court:

#### **DANITE CONSTITUTION**

Whereas in all bodies laws are necessary for the permanence, safety, and well-being of society, we, the members of the Society of the Daughters of Zion, do agree to regulate ourselves under such laws as, in righteousness, shall be deemed necessary for the preservation of our holy religion, our most sacred rights, and the rights of our wives and children. But to be more explicit on the subject, it is especially our object to support and defend the rights conferred on us by our venerable sires, who purchased them with the pledges of their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honors. And now, to prove ourselves worthy of the liberty conferred on us by them, in the providence of God, we do agree to be governed by such laws as shall perpetuate these high privileges, of which we know ourselves to be the rightful possessors, and of which privileges wicked and designing men have tried to deprive us, by all manner of evil, and that purely in consequence of the tenacity we have manifested in the discharge of our duty towards our God, who has given us those rights and privileges, and a right, in common with others, to dwell on this land. But we, not having the privileges of others allowed unto us, have determined, like our fathers, to resist tyranny whether it be found in kings or in people. It is all alike unto us. Our rights we must have, and our rights we shall have, in the name of Israel’s God.

Article 1st. All power belongs originally and legitimately to the people, and they have a right to dispose of it as they shall deem fit; but, as it is inconvenient and impossible to convene the people in all cases, the legislative powers have been given by them, from time to time, into the hands of a representation composed of delegates from the people

themselves. This is and has been the law, both in civil and religious bodies, and is the true principle.

Article 2d. The executive power shall be vested in the president of the whole church and his councillors.

Article 3d. The legislative powers shall reside in the president and his councillors, together with the generals and colonels of this society. By them all laws shall be made regulating the society.

Article 4th. All offices shall be during life and good behavior, or to be regulated by the law of God.

Article 5th. The society reserves the power of electing its officers, with the exception of the aids and clerks, which offices may need in their various stations. The nomination to go from the presidency to his second, and from the second to the third in rank, and so down through all its various grades. Each branch or department retains the power of electing its own particular officers.

Article 6th. Punishments shall be administered to the guilty in accordance with the offence, and no member shall be punished without law or by any other means than those appointed by law for that purpose. The legislature shall have power to make laws regulating punishments, as, in their judgments, shall be wisdom and righteousness.

Article 7th. There shall be a secretary, whose business it shall be to keep the legislative records of the society; also the rank of the officers. He shall also communicate the laws to the generals as directed by the laws made for the regulation of such business by the Legislature.

Article 8th. All officers shall be subject to the commands of the Captain General, given through the Secretary of War; and all officers shall be subject to their superiors in rank, according to the laws made for the purpose.

The author of this document is unknown. When Avard was captured, he immediately surrendered the paper to General Clark. Clark in turn forwarded it to Governor Boggs. Of those who were questioned at the hearing concerning its existence, all insisted they had never heard of it. In addition, Corrill wrote, I have learned of late [i.e., as a result of the hearing] that a constitution was formed, savoring all the spirit of monarchy and adopted by the leaders and some others of this society; but I conclude that few knew about it, for I never heard one lisp on the subject, until after Avard exposed it after he was arrested.

### **Danite Relationship to the "Armies of Israel"**

Increasing hostilities, both actual and threatened, during the late summer and early fall of 1838 made it advisable for the Saints to organize into military bodies for self-defense. Acting upon advice from General Alexander Doniphan, brigadier general for northern Missouri, the saints formed two such units, one at Far West, the other at Adam-ondi-Ahman.

Many who belonged to these legitimate units were also members of the Danite clan. Evidence indicates that little, if any, effort was made to distinguish between one's activities in either group.

In addition, both Danites and legitimate troops were organized into companies of tens and fifties, thus further obfuscating the picture. Joseph Smith made an attempt to distinguish between the groups in these words: And here let it be understood, that these companies of tens and fifties got up by Avarad were altogether separate and distinct from those companies of tens and fifties organized by the brethren for self-defense in case of attack from the mob. This latter organization was called into existence more particularly that in this time of alarm, no family or person might be neglected; therefore, one company would be engaged in drawing wood, another in cutting it, another in gathering corn, another in grinding, another in butchering, another in distributing meat, etc., etc., so that all should be employed in turn and no one lack for the necessaries of life.

Following his capture by the Missouriians, Avarad apparently surmised rather quickly that if he could convince the court that both sets of troops were one and the same and that the First Presidency was responsible for their creation and perpetuation, he would go free. Such is precisely the stand he took; and his testimony was accepted at face value, for Avarad was never censured in any way for his connection with the Danites. Joseph Smith, on the other hand, wished it plainly understood that the two groups were separate. He wrote, Let no one hereafter, by mistake or design, confound this organization [i.e., the legitimate militia of Far West] of the Church for good and righteous purposes with the organization of the "Danites" by the apostate Avarad, which died almost before it had an existence.

Other factors make it clear that the two groups were separate. In contrast to Danite secrecy, membership in the "Armies of Israel" was open to all able-bodied men. In addition, the Armies of Israel were purely defensive in nature and were not distinguished by secret oaths or passwords of any sort. They were governed openly in accord with accepted military discipline. Nothing ~~forms~~ confirms the fact of separateness, however, like a comparison of the ~~oficers~~ officers of the two organizations. Reed Peck, one-time member of the Danites, claims the following: Philo Dibble told me who the ~~oficers~~ officers of the Danite Band were: that George W. Robinson was colonel, that he [Dibble] was lieutenant colonel, and Seymour Brunson, major, and that I was chosen adjutant. After that, I had a talk with George W. Robinson, in which I was informed . . . further, that Jared Carter was captain general of the band, Cornelius P. Lott, major general, and Sampson Avarad, brigadier general. This is as I recollect it.

The military organization for the Armies of Israel, on the other hand, was as follows: It was determined that Colonel Wight should be commander-in-chief at Adamondi-Ahman; [Seymour] Brunson, captain of the flying of Daviess; Colonel [George M.] Hinkle, commander-in-chief of the Far West troops; Captain Patten, captain of the flying

horses or cavalry [at Far West]; and that the Prophet, Joseph Smith, jr., should be commander-in-chief of the whole kingdom.

It will be noticed that in the foregoing quote, Avard places Joseph Smith as “commander-in-chief “ of the Armies of Israel and makes no mention whatever of himself. In this way, Avard, who could not have failed to know the difference between the two organizations, attempted to make the Mormon prophet pay for Avard’s own folly. George M. Hinkle, however, inadvertently exposed Avard’s rascality at the hearing when he complained bitterly that the Danites took “all power out of the hands” of himself and the officers of the troops in Far West. He thus clearly distinguishes between the two groups.

### **Danite Relationship to the First Presidency**

The question naturally arises as to how much the members of the First Presidency knew about the Danite movement. Avard consistently taught his followers that he had the unqualified support of the top leaders of the Church.

Owing to the secret nature of the order and to the severe penalties invoked when Danite secrets were discussed outside of chambers, dubious members do not seem to have felt free to inquire for themselves. In time, however, some members became insistent on a visit from the First Presidency. According to Peck, Avard gave in reluctantly, having long insisted that it was “impossible for the presidency to come and explain their views and wishes” because of the heavy press of Church duties.

One of those who demanded the visit was Lorenzo Dow Young. According to his own testimony, he felt that what he heard at Danite meetings was “in direct antagonism to the principles taught by the leaders of the Church, and the elders generally.” Speaking of his personal efforts to induce Avard to give in, Young wrote,

The culmination finally arrived. At one of the meetings Dr. Avard particularly required that all present who had been attending meetings should at once join the Society by making the required covenants, and I was especially designated. I asked the privilege of speaking which was granted. I began to state my reasons for joining the society and was proceeding to . . . expose its wickedness, when Dr. Avard peremptorily ordered me to be seated. I objected to sitting down until I had fully expressed my views. He threatened to put the law of the organization in force there and then. I stood directly in front of him and was well prepared for the occasion. I told him with all the emphasis of my nature, in voice and manner, that I had as many friends in the house as he had, and if he made a motion to carry out his threat, he should not live to get out of the house, for I would instantly kill him. He did not try to put his threat into execution, but the meeting broke up. From the meeting I went directly to Brother Brigham and related the whole history of the affair. He said he had long suspected that some secret wickedness was being carried on by Dr. Avard.

Such pressure resulted in the only known visit of Joseph or Hyrum Smith to Danite meetings. Evidence indicates that Rigdon was present on more than one occasion, perhaps several. At the meeting Avard informed those present that “he had procured the Presidency to come there to show that what he had been doing was according to their direction and will.” However, adds Peck, Avard “did not explain to the Presidency” in the presence of those assembled, precisely “what his teachings had been in that Society.”

John Clemenson, also present for the occasion, testified: The three composing the presidency was at one of those meetings, and to satisfy the people, Dr. Avard called on Joseph Smith, Jr., who gave them a pledge that if he led them into ~~fact~~ <sup>folly</sup>, he would give them his head for a football; that it was the will of God these things should be so. The teacher and active agent of the society was Dr. Avard.

It was during the second stage of Danite development, namely, when the Saints were making preparations to stand against the many mobs forming and threatening to be formed, that the First Presidency made their only visit. Understanding neither the full intent of Avard’s mind nor the devastating nature of his teachings, Joseph Smith may have felt that the society had a legitimate basis for existence in that it was organized for protective purposes. His comment that “it was the will of God these things should be so” doubtless should be interpreted in this light. Consider the following statement from Joseph Smith: The Danite system . . . never had any [f]icial existence [it was a term used by some of the brethren] in Far West and grew out of an expression I made use of when the brethren were preparing to defend themselves from the Missouri mob, in reference to the stealing of Maccaiah’s [i.e., Micah’s] images (Judges 18). If the enemy comes, the Danites will be after them, meaning the brethren in self defense.

Avard apparently took advantage of the expression and applied it to his secret band. Hence Joseph Smith wrote from jail in 1838, We have learned . . . since we have been prisoners that many false and pernicious things, which were calculated to lead the Saints far astray and to do great injury, have been taught by Dr. Avard as coming from the Presidency, and we have reason to fear that many other designing and corrupt characters like unto himself, have been teaching many things which the Presidency never knew were being taught in the Church by anybody until after they were made prisoners. Had they known such things, they would have spurned them and their authors as they would the gates of hell. Thus we find that there have been frauds and secret abominations and evil works of darkness going on, leading the minds of the weak and unwary into confusion and distraction, and all the time palming it off upon the Presidency, while the Presidency were ignorant as well as innocent of those things. . . .

Later, in a second letter from Liberty Jail, the Prophet wrote, I would suggest the impropriety of the organization of bands or companies, by covenant or oaths, by penalties or secrecies; but let the time past or our experiences and suffering by the wickedness of Doctor Avard suffice and let our covenant be that of the Everlasting

Covenant, as it is contained in Holy Writ, and the things that God hath revealed unto us. Pure friendship always becomes weakened the very moment you undertake to make it stronger by penal oaths and secrecy.

The precise role of the First Presidency in the so-called Mormon War is uncertain. George M. Hinkle, disgruntled because of alleged mistreatment at the hands of Joseph Smith, testified at the hearing as follows: In the council in Far West a few days before the [State] militia came out, I recollect, in making arrangements for war, that the Presidency was to have supreme rule, and that their war office or headquarters was to be in Diamon where, Joseph Smith, Jr., said they could have all necessary preparations to carry on the war in a warlike manner; and they were to have gone in a day or two to take their seats.

John Clemenson testified that "it was not usual for any of the presidency . . . to take up arms and go into the ranks," while Alanson Ripley, Heber C. Kimball, William Huntington, and Joseph B. Noble signed a formal petition claiming that the Mormon prophet "never commanded any military company nor held any military authority, [nor] has borne arms in the military rank"

If it be wondered how one so prominent as Joseph Smith could be so ignorant of Danite workings, particularly when the size of the order is considered, the following should be of interest. John Taylor, a prominent resident of Far West during the latter half of 1838, once said in a public sermon, "I have heard a good deal about Danites, but I never heard of them among the Latter-day Saints. If there was such an organization [i.e., in 1838], I was not made acquainted with it."

Taylor's testimony is confirmed by Luman Shurtliff, a Danite, who, while on guard duty with Taylor during a difficult phase of the Mormon War, gave the Danite signal of distress only to discover that Taylor did not recognize it.

Sidney Rigdon's connection with the Danites is truly open to question. As shown throughout this study, Rigdon was present at Danite meetings on more than one occasion. In setting forth his personal testimony of the order, Rigdon speaks far less deprecatingly than does Joseph Smith; in fact, his tone sometimes suggests approval: Sometime previous to this [i.e., the trouble in Daviess County] in consequence of the threatenings which were made by mobs or those who were being formed into mobs, and the abuses committed by them on the persons and property of the citizens, an association was formed called the Danite band. This, as far as I was acquainted with it (not being myself one of the number, neither was Joseph Smith, Sen.,) was for mutual protection against the bands that were forming and threatened to be formed for the professed object of committing violence on the property and persons of the citizens of Daviess and Caldwell counties. They had certain signs and words by which they could know one another, either by day or night. They were bound to keep these signs and words secret, so that no other person or persons than themselves could know them. When any of these persons were assailed by any lawless

band, he would make it known to others, who would flee to his relief at the risk of life. In this way they sought to defend each other's lives and property; but they were strictly enjoined not to touch any person, only those who were engaged in acts of violence against the persons or property of one of their own number, or one of those whose life and property they had bound themselves to defend.

Certain statements credited to Rigdon during this period have strong Danite overtones. We have already considered the "Salt Sermon," the strong note of "Greeting" written to the dissenters in June of 1838, and the "Fourth of July Oration." One of Rigdon's biographers, Daryl Chase, allows that while the testimony given against Rigdon at the trial was one-sided, it does show him to be "one of the chief storm-centers on the Mormon side."

The following are samples of the rhetoric attributed to Rigdon during this difficult period: Rigdon, in speaking of the dissenters who were unwilling to fight mobs, said they ought to be pitched upon their horses with pitchforks and bayonets, forced into the front of the battle, and their property confiscated to the use of the army. As early as April last, at a meeting in Far West of eight or twelve persons, Mr. Rigdon arose and made an address to them, in which he spoke of having borne persecutions and law-suits, and other privations, and did not intend to bear them any longer; that they meant to resist the law; and if a sheriff came after them with writs, they would kill him; and if anybody opposed them, they would take off their heads. George W. Harris, who was present, observed, "You mean their heads of fluence, I suppose. " Rigdon answered that he meant that lump of flesh and bone called the skull or scalp. . . . I was invited to a schoolhouse, where, it was said, the people had assembled. I went there and was admitted. . . . A guard was placed around the house and one at the door. Mr. Rigdon then commenced making covenants, with uplifted hands. The first was that, if any man attempted to move out of the county or pack their things for that purpose, that any man then in the house, seeing this, without saying anything to any other person, should kill him and haul him aside into the brush; and that all the burial he should have should be in a turkey buzzard's guts; so that nothing should be left of him but his bones. That measure carried in the form of a covenant with uplifted hands. After the vote had passed, he said, Now see if anyone dare vote against it, and called for the negative vote; and there was none. The next covenant, that if any persons in the surrounding country came into town, walking about—no odds who he might be—anyone of that meeting should kill him and throw him aside into the brush. This passed in a manner as the above had passed. The third covenant was to "conceal all these things." Mr. Rigdon then observed that the kingdom of heaven had no secrets; that yesterday a man had 'slipped his wind,' and was dragged into the hazel brush; and, said he, the man who lisps it shall die.

The foregoing testimony was supplied by men who felt animosity for Rigdon and must be viewed in that light. As Daryl Chase observes, however, "if there is so much as

a grain of truth running through the apostates' affidavits, Rigdon made wild utterances" on several occasions. The evidence indicates, Chase concludes, that Sidney was a "dangerous man to be exercising control in such a situation." Later he avers that "if the Prophet had any desire to curb Rigdon's extravagant language, he was not very successful."

Avard is quoted as having said that he had received his authority for heading the Danite order from Sidney Rigdon. The truth of this assertion, like all others coming from Avard, is open to question because of Avard's known anxiety to implicate anyone but himself. It is possible, in view of Rigdon's later connections with the Church, that he may have had some connection with the organization. Following his release from jail in January 1839, Sidney's interest in the Church began to wane. He allegedly told Brigham Young that he "would never follow Brother Joseph's revelations anymore, contrary to his own convenience" and that "Jesus Christ was a fool compared to him in sufferings."

Rigdon's agreement to go to Washington to present the case of the stricken Saints was never fulfilled, and in 1843, Joseph Smith came to suspect that Rigdon was in league with the "Missouri mob" to destroy him.

As for Hyrum Smith, second counselor in the First Presidency, no specific charges against him emerged at the hearing. John Clemenson testified: As to Hiram [sic] Smith, personally, I have thought him to be a good meaning man; but in connection with others, under the order of the Danite society, I thought I had as much to fear from him as from others. Avard himself testified I never heard Hiram [sic] make any inflammatory remark; but I have looked upon him as one composing the first presidency; acting in concert with Joseph Smith, Jr.; approving by his presence, acts, and conversations, the unlawful schemes of the presidency.

Avard's only indictment of Hyrum Smith was that he was a member of the First Presidency and therefore guilty by association.

## Summary and Conclusions

Much of the attitude one takes toward the origin and development of the Danite problem depends upon the kind of testimony one is willing to accept. When Avard's known penchant for lying as well as his unchristian teachings to the Danites are considered, it is difficult to see how much reliance could be placed in his word. Moreover, the readiness with which Avard, when apprehended by the law, broke his oath and "told all" speaks volumes about his character. Evidence that contributes to an understanding of the Danite order comes from three prime sources. Some of it comes from members who had nothing to hide. Other portions come from members who wished to implicate all but themselves. A major source is Joseph Smith, who gleaned his understanding following the demise of the order. Not until the trial was in progress did Joseph Smith and his close associates become aware of the full extent of Avard's work. From his prison cell, the Mormon prophet emphatically denied the Danite order

and issued stern warnings against all such future attachments. The student stands aghast at the methods employed by Avar. By means of secret signs and tokens, communicated in secret meetings heavily guarded against intrusion, Avar swore his men to everlasting secrecy. This made it impossible, under pain of death, to inquire of Joseph Smith or other Church leaders concerning the truth. Avar personally demonstrated outward allegiance to Church practices by obeying the law of consecration and instructed his followers to do the same.

As a scheme the Danite order lasted less than five months. Following Avar's capture in November 1838 the movement died a quick death. It was then that Avar called upon his ingenuity to extricate himself from a difficult position. Taking advantage of the unpopularity of the Church's leaders with the Missouri populace, as well as the fact that they were the ones the court wished to convict, Avar carefully worked to shift responsibility for the order from himself to Joseph Smith and his close associates. It being the fashion of the times to blame the Mormon prophet for all that went awry in Mormondom, enemies of the Church accepted Avar's lies without question. Sampson Avar, designer, craftsman, and leading light of the Danite Band, was never punished in any way for his crimes. Joseph Smith and other leading Church officials spent the next several months in Missouri jails.

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## Notes

1. See Document Showing the Testimony Given Before the Judge of the Fifth Judicial District of the State of Missouri, on the Trial of Joseph Smith, Jr., and others, for High Treason and Other Crimes Against that State. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1841). Hereafter cited as Document.
2. That the testimony in the Document is generally unfavorable to Joseph Smith derives from its being drawn in more part from prejudiced witnesses, and from the fact that favorable testimony was an act of courage, being given largely "at the point of a bayonet." Also, whenever additional witnesses were found who could testify for Joseph, they were quickly placed in prison, thus preventing their testimony from being given. A fuller account of the hearing and its proceedings is found in Leland H. Gentry, "A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri, 1836–1839" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1965), pp. 546–61. On the basis of the evidence thus procured, Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Parley P. Pratt, and others were held in Missouri jails for several months during the winter and spring of 1838–1839, ostensibly awaiting trials that never came.
3. During the latter part of October and the early part of November, 1833, Mormon residents of Jackson County, Missouri, were forcibly evicted from their homes by mob

action. Following a two-and-one-half year stay in Clay County, they were once again compelled to “move on.” See Gentry, “History,” pp. 18–47.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 109–18.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 59.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 102–9. Evidence shows that Groves and Marsh were each paid one dollar per day plus traveling expenses for their services. *Elders’ Journal* 1 (July, 1838):37–38. This may have accounted for Phelps’ and Whitmer’s feelings that they should also be reimbursed.

7. Ebenezer Robinson, *The Return* (Davis City, Iowa, 1889) 1:218.

8. For an account of the trials, see Gentry, “History.” pp. 139–55. David Whitmer had long been absent from his post in Missouri, preferring, it would seem, the more hospitable climes of Kirtland.

9. No text for the speech has ever been found. Many, however, have confused it with the even more famous “Fourth of July Oration” given less than three weeks later. Reed Peck, one who heard it, claims that the address was rabid and suggested that when Church members lose faith they are as salt without savor and should be cast out and trampled under foot. See the “Reed Peck Manuscript,” photocopy, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, p. 23. Although not an open dissenter at this time, Peck came to sympathize with the dissenting point of view. His unpublished manuscript reveals much of his hidden discontent during the period.

10. John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints (Commonly Called Mormons)* (St. Louis: Privately Printed for the Author, 1839), p. 31.

11. The feelings entertained by the Saints of Caldwell County are strangely reminiscent of those expressed by the residents of Jackson County in 1833. The “evil” occasioned by the Mormon occupation, they said, was one that “no one could have foreseen,” one that was “unprovided for by the laws,” one that “the delays incident to legislation would put . . . beyond remedy.” Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971) 1:396. Hereafter cited as HC.

12. Corrill, *Brief History*, p. 31.

13. For the document in its entirety, see Gentry, “History,” pp. 162–66.

14. Avard testified at the hearing in 1838 that Rigdon was the author of the paper. See “*Journal History*,” 13 November 1838. (The “*Journal History*,” a day-by-day account of historical events within the Church, is housed at the Church Historical Department in Salt Lake City.) Whereas Avard’s signature is the first to be appended to the document, Rigdon’s does not appear. It is possible, therefore, that Avard drew up the document himself.

15. A careful search for Avard’s parents as well as for the year of his birth has proved unfruitful. The information given above was supplied by Avard himself at the time he

received his patriarchal blessing in Kirtland. See “Early Church Information File,” Genealogical Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

16. “Journal History,” 14 October 1835.

17. See “Cowdery Letters, “ 14 October 1835. Copies of these letters may be found at the Historical Department of the Church in Salt Lake City.

18. “Journal History,” 14 October 1835. The account reads: “Elder Orson Pratt left Kirtland on another mission of which he gives the following account: ‘Started on a mission to the Ohio River, preaching by the way; tarried two or three weeks in Beaver County, Penn; held sixteen meetings, baptized a few and raised up a small branch of the Church, and ordained Dr. Sampson Avard an elder, to take charge of them, and returned to Kirtland.’ “ A second account of the same mission has Pratt reporting that he “baptized three in Freedom, Pennsylvania, one of whom (Sampson Avard) I ordained an elder. . . . After parting with two Books of Mormon; four books of Revelations, and obtaining 14 subscribers for the ‘Messenger and Advocate,’ I left them with Elder Avard to continue the work. There is a prospect of many embracing the gospel in these parts.” Messenger and Advocate 2 (November 1835): 223–24.

19. “Journal of Erastus Snow,” n.p. 1836, original of file in the Church Historical Department in Salt Lake City. About this time, Lorenzo Dow Young was also engaged in missionary work in the southeastern part of Ohio and came in contact with Avard, still presiding over the branch at Freedom, Pennsylvania. Lorenzo became disturbed at some of Avard’s teachings and reported that he “did not like the spirit or the teachings of the man.” Later, so he reports, he discovered “that the Dr. and Elder S. S. Rigdon [sic] were on quite intimate terms, and that the latter was considerably tainted with the ideas and spirits [sic] of the former.” When Lorenzo reported his mission to the First Presidency, he likewise spoke of his reaction to Avard, whereupon Rigdon allegedly “manifested his displeasure by animadverting rather sharply on my remarks.” The Prophet Joseph Smith encouraged Lorenzo to proceed with his report, at the conclusion of which Joseph Smith allegedly said: “Give Avard time and he will prove that he is a consummate hypocrite and a wicked man.” See “Diary and Reminiscences of Lorenzo Dow Young,” unpublished remarks made in February, 1890, and set forth in a manuscript housed in the Church Historical Department and quoted by Hugh Nibley in *Sounding Brass* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1963), p. 219. It is entirely possible that Rigdon and Avard may have been personally acquainted prior to Avard’s joining the Church, for they both came from the same area in Pennsylvania and both were involved with the Campbellite movement.

20. “Early Church Records File,” Genealogical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah. See the card on Sampson Avard.

21. HC 3:519.

22. B. H. Roberts, *Life of John Taylor* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1963), pp. 43–44. Whether or not the license was ever renewed is unknown.

23. From an original letter of Oliver Cowdery owned by Professor Kirk L. Cowdery. Oberlin, Ohio. See the photostat in Stanley Gunn, *Oliver Cowdery: Second Elder and Scribe* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962), Appendix D, p. 263.

24. HC 3:284.

25. Document, p. 12. Note the tenuous nature of Corrill's testimony as indicated by the italics supplied for emphasis. With the exception of Avard, all who testified at the hearing were careful to preface their remarks with such expressions as "I think," "It is my opinion that," or "I rather thought." What Corrill and others related they learned either from Avard's testimony on the occasion or from hearsay conversation with other known Danites. Their disaffection for Joseph Smith and his close associates made it easy for them to accept and repeat what they heard.

26. *Ibid.*, p.1.

27. John Whitmer, one of the dissenters, records the following from the dissenting point of view: "When we were on our way home from Liberty, Clay County [whither they had gone to secure legal aid in their battle against the residents of Caldwell], we met the families of Oliver Cowdery and L. E. Johnson, whom they had driven from their homes. . . . While we were gone Jo. and Rigdon and their band of Gadiantons had kept up a guard, and watched our houses and abused our families, and threatened them, if they were not gone by morning, they would be drove out and threatened our lives if they ever saw us in Far West." "History of the Church," chapter 20, kept by John Whitmer. Whitmer was appointed Church Historian by a revelation recorded in the Book of Commandments (50:1 and 47:1). He continued in the post until his defection from the Church in 1838. Following his excommunication, he refused to give up the history when it was demanded. HC 3:16.

28. Document, p. 17. A second Danite group was organized in July 1838 at Adamondi-Ahman with Lyman Wight at its head.

29. *Times and Seasons*, 15 July 1843; *Nauvoo Neighbor* 1 (26 July 1843):2. Rigdon's "Fourth of July Oration" was chosen for an official declaration that the Saints would no longer tamely submit to mob violence. Said Rigdon, "That man or set of men who comes on us to disturb us, it shall be between us and them a war of extermination, for we will follow them, till the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us. . . . One party or the other shall be utterly destroyed." "Oration delivered by Mr. S. Rigdon, 4th Day of July, 1838, at Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri" (*Far West: Elders' Journal Press*, 1838).

30. Luman Andros Shurtliff, "Diary," p. 120. This manuscript is housed in Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. See also Robinson, *The Return*, 2:217.

31. How early this third stage made its appearance is hard to say. Evidence suggests, however, that it came after 6 August 1838, the day of the famed "Election-Day Battle" in Daviess County and before mid-October, when the Saints made a firm determination to

stand in their own defense. For an account of the “Election-Day Battle,” see Gentry, “History,” pp. 251–58.

32. HC 3:180. The concept that the “riches of the Gentiles” were to be consecrated to the Lord’s people appears to be from Doctrine and Covenants 42:39. A careful reading of the passage, however, makes it clear that the riches spoken of were to be given voluntarily by the Gentiles, not extracted by plunder in the manner described by Avar. This is an excellent example of the manner in which Avar capitalized upon the sacred beliefs and credulity of his followers to secure their assistance. “It was frequently observed among the troops,” testified John Clemenson, “that the time had come when the riches of the Gentiles should be consecrated to the Saints.” Document, p. 16 “I understood from those who were bringing in property,” observed Reed Peck. “that they were to take it to the Bishop’s store [house] and deposite it, and if they failed to do so, it would be considered stealing.” Document. pp. 18–19. The Saints, whether Danites or not, clearly considered that they were acting in self-defense. See Gentry, “History” pp. 383–90.

33. Peck, “Peck Manuscript,” p.45. Gideon Carter was one of three men killed at the Battle of Crooked River in October 1838. See Gentry, “History,” p. 404.

34. Document, p. 44.

35. John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled: The Life and Confession of John D. Lee* (St. Louis; Bryan, Brand, and Co., 1877), p. 54. Lee arrived in Far West on 4 June 1838, not yet having been baptized. The incident related above took place on Sunday, 10 June.

36. Document, p. 1.

37. Corrill, *Brief History*, p. 32. Micah 4:12–13 speaks of those who neither know the thoughts of God nor understand His ways. Such persons are likened unto sheaves upon the threshingfloor. “Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.” Apparently the dissenters were the sheaves and the “Daughters of Zion” represented the faithful Saints. Chapters 17 and 18 of the book of Judges rehearse the story of how descendants of the tribe of Dan stole the graven image of one Micah and appropriated it for their own use. When Micah attempted to recover his possessions, he found himself opposed by some six hundred men equipped for war. “And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house. And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto La’ish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword and burnt the city withfire. ” Judges 18:26–27.

38. HC 3:179.

39. See particularly Helaman 2:2–11, 6:21–30, and Ether 8:7–25.

40. William Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed, Being a Journal of a Residence in Missouri from the 28th of May to the 20th of August, 1838* (Pittsburgh: A. Ingram, for the Author, 1846), pp. 17–18.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
42. Document, p. 1.
43. Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*, p. 21.
44. Document, p. 15.
45. Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*. According to Burr Riggs (Document, p. 30), Sidney Rigdon taught in a secret meeting in Far West “that the last man had run away from Far West that was going to: that the next who started should be brought back, dead or alive.”
46. See pp. 438–39 in this article.
47. Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*, p. 22. Such may have been the attitude of mind nurtured by Lyman Wight who refused for so long to submit himself for legal process. See Gentry “History,” p. 267. Wight allegedly stated that he felt no obligation whatever to the laws of the land, for they had never protected him in his rights for the last seven years, and he would rather die than submit to the tyrannical measures advocated by his enemies. Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*, p. 32.
48. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 57.
49. Document, p. 37, testimony of Benjamin Slade. According to Reed Peck the form of justice advocated in Danite circles was not always according to Danite law. See Document, pp. 17, 20.
50. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*. Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*, p. 22 adds that the right hand must strike the right thigh before being raised to the temple in the manner described above.
51. *Times and Seasons*, 15 July 1843; Shurtliff, “Diary,” p. 120.
52. Corrill, *Brief History*, p.32, and Peck, “Peck Manuscript,” p. 43. Thus it was at the famed “Election-Day Battle,” on 6 August 1838, that John D. Lee claimed to have seen John L. Butler, a perfect stranger at the time, give the signal of distress. Whereupon Lee, accompanied by other close friends, leaped into the fray. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 60.
53. HC 3:192–93. Avarad was discovered hiding in some hazel brush a few miles from Far West. Testifying at the trial, Avarad said, “I was continually in the society of the Presidency, receiving instructions from them as to the teachings of the Danite Band. I continually informed them of my teachings; and they were well apprised of my course and teachings in the Danite Society.” Document, p. 21.
54. This would include former members now apostate, as well as non-Mormons.
55. Correspondence, Orders, etc., in *Relation to the Recent Disturbances with the Mormons* (Jefferson City: Office of the Jeffersonian, 1840), p. 90.
56. Document, p. 40.

57. HC 3:209–210.
58. *Ibid.*, p.180.
59. As quoted in Rollin Britton, *Early Days on the Grand River and the Mormon War* (Columbia: Missouri Historical Society, 1920), p. 86.
60. Morris Phelps' material is drawn from a brief account entitled "Missouri Persecutions," Blue Book No. 9245, Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.
61. For proof that the kingdom concept was a subject of widespread discussion at this time, see the Elders' Journal 1 (July 1838):27–38, and HC 3:49–54.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
63. Mosiah L. Hancock, "Life of Mosiah L. Hancock by Himself," n.p., n.d., Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. Hancock did not think much of the Danites. To him, they were all "show."
64. This was an old Missouri trick. See Gentry, "History," pp. 383–86. The Danites did some burning, too, but not so much as the Missourians charged. On 12 April 1839, Stollings wrote a letter to Joseph Smith requesting that various irreplaceable items be returned to him. Joseph Smith replied that the items in question were last seen in the possession of Sampson Avard. HC 3:316–17, 378–79.
65. Document, p. 18.
66. HC 3:179.
67. Peck, "Peck Manuscript," pp. 46, 47. The subject of angels coming to the assistance of the faithful was mentioned often at the hearing. See Document, pp. 4, 14, 24, testimony of Avard, Owens, and Hinkle. The reference to God's "strange act" was no doubt inspired by Doctrine and Covenants (1835) 95:1 and 97:12.
68. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 60–61, 74–75; Corrill, *Brief History*, p. 38. Avard capitalized upon such statements as found in the Doctrine and Covenants 85:6. See also *Times and Seasons*, 1 February 1846; D & C 98:37 and 105:14.
69. HC 3:179–81 for these quotes about Sampson Avard.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
72. Document, pp. 5–6.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
74. *Correspondence, Orders, etc. . . .*, p. 63.
75. Document. pp. 14, 17.
76. Corrill, *Brief History*, p. 32.
77. HC 3:161–63. Lyman Wight, resident of Diahman, and George M. Hinkle, resident of Far West, were selected to serve as commanding officers of the newly organized units. Each man held an official commission as a colonel in the Missouri State Militia from Governor Lilburn W. Boggs. The legislature had been slow to recognize the need for a military unit for Caldwell County, but the Saints, sensitive to past hardships, were determined not to be driven again. The advice of Doniphan, then, was not only timely, it

was in line with the thinking of the Saints themselves. During the height of the troubles, both units were ordered into the field, the one in Caldwell by Doniphan, the one in Daviess by General Parks. See Gentry, "History," pp. 367–77.

78. Members of these military units always regarded themselves as legitimate state troops and their enemies as "mob" because of Doniphan's orders. See HC 3:162.

79. *Ibid.*, pp. 181–82. Following the surrender of Far West and until such time as provisions were made otherwise, these units continued to serve the Saints. The sufferings of the Mormon people during the post-Mormon War period are told in Gentry, "History." chapter 14, pp. 599–657.

80. HC 3:182.

81. This name was adopted from the Doctrine and Covenants 105:26, 30

82. Document, p. 17. Peck, "Peck's Manuscript," p. 47, also states that Carter was later dismissed and replaced by Avard. Avard's position in the legitimate Armies of Israel was that of Surgeon. See Document, p. 3.

83. *Ibid.*, p.4. Several authorities deny that Joseph Smith exercised any military authority whatever. HC 3:280, 404, 432–33, 449.

84. Document, pp. 22–23. Hinkle claims that he returned from Daviess County and found the Saints hemmed in by their enemies. He was ordered to call out the militia by the Caldwell County Judge, Elias Higbee, highest-ranking civil officer in the county. In this framework Hinkle discovered that the Danite Band had superseded the local militia.

85. *Times and Seasons*, 15 July 1843; Shurtliff, "Diary," p. 120.

86. Document, p. 18.

87. As cited in Nibley, *Sounding Brass*, pp. 219–20. As far as is known, not one apostle belonged to the Danite Order.

88. Document, p. 18. Although a charter member of the order, Peck later renounced his former connections with the clan and subsequently with the Church as well.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 15. Italics added.

90. HC 6:165.

91. *Ibid.*, 3:231. Italics added.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 303.

93. An account of the Mormon War, so called in Missouri annals, is in Gentry, "History," Chapters 8, 10, 11, and 12.

94. Document, p. 23.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

96. HC 3:280. The petition was formally concurred in before a justice of the peace by six additional acquaintances of the Prophet (p. 281).

97. Corrill, *Brief History*, p. 32, says that the band had about 300 members.

98. John Taylor, *The Mormon Question: Being a Speech by Vice President Schuyler Colfax at Salt Lake City and a Reply Thereto by John Taylor* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1870), p. 8.

99. Shurtliff, "Diary," p.120.

100. Even Avarad admitted that neither Rigdon nor Joseph Smith ever took the Danite oath. Document, p. 21. The reference to "Joseph Smith, Sen.," is a reference to Joseph Smith whose father, also named Joseph Smith, was dead at the time of Rigdon's statement.

101. HC 3:453. Rigdon's failure to denounce the Danites as Joseph Smith did may be partly due to his close association with the movement, particularly in its first two stages.

102. Daryl Chase, "Sidney Rigdon: Early Mormon Leader" (Master's thesis, The University of Chicago, 1930), p.129.

103. Document, p. 12, testimony of Morris Phelps. See also the testimonies of John Corrill, p. 13, John Clemenson, p. 16, and Reed Peck, p. 18.

104. Ibid., p. 43, testimony of W. W. Phelps.

105. Ibid., p. 46.

106. Chase credits Rigdon's unrestrained oratorical outbursts to the aftereffects of his maltreatment at the hands of enemies in March 1832. Chase, "Sidney Rigdon," p. 101.

107. Ibid., p. 129. Evidence shows that Joseph Smith did try to restrain Rigdon's emotional outbursts on more than one occasion. Document. pp. 20–21, 33, 43, testimony of Reed Peck, John Whitnaer [Whitmer], and W. W. Phelps. Orson Hyde, speaking of Rigdon's conduct during this period, observed that "although Brother Joseph tried to restrain him, he would take his own course." See Improvement Era 3:583. Jedediah M. Grant reports that Rigdon's flights of fancy were "so rapid that Elder [Joseph] Smith was unable to keep him within the bounds of reason. . . . His imagination carried him not 'beyond the bounds of time and space,' but beyond the bounds of reason." Jedediah M. Grant, Collection of Facts Relative to the Course of Mr. Sidney Rigdon, a copy in the Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah, p. 9. Newell K. Whitney also claimed to overhear Joseph Smith rebuke Rigdon for "speaking in the name of the Lord what was not so." Times and Seasons, 15 October 1844.

108. HC 3:181.

109. Times and Seasons, 1 October 1844. A similar comment from David Pettigrew will also be found in the 1 May 1845 issue.

110. HC 5:531–32. The basis for the Prophet's suspicion was information he had received from Orson Hyde to the effect that Rigdon was in league with Governor Thomas Carlin of Illinois to capture Joseph Smith and extradite him to Missouri on the old charges. See also pp. 553–54, where Carlin denies the charge by personal letter to Rigdon.

111. Document, p. 17.

112. Ibid., p. 21.

## Jehovah's Witnesses and the Concerns They Raise

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### History of the Movement

This organization is the brain-child of Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916) of Allegheny, Pennsylvania. In 1868, three years following the Civil War, the sixteen-year-old Russell concluded that the orthodox Calvinistic views of predestination and everlasting punishment of the wicked could not be reconciled with the New Testament description of a just and merciful God. He therefore withdrew from the Congregational Church. He then examined writings of biblical critics and subsequently labeled himself a "Christian skeptic." He examined other Christian faiths. Like many other reformers, this conscientious seeker decided that none of the religions he investigated was God's church. God's religion, he eventually concluded, should be devoid of all human opinions and creedal expressions and should be built upon a single norm—the infallible Bible.

Russell recognized the problem of interpreting the word of God, and he sought companions who could help him unlock the mysteries—the real truths—of the scriptures. He contacted a group of "Adventists" who had organized a society in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Russell subsequently developed a keen interest in the chronology of biblical prophecy and in the Millennium. While associating with the Adventists, Russell also adopted an unusual explanation of the concept of Christ's atonement or "ransom." Christ's *ransom* on the cross, he concluded, was not solely a guarantee that believers would be pardoned of their sins, but a promise that during the Millennium, nearly all men, believers and unbelievers, will come forth from their graves and be given the opportunity to start afresh. They will each have "full opportunity" to earn everlasting life.

The Adventists of Pittsburgh also contributed to Russell's beliefs regarding the second coming of Christ. After setting an initial date for the Savior's return and being disappointed, this small group of Protestants had reset the date of Christ's return, declaring that the Savior would reappear in 1873 or 1874. After they had experienced a second disappointment, Russell informed the Adventists that Christ did return in 1874, but not physically as the Adventists had anticipated. Christ's second coming had occurred, Russell alleged, as a sort of spiritual advent. Russell taught that Christ had come to earth and had begun a ministry during which he would be unseen but effective. He maintained that the separation of the "wheat" from the "tares" had commenced, and the gathering of God's children would continue until 1914, the date when the Battle of Armageddon would inaugurate Christ's millennial reign on earth which would begin about 1918.

Though the chronology of these events has subsequently been adjusted and readjusted, the idea that Christ's "spiritual" second coming has already occurred

persists even today. Witnesses believe that Jesus rules today on earth invisibly—that he is perceived only as a series of “signs.” They base this belief on a rendering of the Greek word *parousia*. This word is usually translated as “second coming” when referring to Christ. Another meaning, however, is “presence.” Playing on this second meaning, they believe that Jesus’s “second coming” refers less to a moment of arrival and more to his ruling invisibly on earth beginning in 1914 (the current proposed date) and continuing for an unknown duration.

In the 1870’s, Russell became an itinerant preacher. He recorded and published his interpretations of the scriptures. He issued his most famous publication, *Zion’s Watch Tower*. After organizing his followers, he authorized many to serve as missionaries. In order to finance their proselyting activities, Russell liberally spent money earned from a successful mercantile business he had developed during his quest for religious truth.

The work of organizing a religious society continued into the ensuing decade. In 1884, three years after organizing a Bible society, “Pastor” Russell secured a charter enabling him to establish the “Zion’s Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society,” a corporation designed to “spread the truth.” A few years later, Russell changed the title of the corporation to “Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (or Corporation)” and moved the headquarters of this society from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Brooklyn, New York. Russell’s followers went by the name of “Bible Students.” He wasn’t trying to organize a church, only a Bible study society.

As the year 1914 approached, Russell sensed that he might have erred in his analysis of biblical prophecies and their chronology. He announced that a mistake on the precise date of the Battle of Armageddon would not invalidate his descriptions of other major themes of the scriptures. When World War I erupted and inaugurated an era of unprecedented death and destruction, however, Russell saw the conflict as representing a plausible Armageddon. He confidently proclaimed that death, anarchy, and revolution would continue until the thousand-year Millennium began. But Russell did not live to find out whether or not the Millennium would commence and a “new world” be created. In 1916, two years before the cessation of hostilities in Europe, the founder of this unusual religious corporation died, leaving no successor over an established society of then approximately 50,000 adherents.

A power struggle followed Russell’s death. An attorney who had served for many years as a member of the board, “Judge” Joseph F. Rutherford quickly took control of the Watch Tower Society through legal maneuvers that included the ouster of dissident board members. The subsequent changes in organization, policy, and doctrine were so drastic, and the number of defectors so large, that many scholars now consider the Jehovah’s Witnesses to be an offshoot of the original movement that Russell founded. By mid-1919, about one in seven Bible Students had left rather than accept Rutherford’s leadership.

Rutherford had served for a short time as a special judge in the Fourteenth Judicial District in Missouri. He had also been a legal counselor for “Pastor” Russell. He had demonstrated qualities of leadership in performing many assignments. Once Rutherford was firmly established as Russell’s successor, members of the Bible society were invited to participate in an “election” by contributing ten dollars for every vote they desired to cast. After 150,000 votes were counted, word was circulated that Joseph Rutherford had been unanimously elected president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Corporation.

Rutherford’s rise to power was aided by governmental persecution at the end of World War I. The Bible Students were conscientious objectors who refused military service, and they widely circulated literature urging others to do likewise. This was regarded as sedition by various Canadian and American officials. In May of 1918 warrants were issued for the arrest of Rutherford and seven of his aides for conspiring to promote draft evasion during a time of war. A month later they were sentenced to twenty years in prison. These convictions prompted violent mob actions in many American communities against many local Bible Students. A year later the convictions were overturned and subsequently dropped. However, this episode, in somewhat ironic fashion, made Rutherford a martyr, and greatly increased his prestige among the rank and file.

Significant changes in doctrine were made under Rutherford’s leadership. He introduced a new *ex post facto* explanation of the events that had transpired between 1874 and 1918. You will recall that Pastor Russell had announced that Christ’s spiritual advent had occurred in 1874. Christ would then, according to Russell, reign invisibly on earth until after Armageddon which would begin in 1914. Christ would begin his millennial reign on earth shortly thereafter. Revising Russell’s prior prediction, the “Judge” declared that the Battle of Armageddon had not been designated to erupt in 1914 after all. In that year, World War I had erupted. Rutherford ignored the “coming of Christ” in 1874 and announced that during 1914 Satan had been cast out of heaven and Jehovah—the Father—placed Christ upon his heavenly throne, authorizing him to be king. After commencing to rule in heaven in 1914, Rutherford added, Christ began to rule on earth in 1918. Then, for a few years, the King would permit Satan to continue his reign of terror until Armageddon and the onset of the Millennium. Rutherford began to set dates for the Millennium’s onset. He first committed to 1920, then later he would suggest 1925, and finally 1940.

At an international convention held at Cedar Point, Ohio in September 1922, a new emphasis was made on house-to-house preaching. From the start, the Witnesses have been literal and dedicated Adventists. That is, their main religious theme and message has been the imminent physical return of the Savior (his “advent”) following a major cleansing battle, Armageddon. Under Rutherford, they proselyted using the

theme, “Millions now living will never die” to attempt to awaken the world to the rapid approach of the end of the world.

In 1931, at the convention of Bible Students in Columbus, Ohio, a resolution was passed adopting the name “Jehovah’s Witnesses” based on Isaiah 43:10-12: ”Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and my servant whom I have chosen.” This name is applied to those who adhere to the doctrines held by the Watch Tower Corporation and differentiates the largest group of followers of Russell from other branches of this movement.

Many members became dissatisfied with Rutherford’s leadership. This resulted in the formation of various Bible Student groups independent of the Watch Tower Society. William Schnell, author and former Witness, has claimed that three quarters of the Bible Students under the leadership of Rutherford in 1921 had left by 1931.

In 1932, Rutherford eliminated the system of locally elected leaders (elders), and he introduced what he called a “theocratic” (literally, *God-ruled*) organizational system. Under this system, appointments in congregations worldwide were made from the Brooklyn headquarters.

By 1933, the timing of the beginning of Christ’s presence on earth (the parousia), his enthronement as king in heaven, and the start of the “last days” were each moved to 1914. Prior to 1932 the Witnesses had held that 144,000 “anointed” members from among their number would be eventually “reborn in the spirit” and live with God in heaven (in the spirit rather than with a physical body). They would help in the administration of God’s universe. In 1932, this quota of 144,000 was rapidly being filled. Hence, a separate class of Witnesses was identified who would be resurrected with physical bodies and live eternally in a paradise restored on earth. From 1935 (when the quota became completely filled), new converts to the movement were considered part of that class.

Rutherford was industrious and domineering. Instead of continuing to emphasize Russell’s interpretation of the “ransom” (the atonement), physical resurrection, and the nature of everlasting punishment (see below), “Judge” Rutherford introduced a new set of doctrinal themes. In the 1930s, he proclaimed that a central message of the Bible was the “vindication of Jehovah’s name.” This meant that eventually God would defeat Satan and restore conditions on earth to a state of original perfection. Thus equipped with another “vital message” to proclaim to mankind, the Bible students intensified their missionary labors. If people neglected to heed their message, militant missionaries reasoned, the unbelievers would be held accountable while they (the missionaries) would have accomplished the will of God.

After serving as president of the Bible society for twenty-five years, the autocratic Rutherford died in January 1942. The Witnesses stopped setting dates for the onset of the Millennium. However, during the late 1960s the belief that the end would come in 1975 began to circulate and soon gained wide-spread acceptance (although it was

never made the official view). The failure of that date caused considerable disillusionment and damage to the Witness's mission, but the damage eventually healed because the majority of today's members were either very young at the time or had not yet joined. After 1975, the Witnesses did actually stop setting dates for good. The November 1995 issue of *The Watchtower* effectively removed any limit on the number of years that might elapse before the Lord's second coming.

Five days after Rutherford's death, on January 13, 1942, Nathan H. Knorr was elected by the Board of Directors as the third president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. Under Knorr's competent direction, the Jehovah's Witnesses grew in membership at an astonishing rate, increasing from approximately 100,000 in 1942 to about 1,000,000 in 1962.

Knorr commissioned a new translation of the Bible, the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, the full version of which was finally released in 1961. Some Bible scholars have noted that the translation of certain texts in the New World Translation of the Bible are biased in favor of Witness practices and doctrines. On the whole, however, it is considered to be a satisfactory translation. One particular source of criticism by some theologians has been that the word *Jehovah* has been inserted into the text of the New Testament of the New World Translation some 237 times in places where it does not appear in the extant Greek manuscripts. The King James version has "Lord" in these places—the translation of the Greek word *kyrios*.

Knorr organized large international assemblies, instituted new training programs for members, and expanded missionary activity and branch offices throughout the world. Knorr's presidency was also marked by an increasing use of explicit instructions guiding Witnesses in their lifestyle and conduct, and a greater use of congregational judicial procedures to enforce strict moral codes.

Since Knorr's death in 1977, the position of president has been occupied by Frederick Franz (1977–1992) and Milton Henschel (1992–2000), both members of the Governing Body (see a description of the function of the "Governing Body of the Jehovah's Witnesses below), and since 2000 by Don A. Adams, not a member of the Governing Body.

Jehovah's Witnesses have an active presence in most countries, though they do not form a large part of the population of any country. As of August 2009, Jehovah's Witnesses have an average of some seven million "publishers," the term they use for members actively involved in preaching. In 2009, their statistical reports indicated a total of over 1.5 billion hours spent in preaching and Bible study activity. Since the mid-1990s, the number of peak publishers had increased from 4.5 million to 7.3 million. The worldwide growth rate of Jehovah's Witnesses is currently 3.2% per year. Convention attendance is over 12 million, and annual Memorial attendance is over 18 million. There are more than 100,000 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide. Congregations reflect the languages spoken in their communities. For example, by

2002, nearly 3,000 of the 10,000 congregations in the United States conducted meetings in 38 languages other than English.

The official published membership statistics include only those who submit reports for their personal ministry. Official statistics do not include “inactive” and disfellowshipped members or those who merely attend meetings. As a result, only about half of those who self-identified as Jehovah’s Witnesses in independent demographic studies are considered “active” by the faith itself.

### **Witnesses’ Present-Day Government**

The “faithful and discreet slave” is the term used by Jehovah’s Witnesses to describe the survivors or “remnant” of the collective body of the 144,000 “anointed” Christians selected prior to 1935 from among the Jehovah’s Witnesses. At death, these are anticipated to be “born again as spiritual sons of God” and live with God forever as spirits. They will assist Christ in ruling the universe. As of 1997 there were more than 10,000 of these individuals still living. Jehovah’s Witnesses believe this group exercises teaching authority in all matters pertaining to doctrine and articles of faith. The “faithful and discreet slave” is described as a “class” of Christians that operates under the direct control of Jesus Christ and has been delegated the task of “feeding” Christians with scriptural instruction and exercising direction over their interests and affairs. The concept is a central doctrine of Jehovah’s Witnesses’ system of belief and is based on their interpretation of the parable of the wise steward in Matthew 24:45-47. Watch Tower Society publications teach that Jesus uses this group exclusively “to publish information on the fulfillment of Bible prophecies and to give timely direction on the application of Bible principles in daily life.” The “faithful and discreet slaves” are thought to be God’s only means of communicating his messages to humans. Hence, this body of men is referred to as God’s “prophet” and “channel.” The group is also said to appoint men to positions of responsibility within Jehovah’s Witnesses “through its Governing Body.”

The Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses is the ruling council of Jehovah’s Witnesses and is based in Brooklyn, New York. The body assumes responsibility for formulating policy and doctrines, producing material for publications and conventions, administering its worldwide branch office staff, and leading and directing the activities of all members of the religion. There is no election for membership in the Governing Body. New members are nominated and selected by the existing body. Once appointed to the Governing Body, almost all members have remained in the position until their death. The Governing Body is described as the “spokesman” for God’s “faithful and discreet slave class.” Members of the Governing Body say they are followers of Christ rather than religious leaders. The board’s size has varied, with as many as eighteen members from 1974 to 1980. Since June 2010 it has comprised eight members, who each claim

to be of the “anointed” class with a hope of heavenly life. As mentioned, the “slave class” is represented by “a limited number” of anointed men on the Governing Body.

This doctrine of governance was actually originated by Watch Tower Society founder Charles Taze Russell, who in 1881 first applied it to the “church”—the “little flock” of 144,000 who would go to heaven. But five years later Russell explained that it was an individual who would act as a sole “channel” or agent for Christ, dispensing “food,” or new truths for God’s “household.” Russell’s followers identified him as that “servant” until that view was rejected in 1927.

Governing Body meetings are held weekly in closed session. Watch Tower Society publications provide no details of the agenda or discussion leading to decisions. Until 1975, decisions of the body were required to be unanimous. Since then, a two-thirds majority of the full body has been sufficient to allow proposals to be carried, regardless of the number present.

In a major organizational overhaul in 1976, the power of the Watch Tower Society president was diminished, with authority for doctrinal and organizational decisions passed to the “Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses.” These teachings are disseminated through *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines and other publications of Jehovah’s Witnesses, and at conventions and congregation meetings. As mentioned above, the most recent president of the corporation, Don A. Adams, is not a member of the Governing Body.

Each congregation has a body of appointed and unpaid male elders and ministerial servants. Elders maintain general responsibility for congregational governance, setting meeting times, selecting speakers, conducting meetings, directing the public preaching work, and creating “judicial committees” to investigate and decide disciplinary action for cases that are seen as breaching their doctrines. New elders are appointed by branch offices after recommendation by the existing body of elders. Ministerial servants are appointed in a similar manner to elders. They fulfill clerical and attendant duties, but may also teach and conduct meetings. Witnesses do not use *elder* as a title to signify a formal clergy-laity division.

### **Their Beliefs and Practices**

The Witnesses’ doctrines have been and are established by the Governing Body, which assumes responsibility for interpreting and applying scripture. Watch Tower Society publications claim that doctrinal changes and refinements result from a process of progressive revelation, in which God gradually reveals his will and purposes. Watch Tower Society literature has suggested such enlightenment results from the application of reason and study, the guidance of the holy spirit (they don’t capitalize holy spirit), and direction from Jesus Christ and angels. Watch Tower publications say “responsible representatives” of the “faithful and discreet slave class” at the religion’s headquarters are helped by the holy spirit to discern “deep truths.” These truths are then considered

by the entire Governing Body before it makes doctrinal decisions. Witness publications say the religion's teachings are "not from men, but from Jehovah." It is interesting to note that in spite of all of their explanations for the origin of their doctrines, they disclaim both divine inspiration and infallibility.

Most all of their beliefs and practices date back to Charles Taze Russell. Members of this Bible society only obey laws that correspond to their interpretation of the Bible. They are basically a "millenarian," "adventist, or "restorationist" Christian denomination distinct from mainstream orthodox Christianity. Their central belief is the imminent destruction of the present world order at Armageddon and the establishment of God's millennial kingdom on earth, which they consider to be the only solution for all problems faced by humankind. Jehovah's Witnesses believe their religion restores the doctrines of "true" Christianity.

**Creation.** Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus was Jehovah's only direct creation, that everything else was created by means of Christ, and that the initial unassisted act of creation uniquely identifies Jesus as God's "only-begotten Son." Jesus served as a redeemer and a ransom sacrifice to pay for the sins of humankind. They believe Jesus died on a single upright torture stake rather than the traditional cross. They believe that references in the Bible to the Archangel Michael, to Apollyon, to Abaddon, and to the Word all refer to Jesus. It is, by the way, the LDS belief that Abaddon and Apollyon in the Bible refer to Satan.

Jesus is considered to be the only mediator between God and humankind, and he was appointed by God as the king and judge of his kingdom.

**Satan.** Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Satan is a spirit creature who is the ruler of the world, and that he was originally a perfect angel who developed feelings of self-importance and craved worship. Satan persuaded Adam and Eve to obey him rather than God, and humanity subsequently became participants in a challenge involving the competing claims of Jehovah and Satan to universal sovereignty. Other angels who sided with Satan became demons. Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Satan and his demons were cast down to earth from heaven after October 1, 1914, at which point the end times began. Witnesses believe that the world is influenced by Satan and his demons, that they mislead people, and are the cause of human suffering. However, they do not believe that individual rulers or governments are under Satan's direct control.

**Importance of the Bible.** The Witnesses believe that the Bible is infallible and inerrant. When Jehovah's Witnesses testify that the Bible is free from error, they do not mean that it is free from alterations of the original text. The Holy Scriptures, they claim, were written by individuals who recorded accurately the messages dictated by God. But recognizing that scribes marred the writings of the prophets, Witnesses have published the New World Translation of the Scriptures (1961), a work based upon various translations from which are chosen the "select" or "preferred" texts.

Since Witnesses do not classify their society as a church, but as an organization of Bible students, they emphasize that all members should become intimately acquainted with the scriptures. To assist individuals in their studies, the Watch Tower Corporation has issued a guide entitled *Studies in the Scriptures*, and, more recently, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, which contain selections from the Old and New Testaments arranged in topical sequence. The corporation also publishes works informing members of the proper procedures in preparing and delivering spiritual messages. The society trains public speakers who in turn instruct other members in weekly class studies and drills.

The religion makes no provision for members to criticize or contribute to official teachings, and all Witnesses must abide by its doctrines and organizational requirements. The Watch Tower Society discourages Witnesses from Bible research or study independent of its publications and meetings.

**Concept of the Godhead.** Witnesses do not believe in the concept of the “Trinity,” in fact sometimes they argue that the term *Trinity* originated with Satan. They vehemently deny that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are of one essence, are co-eternal, and co-equal. They believe that God and Jesus are two distinct personages. They also state that the holy ghost (note the absence of capital letters) is not a separate “person,” but rather God’s energizing spirit or force. Jesus himself is not God, but rather God’s only begotten Son. They preach that Jehovah is the “God of the Old Testament” and is the Father, the eternal God.

They teach that there was a time when Jesus did not exist. The Almighty God—the Father—referred to by the prophets as the great Jehovah was once alone in the universe. After initiating the creation, Jehovah brought forth a son who was called Michael in his pre-mortal existence and Jesus during his journey on earth. Michael, the only pre-mortal being who has been born on earth, God’s favorite and beloved son, was not given all of God’s power and authority. Although Jehovah’s Witnesses endorse the belief that Christ was born of a virgin and lived a perfect life devoid of sin, they deny that Jesus was a God while residing on earth. The mission of the Messiah was to provide a ransom. They preach that “the justice of God would not permit that Jesus . . . be more than a perfect man; and certainly not be the supreme God Almighty in the flesh.”

Witnesses deny that Jesus was resurrected with a body of flesh and bone. They state that even though Jesus rose from the grave and appeared as a man, his true resurrected form is the same as that of the Almighty God’s—a spirit that is neither earthly, human, nor confined to a particular form. They acknowledge Luke 24:36-39: “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” But they explain those verses away by claiming that it was necessary, for some reason, for Jesus to appear to his disciples in a temporary “materialized form.”

In summary, they believe Jesus is a later and lesser God who is inferior to Jehovah, and that both are immaterial, all-pervading “spirits” in their present state, with separate identities. Thus, the Jehovah’s Witnesses take emphatic issue with the LDS understanding of the nature and purpose of the members of the Godhead.

**The fall, atonement, and means of salvation.** Watch Tower Society publications teach that humanity is in a sinful state, from which release is only possible by means of Jesus’ shed blood as a payment, or atonement, for the sins of humankind. Witnesses continue to preach the concept of the fall and atonement as described by Russell, insisting that since the fallen Adam transmitted sin and death to his posterity, an atonement was necessary. Christ laid down his life, they teach, not only to cancel the sins of believing men but to free them from death’s condemnation by a guarantee that almost everyone will receive full opportunity during the millennium to embrace the gospel.

In order to be elected to everlasting life, Jehovah’s Witnesses instruct others that they must learn to conform to the will of the Father. Those who are dedicated, and are begotten of the holy spirit, and who serve God shall be resurrected and exalted to positions in the heavenly kingdom.

**Death and resurrection.** Jehovah’s Witnesses consider the *soul* to be a life or a living body that can die. They believe death is a state of non-existence with no consciousness. There is no hell of fiery torment. Hades and Sheol are understood by them to refer to the condition of death—termed the “common grave.” They teach that the human soul (spirit), at death, “sleeps”—actually ceases to be—until the resurrection.

Most, but not all will be resurrected during the Millennium. The millennial earth will be inhabited by resurrected beings undergoing their final trial prior to their final judgment. Their hope for eternal life after death involves being physically resurrected by God to a cleansed earth after Armageddon. For the limited number of 144,000, they will be resurrected to heaven, assume the character of spirits (like the Father and the Son) and assist in heaven for all eternity. Those physically resurrected to earth are referred to as the “other sheep.”

Not everyone will be judged at the same time, Witnesses declare. Many who have lived an unrighteous life on this earth and have sinned against the Holy Spirit have already been judged. These are beyond reform and correction. They will not be resurrected and stand before Christ on the day of judgment but, following their mortal deaths, will remain “asleep”—actually non-existent—forever. Notable individuals who fit into this category include those killed in the Flood at the time of Noah, Judas Iscariot, and even Adam. The “lake which burneth with fire and brimstone,” they say, does not really imply a life of eternal torment. It is a scriptural expression that refers to the “second death”—total and permanent annihilation.

At the end of Christ’s thousand-year reign on earth, all resurrected beings will gather for one last test. Satan will then be released from his prison and will cunningly

strive to turn men from God. Individuals who succumb to the temptation will be annihilated forever with Satan and his demons. All who remain loyal to God during this last trial will be blessed with eternal life on a paradisiacal earth. These obedient souls will be freed from sickness, sorrow, confusion, and pain and will be warmed by the pure love of God.

**More about the destinations of those resurrected.** The hope for the righteous is resurrection. Witnesses believe there are two destinations for those resurrected or saved by God. Jehovah's Witnesses teach that only they meet scriptural requirements for surviving Armageddon, although God is the final judge. During the millennium, most other people who died since the time of Abel and prior to Armageddon will be resurrected with the prospect of living forever. They will be taught the proper way to worship God in order for them to be ready for their final test before the end of the Millennium. There will be two classes of people in the resurrection, an earthly class and a heavenly class:

1. The earthly class—the “other sheep.” The greater number of those who are saved will be resurrected with healthy, perfected physical bodies (bodies of flesh, bones, and blood) and will inhabit this earth after the world has been restored to a paradisiacal state. The earth will be restored to a state of Edenic paradise and will be the place of abode for the righteous. Those people “who will fit in with Jehovah's purpose for a beautified, inhabited earth may live on it forever” (Official Statement of belief).

2. The heavenly class. Witnesses interpret Revelation 14:1-5 to mean that the number of Christians going to heaven is limited to exactly 144,000, who will rule with Jesus as kings and priests over earth. These elite “anointed ones,” selected from among the Jehovah's Witnesses, will be “born again as spiritual sons of God” and live with God forever as spirits. They will assist Christ in ruling the universe. The Witnesses quote John 3:5 which, they feel, refers only to their heavenly class of 144,000. In this verse Jesus says, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Their heavenly class are the only ones who they feel are “born again.” Those in the earthly class, described previously, are said to be “saved,” but not born again.

One scripture the Witnesses cite to support their idea of the “heavenly class” of 144,000 is Luke 12:32: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Witnesses believe that this “little flock” of 144,000 have already been chosen from among the Jehovah's Witnesses. By about 1935, the quota was full, therefore no additional Witnesses have been anointed to be among the heavenly class since that year. As of the year of this writing (2010) the only living Witnesses who have had their special anointing are obviously all very elderly.

Witness publications teach that God's Kingdom is a literal government in heaven, ruled by Jesus Christ and the 144,000 Christians drawn from the earth. The kingdom is

viewed as the means by which God will accomplish his original purpose for the earth, transforming earth into a paradise without sickness or death. The kingdom is said to have been the focal point of Jesus' ministry on earth, and it was established in heaven in 1914. They believe 1914 marks the restoration of God's rule over earth after being halted for 2520 years since 607 BC, the date they uniquely assign to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

**Armageddon.** A central teaching of Jehovah's Witnesses is that the current world era, or "system of things," entered the "last days" in 1914 and faces imminent destruction through intervention by God and Jesus Christ, leading to deliverance for those who worship God acceptably. Watch Tower Society publications teach that Jesus Christ began to rule in heaven as king of God's Kingdom in October 1914, and that Satan was subsequently ousted from heaven to the earth, resulting in "woe" to mankind.

Witnesses consider all other present-day religions to be false, identifying them with "Babylon the Great," or the "harlot," of Revelation 17 and believe that they will soon be destroyed. This development will mark the beginning of the great tribulation. Satan will subsequently attack Jehovah's Witnesses, an action that will prompt God to begin the war of Armageddon, during which all forms of government and all people not counted as Christ's "sheep," or true followers, will be destroyed. After Armageddon, God will extend his heavenly kingdom to include earth. Earth will be transformed into a paradise similar to the Garden of Eden. After Armageddon, most of those who had died prior to God's intervention will gradually be resurrected to a "day of judgment" lasting for a thousand years. This judgment will be based on their actions after resurrection, not on past deeds. At the end of the thousand years, a final test will take place when Satan is released to mislead perfect mankind. The end result will be a fully tested, glorified human race. Christ will then hand all authority back to God.

**Views on the Millennium.** Members of this religious society also teach a unique view regarding events that will transpire immediately preceding the Millennium. The period of time extending from 607 BC, the date the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, to 1914 is referred to as the "times of the Gentiles." During these centuries, Satan ruled the world without God's interference. In 1914, they add, war erupted in heaven between Christ (known as Michael) and Satan. After his defeat, the "Dragon" was cast out of heaven and down to earth, and Christ commenced ruling in heaven as King. During the time period in which we live (called the "time of the end" of this world or the "last days"), Witnesses militantly proclaim that the gospel will be carried to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, and the wicked will be separated from God's people. Witnesses also insist that one of their primary responsibilities is to inform others of the drama described in the Bible, including the birth of God's kingdom, the imminent and final defeat of Satan, and the creation of a new earth. Moreover, members of this Bible society dogmatically predict that billions "who are now living will never die," but will live beyond the end of Satan's rule. They will see the destruction of

the present wicked world and will reside in a state of peace and happiness on a cleansed earth—”Jehovah’s righteous new world.” This claim has been made for many years and seems to be heard less frequently now.

The transition between the present earth and the “new earth” will be cataclysmic rather than evolutionary and is anticipated to be brought about by a great war—Armageddon. As noted above, there have been several specific prophecies made within the Witnesses organization regarding the time of occurrence of Armageddon. The passage of time has introduced increasing complexity and awkwardness into the Witnesses’ paradigm of the “last days.”

**Each Witness is a “publisher of God’s word.”** Jehovah’s Witnesses are perhaps best known for their efforts to spread their beliefs, most notably by visiting people from house to house. Free home Bible studies are offered to people who show interest in their beliefs. They present these with the aid of books, brochures and magazines, including *The Watchtower*. Some literature is available in more than 500 languages. Witnesses are told they are under a biblical command to engage in public preaching. They are instructed to devote as much time as possible to their ministry and are required to submit an individual monthly “Field Service Report.” Baptized members who fail to submit a report every month are referred to as “irregular” and may be counseled by elders. Those who do not submit a report for six consecutive months are referred to as “inactive.”

In order to remain a witness in good standing, one must be an active missionary and spread the Witnesses’ version of “truth.” The Witnesses’ consider themselves to be “in the truth.” Witnesses are further distinguished by their voluminous publication and prolific distribution of Bibles, books, tracts, and journals. All baptized members, male and female, are identified as ministers and are given the responsibility of serving as full-time or part-time missionaries. Although the vast majority of these ministers receive from the society no monetary remuneration, Witnesses conscientiously devote many hours each month to missionary labors. According to their 1964 records, 1,075,523 ministers reported 162,808,312 hours of preaching (an average of almost 13 hours each month for every member) and distributed 17,735,153 books and 127,055,165 magazines, door-to-door in the homes of people residing in 194 countries.

**Their worship.** Meetings for worship and study are held at “Kingdom Halls” which are typically functional in character and do not contain religious symbols. Witnesses are assigned to a congregation in whose “territory” they reside and attend weekly services they refer to as “meetings” as scheduled by congregation elders. The meetings are largely devoted to study of Watch Tower Society literature and the Bible. The format of the meetings is established by the religion’s Brooklyn headquarters, and the subject matter for most meetings is identical worldwide. Congregations meet for two sessions each week comprising five distinct meetings that total about three-and-a-half hours, typically gathering mid-week (three meetings) and on the weekend (two

meetings). Gatherings are opened and closed with kingdom songs and brief prayers. Each year, Witnesses from a number of congregations that form a “circuit” gather for a one-day and a two-day assembly. Several circuits meet once a year for a three-day “district convention,” usually at rented stadiums or auditoriums. Their most important and solemn event is the commemoration of the “Lord’s Evening Meal,” or “Memorial of Christ’s Death.” This generally falls on the same date as the Jewish Passover. See more about this commemoration below.

**Position regarding baptism and the sacrament.** According to the Witnesses, everyone who accepts Jehovah as the Almighty God and agrees to serve him should indicate this dedication by being baptized by immersion. Individuals undergoing baptism must affirm publicly that dedication and baptism identify them “as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses in association with God’s spirit-directed organization.” Though Witness publications say baptism is “a personal dedication to God and not to a work or organization.” Watch Tower publications emphasize the need for members to be obedient and loyal to Jehovah and to “his organization,” stating that individuals must remain part of it to receive God’s favor and to survive Armageddon. Witness publications state that acceptable service to God can be rendered only through the organization and that members should remain submissive to the religion’s leaders and to local congregational elders.

Since baptismal fonts are not built in their meeting houses, known as “kingdom halls,” the rite is generally performed in lakes, rivers, oceans, municipal baths, or in tanks especially installed for the occasion. Any God-fearing Witness is authorized to perform the ordinance—baptizing candidates “in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Witnesses believe that in the days of John the Baptist, baptism was for the remission of sins, but during Christ’s ministry and subsequently, baptism is only a pledge of dedication, and not for the remission of sins. They feel that forgiveness of sins is achieved through continued faith in Jesus and through prayer and calling upon his name. Then a person is declared righteous through the undeserved kindness of God and not through repentance or baptism. Apparently this erroneous doctrine results from an error in the New World Translation in the translation of Acts 22:16. Their Bible renders this verse, “. . . wash away your sins by your calling upon his name.” This is a good example of how, in a church of men, an erroneous doctrine can be propagated by an error in translation of their scripture. All other Bible versions indicate, in this verse, that it is through baptism that sins are remitted, not through prayer or “calling upon his name.” The King James Bible renders this verse: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Peter taught, “Repent and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (New World Translation—Acts 2:38). Also we know that we are forgiven through our repentance and through the regular renewing of our covenant

of baptism as we partake of the sacrament. More than simply “calling upon his name” is required. Again, from their own New World Translation: “And the dead were judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deeds. And the sea gave up those dead in it, and death and Hades gave up those dead in them and they were judged individually according to their deeds” (Revelation 20:12-13).

The Witnesses’ views of the sacrament are very different from the position held by members of other major Protestant denominations in this country. According to the Witnesses, individuals who are classified among the 144,000, the “anointed ones,” should partake of the bread and wine once a year as a symbol of the death of Christ and of their dedication to God. All Witnesses may attend this important meeting and all are served the emblems of the sacrament. But only those numbered among the 144,000 partake. They further believe that the celebration of the Memorial of Christ’s death should take place on the day corresponding to Nisan 14 of the Jewish calendar (occurring sometime in March or April).

**They are known as conscientious objectors.** Witnesses do not work in industries associated with the military. They must not serve in the military, salute the flag, or sing any patriotic songs or national anthems. The latter is regarded as unchristian image worship. They must not vote or hold political office.

Their determined refusal to salute any nation’s flag or serve in its military have been a constant source of conflict and persecution. Since the prosecution of Rutherford and his associates during World War I, the American courts have heard innumerable cases involving the Witnesses. Between 1938 and 1955, the Witnesses were involved in forty-five cases before the United States Supreme Court and have been forced into court battles repeatedly since then. During World War II, Witnesses were prosecuted for their refusal to serve in the armed forces. In the United States thousands of male Witnesses spent World War II in federal prisons, and it is a matter of public record that American judges gave them longer sentences than they did to conscientious objectors of other religions. Similar prosecution of Witnesses took place in Canada and Australia.

Surprisingly, hundreds of male Witnesses were sent to prison in neutral Sweden for refusing to serve. Since Swedish law provided for only relatively short sentences, the government drafted the Witnesses again and again, and re-sentenced them each time. Prosecution of Witnesses for draft evasion continued in Sweden long after the end of the war. Finally, in 1964, the Swedish government exempted the Witnesses from military service, but not by recognizing them as pacifists. Instead, the Swedish government declared them “unfit” for service according to the same rules as are applied to certain alcoholics or asocial individuals.

Things were much worse in Nazi Germany where a few German Witnesses were confined to mental hospitals, and as many as 12,000 were sent to concentration camps, such as Dachau where they were identified by purple triangles. As many as 5,000 died in the camps, presumably right along with the Jews. More than 200 Witnesses were

executed at the orders of German war courts for their pacifism. In the former Soviet Union, about 9,300 Jehovah's Witness families were deported to Siberia as part of "Operation North" in April 1951. Their religious activities are currently banned or restricted in some countries, including China, Vietnam, and some Islamic states.

Even today, the Witnesses continue to face restrictions and government opposition in many nations. As of 1995 the Witnesses reported that they were banned outright (but carried on underground) in twenty-six nations. These no longer include the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe. However, the Witnesses remain illegal throughout most of the Islamic world. Even where the Witnesses have gained the right to exist, they continue to have trouble, some of it quite serious. For example, in Zambia, the nation with the highest Witness membership rate in the world, it is illegal for them to go house-to-house or to proselytize anyone whom they do not know personally. Only recently did Belgium lift a government-imposed ban against transporting Witness publications, including Bibles, via the postal and rail systems. For decades the police in Portugal routinely confiscated Bibles and tracts from the Witnesses, and often beat them severely as well. Lisbon's newspaper *Diario Popular* greeted their recent legalization with the admission that until that time "To be one of Jehovah's Witnesses . . . was dangerous and even subversive. But times have changed. Now it is possible not only to be a Witness in Portugal but also to assemble in public" (quoted in *Yearbook*, 1983: 235). However legal it may now be to assemble in Portugal, Portuguese Witnesses still fear mob violence. On August 12, 1993, the government of Malawi revoked its twenty-year ban on the movement, thus freeing thousands of Witnesses from refugee camps across the border in Mozambique (*Yearbook*, 1995: 43).

Less serious, but representative of the chronic bureaucratic interference the Witnesses face, on May 16, 1991, after many appeals, the Witnesses finally received permission from the government of France to print religious materials in color, rather than only in black-and-white (*Yearbook*, 1992, 15). M. James Penton (*Yearbook*, 1985: 41) summed up the human side of all this persecution: "In many parts of the world, they have been assaulted, mobbed, beaten, tarred, and feathered, castrated, raped, and murdered. . . . Few long-time Witnesses of Jehovah have escaped threats to their persons with clubs, knives, guns, or fists; and many have had boiling water, offal, or stones thrown at them. Others have had dogs turned on them, and almost all have been subjected to verbal abuse." Viewed globally, this persecution has been so persistent and of such an intensity that it would not be inaccurate to regard Jehovah's witnesses as the most persecuted religion of the twentieth century.

Many cases involving Jehovah's Witnesses have been heard by Supreme Courts throughout the world. Their persistent legal challenges have helped to widen the definition of civil liberties in many countries. The cases generally relate to the right to practice their religion, displays of patriotism and military service, and blood transfusions.

**Marriage and divorce.** The family structure is patriarchal. The husband is considered the final authority on family decisions, but is encouraged to solicit his wife's thoughts and feelings, as well as those of his children. Marriages are required to be monogamous. Divorce is permissible only for adultery. Such a divorce is referred to as "a scriptural divorce." If a divorce is obtained for any other reason, remarriage is considered adultery while the previous spouse is still alive and has not begun another sexual relationship. Extreme physical abuse, willful non-support of one's family, and what the religion terms "absolute endangerment of spirituality" are considered grounds for legal separation.

**Church discipline.** Formal discipline is administered by congregation elders. Counseling and shepherding are emphasized as primary roles of these local leaders. When an allegation of "serious sin" is made concerning a baptized member, a "judicial committee" is formed to determine guilt, provide help and possibly administer discipline. Disfellowshipping, a form of shunning, is the strongest form of discipline administered. Contact with disfellowshipped individuals is limited to direct family members living in the same home, and with congregation elders who may invite disfellowshipped persons to apply for reinstatement. Formal business dealings may continue with the disfellowshipped if contractually or financially obliged. By avoiding social and spiritual interaction with disfellowshipped individuals, Witnesses state that the congregation is kept free from immoral influence and wrong-doers may be shamed into repentance. The threat of shunning also serves to deter other members from dissident behavior. Members who voluntarily leave the religion and formally disassociate themselves are also shunned. "Reproof" is given formally by a judicial committee to a baptized Witness who is considered repentant of "serious sin." The reproofed person temporarily loses conspicuous privileges of service, but suffers no restriction of social or spiritual fellowship. "Marking" is practiced if a baptized adherent persists in a course of action regarded as a violation of Bible principles but not a "serious sin." The individual is "marked."

**Theirs is the one true church.** Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the Bible condemns the mixing of religions, on the basis that there can only be one truth from God. Thus, Witnesses reject interfaith and ecumenical movements. They believe that only their religion represents true Christianity, and that other religions fail to meet all the requirements set by God and will soon be destroyed. Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that it is vital to remain "separate from the world." Watch Tower Society publications define the "world" as "the mass of mankind apart from Jehovah's approved servants" and teach that it is ruled by Satan and a place of danger and moral contamination. Jehovah's Witnesses consider secular society to be morally corrupt and under the influence of Satan, and limit their social interaction with non-Witnesses. They perceive dangers from "worldly" associations. They minimize their social contacts to better maintain their own standards of morality.

**They refuse blood transfusions.** Since they believe the Bible forbids man to eat blood (Leviticus 17:10; Acts 15:20, 29), they regard blood transfusions as a violation of God's injunction. Since 1961 the willing acceptance of a blood transfusion by an unrepentant member has been grounds for expulsion from the religion. Watch Tower Society literature directs Witnesses to refuse blood transfusions, even in "a life-or-death situation." Jehovah's Witnesses accept non-blood alternatives and other medical procedures in lieu of blood transfusions.

Though Jehovah's Witnesses do not accept blood transfusions, they may accept some blood plasma fractions at their own discretion. The Watch Tower Society provides pre-formatted Power of Attorney documents prohibiting major components, in which members can specify which allowable fractions and treatments they will personally accept. Jehovah's Witnesses have established Hospital Liaison Committees as a cooperative arrangement between individual Jehovah's Witnesses and medical professionals and hospitals.

**Is their leadership overly autocratic?** Critics have described the religion's leadership as autocratic and totalitarian because of Watch Tower Society requirements for loyalty and obedience by Witnesses, intolerance of dissent or open discussion of doctrines and practices, and the practice of shunning members who cannot conscientiously agree with all the religion's teachings. Sociologist Andrew Holden says those who choose to leave the religion "are seldom allowed a dignified exit" ("Loyal to Christ and His Faithful Slave," *The Watch Tower*, April 1, 2007, 24). Sociologist Rodney Stark, however, states that while Jehovah's Witness leaders are "not always very democratic" and members are expected to conform to "rather strict standards," enforcement tends to be informal, sustained by close bonds of friendship and that Jehovah's Witnesses see themselves as "part of the power structure rather than subject to it" (*Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 1997, 142-43). Critics charge that Jehovah's Witnesses disparage "independent thinking," such as questioning the counsel it provides, and have accused the Watch Tower Society of using elements of mind control by exercising "intellectual dominance" over Witnesses, controlling information, and creating "mental isolation." In a case involving Jehovah's Witnesses' activities in Russia, the European Court of Human Rights stated that the religion's requirements "are not fundamentally different from similar limitations that other religions impose on their followers' private lives" and that charges of "mind control" were "based on conjecture and uncorroborated by fact" (European Court of Human Rights, Point 130, 118).

**Other beliefs and practices.** Jehovah's Witnesses believe their highest allegiance belongs to God's kingdom, which is viewed as an actual government in heaven, with Christ as king. They remain politically neutral, do not seek public office, and are discouraged from voting, though individual members may participate in uncontroversial community improvement issues. They abstain from celebrating religious holidays and birthdays and reject many customs they believe have pagan

origins and are not compatible with Christianity. They actually celebrate no holidays. College education is discouraged.

Jehovah's Witnesses see themselves as a worldwide brotherhood that transcends national boundaries and ethnic loyalties.

They are also assiduous opponents of the evolutionary theory of man.

Above all, they are to remain faithful to the authority of the Watch Tower Society which, except at its highest levels, is a lay organization that employs no clergy and relies entirely upon volunteer labor and leadership.

There is no tithing or collection. Funding for all activities of the organization is provided by voluntary contributions, primarily from members.

Their view of morality reflects conservative Christian values. All sexual relations outside of marriage are grounds for expulsion (disfellowshipment) if the individual is not deemed repentant. Abortion is considered murder. Modesty in dress and grooming is frequently emphasized. Gambling, drunkenness, illegal drugs, and tobacco use are forbidden. Drinking of alcoholic beverages is permitted in moderation.

As recently as 2007, some critics have accused Jehovah's Witnesses of employing organizational policies that make the reporting of sexual abuse difficult for members. Some victims of sexual abuse have asserted that they were ordered by local elders to maintain silence so as to avoid embarrassment to both the accused and the organization. Jehovah's Witnesses maintain that they have no policy of silence, and that elders are directed to report abuse to authorities when there is clear evidence. In 1997, Jehovah's Witnesses' Office of Public Information published their policy for elders to report allegations of child abuse to the authorities where required by law to do so, even if there was only one witness. Any person known to have sexually abused a child is prohibited from holding any responsibility inside the organization. Unless considered by the congregation elders to demonstrate repentance, such a person is typically disfellowshipped.

Sociologists studying the Jehovah's Witnesses have noted a high rate of membership turnover and have attributed it to

1. The Witnesses' *authoritarianism* (rigid presentation of regulations without the opportunity for criticism)

2. *Extremism* (rejection of certain secular requirements and medical treatments).

3. Each Witness exists in a state of tension with the wider society and with their leaders.

4. The leaders impose tests of merit on members and would-be members.

5. The leaders exercise stern discipline, regulate the declared beliefs and the life habits of members and prescribe and operate sanctions for those who deviate, including the possibility of expulsion.

6. The church demands sustained and total commitment from its members, and the subordination, and perhaps even the exclusion of all other interests.

## The Concerns They Raise

### Who is Jehovah?

**Witnesses' view.** Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Eternal Father, not the Son. The Jehovah's Witnesses cite the following scriptures as biblical evidence for their stand that Jehovah is the Father:

Isaiah 26:4: "Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength."

Isaiah 42:8: "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." They interpret the word LORD (in all caps) to be Jehovah, the Father.

Exodus 6:3: "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

Psalms 83:18: "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth."

None of these individual scriptural verses seems to offer compelling evidence that Jehovah is the Father.

**LDS view.** Let us first firmly establish from the Bible that Jehovah of the Old Testament is Christ of the New Testament. The biblical evidence for this truth is abundant and compelling.

Consider the several New Testament scriptural references that all speak of Jesus Christ and clearly demonstrate that he is our Savior and his is the only name by which we may be saved:

Acts 4:12 speaks of Jesus Christ of Nazareth and says: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." This verse makes it clear that Jesus Christ is the Savior, the God of our salvation.

Matthew 1:21: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

Luke 2:11: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Acts 5:31: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

Acts 13:23: "Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus."

1 John 4:14-15: "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

We have demonstrated clearly from these New Testament verses that Jesus Christ is the Savior, and beside him there is no Savior. Now consider several Old Testament verses which indicate that Jehovah is the Savior, and beside him there is no Savior:

Isaiah 12:1-2: "And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." These verses inform us that the LORD JEHOVAH is Isaiah's strength and his song, indeed, his salvation. The God of Isaiah's salvation and, indeed, of our salvation is the Lord Jehovah.

Isaiah 43:11: "I am Jehovah and beside me there is no Saviour" (New World Translation).

Isaiah 45:21: "Is it not I, Jehovah, besides whom there is no other God, a righteous God and a Saviour? There being none excepting me" (New World Translation).

Hosea 13:4: "But I am Jehovah your God from the land of Egypt, and there was no God except me that you used to know: And there was no Saviour but me."

We have seen from these scriptures, both New Testament and Old Testament, that Christ is the Savior and his is the only name by which we may be saved. Also Jehovah is the Savior and beside him there is no other Savior. The conclusion, therefore is inescapable: Jesus Christ is Jehovah.

We have not yet come close to exhausting the biblical evidence that Jehovah is Jesus Christ. Consider also:

Zechariah 12:10. The Lord Jehovah is speaking. He says: "and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced." Who was it that was pierced? The answer is found in John 19:37. John is describing Jesus on the cross and seems to refer to the verse in Zechariah. "And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."

Exodus 3:14-15. Here the God of Moses speaks to Moses and gives his name as "I Am" – "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." And just who is this "I Am?" The next verse tells us that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: "And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you; this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." So "I Am" is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But is he the Father or the Son? The answer is found in John 8:58 where Jesus proclaims: "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." Jesus identifies himself with "I am." The term "I am" used here in the Greek is identical with the Septuagint usage in Exodus 3:14 which identifies Jehovah.

Now let us turn again to the Jehovah's Witnesses' own Bible, the New World Translation. We read in Revelation 22:12-13: "Look, I am coming quickly, and the reward I give is with me, to render to each one as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Verse 16 tells us who was "coming quickly"—Jesus Christ. Therefore we learn that Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Now let us turn to Revelation 1:8 in the New World Translation. It reads, "I am the Alpha and Omega, says Jehovah God, the one who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty." Thus Alpha and Omega is Jehovah is Jesus Christ. If you still have any question about this, start at Revelation 1:8 and read carefully until you come to verses 17 and 18—"Do not be fearful. I am the First and the Last [the meaning of "Alpha and Omega"], and the living one; and I became dead, but look: I am living forever and ever, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

Now, we're not through yet. By a similar logic and by quoting Old Testament scriptures from the Jehovah's Witnesses' own New World Translation, we can demonstrate beyond doubt that Jehovah is the Redeemer or "Repurchaser" (this is a term peculiar to the New World Translation and means *Redeemer*). See Psalm 49:15; Isaiah 41:13-14; Isaiah 43:14-15; Isaiah 49:26; Isaiah 59:20; and Isaiah 54:5. Using New Testament scriptures from the same Bible version we may show that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer or "Repurchaser." See 1 Peter 1:18-19; Galatians 3:13; Galatians 4:4-5; Revelation 5:9; Romans 3:24-25; 1 Corinthians 1:31-31; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14. Hence, we conclude again that Jehovah is the Redeemer and the Redeemer is Jesus Christ; therefore Jehovah is Jesus Christ.

Let us continue. Jehovah is the "Holy One" (see Isaiah 43:15). Also Jesus Christ is the Holy One of Israel (see Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34).

Again using only the New World Translation, we may show that Jehovah is the judge at the last day (see Psalm 50:6; Psalm 9:7; Psalm 96:13; 1 Chronicles 16:33). And Jesus Christ is the judge of the last day (see Matthew 16:27; John 5:22; Acts 10:42; Romans 14:10; Jude 1:14; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1).

Now let us consider John the Baptist. He was a forerunner. But for whom? Christ? Jehovah? Again, let us use only the New World Translation. The Baptist was the forerunner for Jehovah: Mark 1:3; Luke 1:76; Luke 3:15-16; John 1:23, 26, 29. These verses must be read in the Witnesses' own Bible to make the point clear that John was the forerunner for Jehovah. The New World Translation also makes it clear that John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus and that Jesus was to baptize with fire and the Holy Ghost. Jesus came to John and, mentioning Jesus by name, John says: "This is he of whom I said . . ." (Matthew 3:3; 11:10; Luke 7:27; John 1:30-31). Can there be any misunderstanding? The Baptist is the forerunner for Jehovah, and he is the forerunner for Jesus Christ. Therefore Jehovah is Jesus Christ.

And finally: Let's stay with the New World Translation. Jehovah is the Creator (Genesis 1:5, 8, 9). Jesus Christ is the Creator (John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2; John 1:10).

### **Acts 3:13**

**Witnesses' view.** The Jehovah's Witnesses use Acts 3:13 as evidence for their contention that Jehovah is the Father and not the Son. That verse reads: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go." This verse states that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the Father of Christ. Then they add Exodus 6:13: "And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt." This verse, then suggests that Jehovah (the LORD) is the God of Israel (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). Using these two verses together they then reason: Jehovah is the God of Abraham Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 6:13). And the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the Father (Acts 3:13). Hence, Jehovah is the Father.

**LDS view.** We readily acknowledge that in Acts 3:13, the expressions "God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob" and "God of our fathers" both refer to the Father. The key to understanding here is that in scripture the Father, as well as the Son, may be referred to as the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The Father is the Father of the *spirits* of men (Hebrews 12:9). And what about the Son? How is the Son the Father or Creator of men? Clearly referring to the Son, Paul taught: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Colossians 1:16). Thus, the Son is the Father or Creator of the *bodies* of men.

Thus, we learn that both the Father and the Son are the Gods of "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"—but one is the Father of spirits, and the other the Father or Creator of our bodies. As we have stated, and abundantly supported, we contend that Jehovah in the Old Testament is Jesus Christ.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have another ploy for demonstrating that Jehovah is the Father. They acknowledge that the Father is the Father of our spirits. They then make the point that "breath" and "spirit" are two terms in the scriptures that are virtually synonymous. They then point to Genesis 2:7 which says: "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." They claim that what is happening here is the spirit creation of man. Since *breath* and *spirit* are synonyms, Jehovah (the LORD) breathed into man's nostrils the breath or *spirit* of life. They contend that this makes Jehovah the Father or the spirits of men. Jehovah was the responsible for the spirit creation, and thus, is the Father.

The simplest rejoinder here is that just because Christ placed the spirit in man, that doesn't make him the Creator of that spirit. Also, we know that the terms *spirit* and *breath* also have distinct meanings in many places in scripture (see Isaiah 42:5). We would not, for example, say "Blessed are the poor in breath, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven" or "God is a breath and they that worship him must worship him in breath and in truth."

### **Psalm 110:1-2**

**Witnesses' view.** The Jehovah's Witnesses will sometimes raise Psalm 110:1-2 as evidence for their concept of the Godhead: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies."

They argue that the first LORD (in all caps) signifies Jehovah, the Father. They thus interpret this as meaning that Jehovah is speaking to Christ and asking the Son to sit down on his right hand as in Acts 7:55-56 where the Son was seen by Timothy to be standing on the right hand of the Father. In this verse they suggest that the Father is the one who subdues all the enemies of Christ and makes those enemies the footstool of Christ.

**LDS view.** We know, of course, that Jesus Christ of the New Testament is Jehovah (or LORD) of the Old Testament. I will demonstrate that it is Christ and not the Father who will subdue all of the enemies of the Father and the Son.

Consider 1 Corinthians 15:24-25. In these verses Paul is referring to Christ: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." This verse clearly explains that it is the Son, Jesus Christ, who puts all his enemies under his feet and delivers up his earthly kingdom to God the Father.

Thus, in Psalm 110:1-2, the LORD (upper case) is indeed Jehovah, Jesus Christ, who subdues his own enemies and makes them the footstool of the Father. In those verses the "Lord" (in lower case) is the Father as in Acts 3:19-20: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you."

Thus in Psalm 110:1-2 the Son says to the Father, "Sit down at my right hand until I subdue all my enemies and deliver them up to you and make them your footstool."

### **Jesus Is a Later and Lesser God**

**Witnesses' view.** Jesus Christ is a later and a lesser God compared with the Father. Jesus was not given all of the Father's power and authority.

**LDS view.** We do acknowledge that the Father is the God of our universe and that the Son rules as God under the direction of and by the authority of his Father. Let us note a few scriptures, however, indicating that God made Christ, for all purposes pertinent to man and equal with him—contrary to the teachings of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Again, let us stay exclusively with the New World Translation.

John 16:15 “All things that the Father has are mine.”

John 17:10 “And all my things are yours and yours are mine.”

Matthew 11:27 “All things have been delivered to me by my Father.”

Matthew 28:18 “All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth.”

Repeatedly the Savior taught that “My Father and I are one,” and the Witnesses will agree that those words do not mean physically. Then, if they are one in other things, specifically for instance, in jointly holding all power in heaven and earth—are they not alike in power and authority and prestige and honor and glory? The New World Translation indicates they are.

It is unfortunate that the Witnesses’ Bible puts in lower case the statement that Jesus or “the Word” is “a god” in John 1. Of course he is a God, equal with his Father, and he certainly deserves a capital “G,” not a lower case one as the New World Translation has it.

## **Man Ceases to Exist at Death**

**Witnesses’ view.** The Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that the human soul (spirit) of every man ceases to exist at death. To support this they cite such verses as Ezekiel 18:4: “All souls are mine . . . the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Ecclesiastes 9:10 reads “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.” Psalm 6:5: “For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?” Psalm 146:4: “His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” In this condition of “sleep” after death, they believe that all await their resurrection—either to a tangible perfect body to live forever on the earth, or, for a select few, to a spirit body to live in heaven and administer in God’s heavenly kingdom.

**LDS view.** The doctrine of the spirit’s leaving the body at the time of death is clearly taught in the scriptures, as we will demonstrate. The scriptures that the Witnesses use to support the idea of the spirit’s ceasing to exist at the time of death speak only of our physical bodies which we believe will “return to the earth” and that in the grave the physical bodies of man will not know anything nor have wisdom. This is because our spirit will not be in the grave with our bodies, but will “have returned unto God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Matthew 17:3 tells of Christ’s taking three of his apostles up onto a high mountain where Moses and Elias appeared to them. “And, look! there appeared to them Moses and Elias conversing with him” (New World Translation). Deuteronomy 34:5-6 teaches

us that “Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.” This means that Moses had been dead for hundreds of years. We also know that Christ was “the first fruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20). Moses, therefore, could not have been resurrected, so how did Moses make this appearance to Christ and his apostles? He was obviously able to talk and think and was a being living with a body of spirit!

While on the cross Christ told the thief that, “Truly I tell you today, you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43, New World Translation). It is notable that only the Witnesses own translation has changed the punctuation of this statement of the Savior’s. By putting the comma after the word today, they have changed the meaning. All other translations omit this comma and therefore clearly state the meaning as “today thou shalt be with me in Paradise.” And where did Christ and the thief go that day? The New World Translation provides the account. “Why, even Christ died once for all time concerning sins, a righteous (person) for unrighteous ones, that he might lead you to God, he being put to death in the flesh, but being made alive in the spirit. In this (state) also he went his way and preached to the spirits in prison who had once been disobedient when the patience of God was waiting in Noah’s days, while the ark was being constructed, in which a few people, that is, eight souls, were carried safely through the water” (1 Peter 3:18-20).

The eternal truth is that those who “sleep” in death still exist and live in the spirit.

1 Peter 4:6 states: “In fact, for this purpose the good news was declared also to the dead, that they might be judged as to the flesh from the standpoint of men but might live as to the spirit from the standpoint of God” (New World Translation). While the body of Christ lay in the tomb, he was “made alive in the spirit” and in this state he went his way and preached to the spirits in prison who had once been disobedient in Noah’s day. How could they be preached to if they did not exist? Obviously they were given the opportunity to repent in that realm of the dead. Only mentally alert people can receive the gospel, repent, and adjust their lives to fit Christian standards. And these spirits did it after they died in the Flood. They did it while they were yet spirits of the departed dead. They were intelligent, alert, alive, teachable, repentant, believing—all in the spirit world—after death.

The Jehovah’s Witness may respond that Peter was not speaking about the spirits of dead persons in 1 Peter 4:6. They may contend that since the physically dead are “conscious of nothing at all,” the dead mentioned here are the same “dead” Jesus referred to when he said: “Let the dead bury their dead.” We have already demonstrated that the spirit lives on when the body returns to the dust, and it is the physical body that is “conscious of nothing at all.” Certainly the word *dead* may refer to those spiritually dead, but word dead in 1 Peter 4:6 from its context means what it says—dead. The word dead in 1 Peter 4:6 is a translation of the Greek word nekros meaning “corpse.”

Luke 16:19-31 relates the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. This parable deals with life between death and the resurrection. Would Christ have based his parable on a false premise?

### **The Holy Ghost is Not a Person**

**Witnesses' view.** The holy ghost (note lower case "h" and "g") is not a person and not a member of the Godhead. Instead the holy ghost is a divine influence or active force, emanating from God and motivating men to serve their Creator.

**LDS view.** We declare that the Holy Ghost is a divine man and that he serves as a member of the Godhead with the Father and the Son. Let us consider a few scriptures from the New World Translation and then ask ourselves, is the Holy Ghost an individual God and a member of the Godhead, or is the Holy Ghost only a "divine influence"?

Luke 4:1: "Now Jesus, full of holy spirit, turned away from Jordan, and he was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness."

Matthew 28:19: ". . . baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Matthew 3:16-17: The Holy Spirit appeared at the baptism of Christ as a separate individual.

Acts 13:2-3: "As they were publicly ministering to Jehovah and fasting the Holy Spirit said: Of all persons, set Barnabas and Saul apart for me for the work to which I have called them."

### **Only 144,000 Will get to Heaven**

**Witnesses' view.** Only 144,000 will reach Heaven, the heavenly class. One scripture the Witnesses cite to support their idea of the "heavenly class" of 144,000 is Luke 12:32: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Witnesses believe that this "little flock" of 144,000 have already been chosen from among the Jehovah's Witnesses. By about 1935, the quota was full, therefore no additional Witnesses have been anointed to be among the heavenly class since that year.

**LDS view.** Who are the one hundred and forty-four thousand mentioned by John in the book of Revelation (7:4-8)?

First, the number need not be taken literally. In some ancient writings numbers are significant and symbolic. The book of Revelation is a good example of this. The number twelve represents the priesthood. Biblical people squared a number to amplify its symbolic meaning. Thus, 144 suggests a fulness of priesthood authority. But John is not satisfied with that. He gives the image a superlative quality by multiplying by 1,000, representing completeness. In this way he shows the strength and breadth of

the priesthood in the latter days—in this dispensation—the dispensation of the fulness of times. During this period that complete priesthood authority will operate.

The Doctrine and Covenants identifies these one hundred and forty-four thousand. It describes them thus: “Those who are sealed are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn” (77:11). Note that this scripture does not specify a number. Instead it notes that the group is composed of high priests who have a special calling “to administer the everlasting gospel” and “to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn.”

Joseph Smith associated them with the temple (*HC*, 6:365). The attachment to the temple fits perfectly since only there can one receive the fulness of the priesthood (D&C 124:25-30). Elder McConkie states that the 144,000 are kings and priests “converted, baptized, endowed, married for eternity, and finally sealed up unto eternal life” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:491). Their mission is not merely to bring people into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It goes beyond that. They will have “general authority” status. Their special assignment centers in getting people sealed into the church of the Firstborn through the administration of the fulness of the endowment (on the church of the Firstborn, see D&C 76:50-70; 93:21-23).

John indicates that the 144,000 will be those sealed from all the tribes of Israel. President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

We do not believe that these are the only ones saved in heaven. If you will read all of Chapter 7 in Revelation you will learn that in addition to these one hundred and forty-four thousand there was a great multitude out of all nations which no man could number who likewise received salvation, and they, too, “stood before the throne of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” Note particularly these verses: “After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried out with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. . . . And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them” (Revelation 7:9-10, 13-15).

All mortals shall be resurrected, but only those who merit celestial glory shall stand before the throne of God (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 volumes, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957-1966, 3: 185).

## **We Don't Need Priesthood Authority—We have the Bible**

**Witnesses' view.** We don't need priesthood authority to baptize, we have the Bible.

**LDS view.** See chapter , *The Need for Authority*.

## **Your Book of Mormon Teaches that Polygamy Is Condemned**

**Witnesses' view.** Witnesses like to point out what they think is a discrepancy or contradiction they believe they've found in our scriptures regarding the doctrine of polygamy: Jacob 2:24-27 says, "Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord. Wherefore, thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph. Wherefore, I the Lord God will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old. Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none." This verse of scripture seems to condemn the practice of polygamy under any circumstances.

**LDS view.** D&C 132:39, on the other hand, seems to indicate that under some circumstances, polygamy is allowed by the Lord: "David's wives and concubines were given unto him of me, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife; and, therefore he hath fallen from his exaltation, and received his portion; and he shall not inherit them out of the world, for I gave them unto another, saith the Lord."

See chapter , *Plural Marriage*.

## **No Man Hath Seen God**

**Witnesses' view.** The scriptures say, "No man hath seen God" (John 1:18; 1 John 4:12). Yet you say that Joseph Smith saw God.

**LDS view.** See chapter , *First Vision—No Man Hath Seen God*.

## **Book of Mormon and Ezekiel 37**

**Witnesses' view.** There is no biblical backing for the Book of Mormon. You Mormons misinterpret Ezekiel 37:16-17: "Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand" (Ezekiel 37:16-17).

Using the following scriptures, their line of criticism logic goes something like this: The scripture at Ezekiel 37:16-17 is used by Mormons to prove their contention that a complementary relationship between the Bible and the Book of Mormon was foretold in prophecy. The Mormons claim that the two sticks about which the prophet Ezekiel speaks represent these two books. But the sticks in Ezekiel's prophecy have no reference to books, and this is indicated by Ezekiel himself. He designated one stick for Judah and the other one for Ephraim, "the stick of Ephraim." The tribe of Ephraim descended from Joseph and became the head of the ten tribes that broke away in the days of King Rehoboam. Because of this headship the name Ephraim came to be applied to the ten-tribe kingdom. After the release of the Israelites from captivity to Babylon, the ten tribes were reunited with the other two tribes and the Levites. This reunion of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel was what Ezekiel foretold when he spoke of the two sticks' becoming one stick. So the Bible lends no support to the claim that some other religious book is of equal authority to it.

**LDS view.** See chapter , *Book of Mormon and Ezekiel 37*.

### **Death Dissolves the Marriage Bonds—Eternal Marriage Does Not Exist**

**Witnesses' view.** The Jehovah's Witnesses claim that death terminates the marriage bond. They always cite Romans 7:2: "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband" and Matthew 22:30: "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."

**LDS view.** Romans 7:2 simply describes the tenet in the law of Moses that applied to civil marriage. Let us consider carefully the discussion between Jesus and his Sadducean detractors in Matthew 22:23-30. Just previously Jesus had clearly taught the principle of eternal marriage to the Pharisees: "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (Matthew 19:4-9).

The Lord explained to the Pharisees that the Israelites had not been able to live the higher law of eternal marriage, therefore "because of the hardness of your hearts"

they were given the lesser law or the law of Moses which included a provision for divorces for certain few transgressions including that of fornication.

We know that marriage is an eternal principle. Paul wrote: "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11). Ecclesiastes 3:14 declares: "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever."

Now, back to Matthew 22:23-30:

The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven (Matthew 22:23-30).

In this interchange, Jesus was being confronted by the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection and were challenging the Savior on that point. It is apparent from the context of these verses that the Jewish nation in general believed that marriage was eternal. That fact is assumed by the Sadducees who were present. It is apparent from the text that the Sadducees knew that marriage after death was a commonly held belief among the Jews. Without doubt, Jesus, the apostles, the seventies, and the disciples generally had discussed this doctrine. The Sadducees, in order to challenge the concept of resurrection, concocted a preposterous scenario and presented it as a question to Jesus. Not wanting to cast pearls before swine, Jesus did not answer as if he had been asked a sincere question by one who was genuinely seeking the truth. He also did not deny the prevailing belief in marriage after the resurrection. Rather, he told them that for people like them, there would be no marriage in the life to come.

The Lord said very much the same thing to Joseph Smith in this dispensation:

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. Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory. For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition,

to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever (D&C 132:15-17).

Thus, in the resurrection, the unmarried remain everlastingly as angels or servants, but the married gain exaltation and godhood. This latter group consists of those who enter into that “order of the priesthood” named “the new and everlasting covenant of marriage,” and who then keep the terms and conditions of that eternal covenant (D&C 131:1-4)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 volumes, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-1973, 1: 607).

## **Book of Mormon and Anachronisms**

**Witnesses’ view.** The Jehovah’s Witnesses delight in pointing out what they call “anachronisms” in the Book of Mormon. An anachronism is an error in chronology in which a person, object, or event is assigned a date or period other than the correct one. The material to which the Witnesses have reference are specific prophecies of the Savior’s birth, mortal life, atonement, and resurrection. They are considered anachronisms by the Witnesses because there are no corresponding prophecies in the Bible, and the Witnesses don’t believe that specific events of the Savior’s life were ever prophesied. They feel that these Book of Mormon prophecies must have been written after the Savior’s mortal sojourn.

**LDS view.** We rejoice in the sacred truth that every prophet since Adam existed to prophesy of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (see also the resource article “All Prophets Taught of Christ” in chapter , *Prophets*). The Apostle Peter knew also of this truth when he wrote: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19-21). Also: “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). See also Jacob 4:4; Moses 6:51-68; 7:55; 8:24; JST, Genesis 15:11-12; Jacob 7:11; Mosiah 13:33; 3 Nephi 20:24; Helaman 8:17-19; John 8:56.

**Witnesses’ view.** Another objection the Witnesses raise against the Book of Mormon is related to anachronisms. This objection is made explicit in the following statement from the Witnesses’ anti-Mormon propaganda collection: “As might be expected when events are talked about out of time-order, The Book of Mormon occasionally slips and refers to them in the past tense instead of in the future tense.” They then give examples of Book of Mormon prophecies of Christ written centuries before his mortal birth that are written in the past tense. Consider for example 2 Nephi 33:6: “I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell.” The Witnesses

then betray their ignorance by asking the question, "How can a person supposedly living long before Christ made his sacrifice say that Christ had redeemed him?"

**LDS view.** In the language of the Hebrew prophets, it is common and well understood usage to speak of future events, seen in prophecy, as if they had already happened. This has been called the "prophetic perfect" verb tense. For example, referring to the Babylonian captivity, which culminated in 587 BC, Isaiah, writing in 720-740 BC, said, "Therefore my people are gone into captivity" (Isaiah 5:13). Speaking of Christ's mortal ministry, Isaiah said, "People that walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:2). Prophesying of the birth of Christ, Isaiah wrote, "For unto us a child is born." A more literal translation is "for a child has been born unto us" (Isaiah 9:6). What the Witnesses consider an error in the Book of Mormon is actually a testimony of the authenticity of the book.

The Witnesses also betray their lack of understanding of the infinite nature and timelessness of the Savior's atonement by criticizing Mosiah 4:2: "O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men." They say of this verse: "How can a people cry for forgiveness of sins by the atoning blood of Christ long before that blood was shed?" For a discussion of the infinite nature of Christ's atonement, please see *Consequences of the Savior's Atonement in chapter 2 of volume 2 of Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. See the section titled, "The Infinite Nature of Christ's Atonement."

### **Though Christ Had a Premortal Existence, Man Did Not**

**Witnesses' view.** While there is evidence in the Bible of the premortal existence of Jesus Christ, there is no such scriptural evidence of the premortal life of all mankind.

**LDS view.** See chapter , *The Premortal Existence of All Men*.

### **The Wicked (Including Adam) Will Never Be Resurrected**

**Witnesses' view.** Some individuals—the wicked—will never be resurrected. To support this erroneous belief they cite Isaiah 26:14: "They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish." Also, Proverbs 10:7: "The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot." And, Psalm 9:5: "Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever." Matthew 25:41-46 reads: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels . . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Finally, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9: "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be

punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”

**LDS view.** There can be no question from the scriptures, that all will be resurrected. Paul taught, “For just as in Adam all are dying so also in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22, New World Translation). Paul also wrote, “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15). Also, John 5:28-29: “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

## **Conclusion**

It seems clear that those who have led the people now called Jehovah’s Witnesses, beginning with their founder Charles Taze Russell, have been, strong, energetic, dedicated, disciplined, and sincere. Their motives have been pure. Each leader has truly yearned for an acceptable conformity of their members to their version of the commandments of the gospel. The set of rules or commandments to which they adhere have been developed over the years by their leaders. They are based upon their distinctive interpretations of the scriptures. They sincerely consider their version of the doctrine and gospel of Jesus Christ to be only true version. I believe these same leaders have been inspired of God. They have had the blessings and guidance of the Spirit of God in attempting to lead their followers along righteous paths of wholesome righteousness. Many will be better off in the eternities because they were Jehovah’s Witnesses. They are a “lesser” or “terrestrial church” as described in chapter , *Are We Really the Only True Church?* As in all lesser churches, some of their members will be exalted at the moment of the partial judgment. See “The Partial Judgment” in *The Spirit World*, volume 2, chapter 13 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

Witnesses do not, however, possess the fulness of the gospel. They teach some doctrinal principles that are not true. And they lack many important spiritual truths including some of most fundamental and spiritually satisfying. For example, they have no notion of the true nature of the Godhead and the relationship of those in the Godhead to each child of God. They fail to understand the concept of spiritual growth and the capacity of man to become like God. They teach a frightening and incomplete concept of death, resurrection and the eternal hereafter.

They also lack divine authority or priesthood. They claim no revelation from heaven and are, in fact, not guided by a prophet of God. They have assumed the title Jehovah’s Witnesses without divine appointment or authorization.

## Freemasonry and Mormonism

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Freemasonry is not a religion. It is a fraternal organization that arose from obscure origins in the late 16th to early 17th century. For some Masons, however, it substitutes for their religion. A discussion of Freemasonry is pertinent here only because there are some similarities between the LDS temple ceremony and Masonic rites. Some argue that Joseph Smith borrowed from Masonic ritual in creating the LDS temple ceremony. My intention is to provide the reader with a basic, fundamental background and understanding of the Freemasons' organization. I will then address the issue of ritual or any doctrinal influences Joseph Smith's experiences with the Masons might have had on him. I will explore, in general terms, the relationships between Masonic ritual and the LDS temple ritual and the significance of and implications of these relationships.

Freemasonry today (January 2011) exists in various forms all over the world, with a membership estimated at around six million. There are about four hundred thousand members in the British Isles and just under two million in the United States. The fraternity is administratively organized into independent Grand Lodges (the Masonic lodges are sometimes referred to as "Orients"), each of which governs its own "jurisdiction," which consists of subordinate (or "constituent") Lodges. The various Grand Lodges recognize each other, or not, based upon similar or differing beliefs, policies, and practices. A Grand Lodge will usually deem other Grand Lodges it recognizes as "regular." Those it does not recognize are "irregular" or "clandestine."

Freemasonry uses the metaphors of skilled stonemasons' tools, against the allegorical backdrop of the building of King Solomon's Temple, to convey what has been described by both Masons and critics as "a system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols" (Masonic Service Association—Short Talk Bulletin as reprinted on the website of the Grand Lodge of Louisiana). The prefix *Free-* in the title of the movement seems to refer back to the status of the master stone masons. Their highly specialized abilities left them free to travel over the face of their land and be readily hireable, qualified for work, and even in demand for jobs in many locations.

### History of the Movement

The origins and early development of Freemasonry are a matter of some debate and conjecture. A poem known as the "Regius Manuscript," dated approximately AD 1390 is the oldest known Masonic text ("The Regius Manuscript." <http://www.masonicsites.org/blue/regius1.htm>). There is evidence to suggest that there were Masonic lodges in existence in Scotland as early as the late 16th century.

The first Grand Lodge, the Grand Lodge of England (GLE), was founded on June 24, 1717, when four existing London Lodges met for a joint dinner. This Grand Lodge

rapidly expanded into a regulatory body, which most English Lodges joined. However, a few lodges resented some of the modernizations that GLE endorsed, such as the creation of the Third Degree, and formed a rival Grand Lodge on July 17, 1751, which they called the “Antient Grand Lodge of England.” The two competing Grand Lodges vied for supremacy—the “Moderns” (GLE) and the “Antients” (or “Ancients”)—until they united on November 25, 1813, to form the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE).

The Grand Lodge of Ireland and The Grand Lodge of Scotland were formed in 1725 and 1736 respectively. Freemasonry was exported to the British Colonies in North America by the 1730s—with both the “Antients” and the “Moderns” (as well as the Grand Lodges of Ireland and Scotland) chartering offspring, or “daughter,” lodges. After the American Revolution, independent U.S. Grand Lodges formed themselves within each State. Some thought was briefly given to organizing an over-arching “Grand Lodge of the United States,” with George Washington (who was a member of a Virginian lodge) as the first Grand Master, but the idea was short-lived. The various State Grand Lodges did not wish to diminish their own authority by agreeing to such a body.

Although there are no real differences in the Freemasonry practiced by lodges chartered by the Antients or the Moderns, the remnants of this division can still be seen in the names of most Lodges—F. & A. M. being *Free and Accepted Masons* and A. F. & A. M. being *Antient Free and Accepted Masons*.

The oldest jurisdiction on the continent of Europe, the Grand Orient de France (GOdF), was founded in 1728. However, most English-speaking jurisdictions cut formal relations with the GOdF around 1877 when the GOdF removed the requirement that its members have a belief in a Deity, thereby accepting atheists. The Grande Loge Nationale Française (GLNF) is currently the only French Grand Lodge that is in *regular amity* (friendship or harmony) with the UGLE and its many concordant jurisdictions worldwide.

Due to the above history, Freemasonry is often said to consist of two branches *not in mutual regular amity*:

1. the UGLE and concordant traditional jurisdictions (mostly termed “Grand Lodges”), and
2. the GOdF, European Continental, traditional jurisdictions (often termed “Grand Orients”).

In most Latin countries, the GOdF-style of European Continental Freemasonry predominates, although in most of these Latin countries there are also Grand Lodges that are in *regular amity* with the UGLE and the worldwide community of Grand Lodges that share regular “fraternal relations” with the UGLE. The rest of the world, accounting for the bulk of Freemasonry, tends to follow more closely to the UGLE style, although minor variations exist.

## Organizational Structure

Grand Lodges and Grand Orients are independent and sovereign bodies that govern Masonry in a given country, state, or geographical area (termed a *jurisdiction*). There is no single overarching governing body that presides over worldwide Freemasonry. Connections between different jurisdictions depend solely on mutual recognition.

**Regularity.** *Regularity* is a constitutional mechanism whereby Grand Lodges or Grand Orients give one another mutual recognition. This recognition allows formal interaction at the Grand Lodge level, and gives individual Freemasons the opportunity to attend Lodge meetings in other recognized jurisdictions. Conversely, regularity proscribes interaction with Lodges that are *irregular*. A Mason who visits an irregular Lodge may have his membership suspended for a time, or he may be expelled. For this reason, all Grand Lodges maintain lists of other jurisdictions and lodges they consider regular.

Grand Lodges and Grand Orients that afford mutual recognition and allow inter-visitation are said to be *in amity*. As far as the UGLE is concerned, regularity is predicated upon a number of guidelines or standards (referred to as “landmarks” by the Freemasons—see discussion of *landmarks* below), set down in the UGLE Constitution and the Constitutions of those Grand Lodges with which they are in amity. Even within this definition there are some variations with the quantity and content of the guidelines from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

Each of the two major branches of Freemasonry considers the Lodges within its branch to be “regular” and those in the other branch to be “irregular.” As the UGLE branch is significantly larger, however, the various Grand Lodges and Grand Orients in amity with UGLE are commonly referred to as being “regular” (or “Mainstream”) Masonry. Those Grand Lodges and Grand Orients in amity with GOdF are commonly referred to as “liberal” or “irregular” Masonry. The issue is complicated by the fact that the usage of “Lodge” versus “Orient” alone is not an indicator of which branch a body belongs to, and thus not an indication of regularity. The term “irregular” is also universally applied to various self created bodies that call themselves “Masonic” but are not recognized by either of the main branches.

## Masonic Lodge

Freemasons correctly meet as a Lodge, not *in* a Lodge, the word “Lodge” referring more to the people assembled than the place of assembly. However, in common usage, Masonic premises are often referred to as “Lodges.” Masonic buildings are also sometimes called “Temples” (“of Philosophy and the Arts”). In many countries, *Masonic Centre* or *Hall* has replaced *Temple* to avoid arousing prejudice and suspicion. Several different Lodges, as well as other Masonic or non-Masonic organizations, often

use the same premises at different times. Early Lodges often met in a tavern or any other convenient fixed place with a private room.

A Lodge (often termed a *Private Lodge* or *Constituent Lodge* in Masonic constitutions) is the basic organizational unit of Freemasonry. Every new Lodge must have a Warrant or Charter issued by a Grand Lodge, authorizing it to meet and work. Except for the very few “time immemorial” Lodges pre-dating the formation of a Grand Lodge, masons who meet as a Lodge without displaying this document (for example, in prisoner-of-war camps) are deemed “clandestine” and irregular.

A Lodge must hold regular meetings at a fixed place and on published dates. It will elect, initiate and promote its members and officers. It will build up and manage its property and assets, including its minutes and records. And it may own, occupy, or share its premises. Like any organization, it will conduct formal business to manage its meetings and proceedings including annual general meetings and committees. Business includes charity funds, correspondence and reports, membership and subscriptions, accounts and tax returns, special events and catering, and so forth. The balance of activities is individual to each Lodge, and under their common constitutions and forms of procedure, Lodges evolve very distinctive traditions. According to Masonic tradition, medieval European stonemasons would meet, eat, and shelter outside working hours in a Lodge on the southern side of a building site, where the sun warms the stones during the day. The “Festive Board” or “Social Board” part of the meeting is thus sometimes called *the South*.

A man can only be initiated, or made a Mason, in a Lodge, of which he may be expected to remain a subscribing member for life. A Master Mason can generally visit any Lodge meeting under any jurisdiction in amity with his own. He may attend the formal meeting, and the Lodge he visits may well offer hospitality. A visitor should first check the regularity of that Lodge, and must be able to satisfy that Lodge of his own regularity. He may be refused admission if adjudged likely to disrupt the harmony of the Lodge. If he wishes to visit the same Lodge repeatedly, he may be expected to join it and pay a subscription.

**Types of lodges.** The terms “Blue Lodges,” “Craft Lodges,” or “Ancient Craft Lodges” refer to the lodges that utilize the first three Masonic degrees. These terms distinguish them from the “appendant” or extra orders usually assembled and organized for specific functions, perhaps particularly for social interactions. The term “Craft Lodge” is used in Great Britain. The word *craft* here may be a metaphorical allusion to particular specialty of the ancient stone mason. The “Blue Lodge” is said to refer to the traditional color of regalia in Lodges derived from English or Irish Freemasonry. Although the term was originally frowned upon, it has gained widespread and mainstream usage in America in recent times.

Most Lodges consist of Freemasons’ living or working within a given town or neighborhood. Other Lodges are composed of Masons with a particular shared interest,

profession or background. Shared schools, universities, military units, Masonic appointments or degrees, arts, professions and hobbies have all been the qualifications for such Lodges. In some Lodges, the foundation and name may now be only of historic interest, as over time the membership evolves beyond that envisaged by its “founding brethren.” In others, the membership remains exclusive. Examples of these specialty lodges include:

1. Research Lodges. These have the purpose of furthering Masonic scholarship (historical, philosophical, etc.). These may have strictly limited membership. That is, the members need specific educational or other types of backgrounds. It is not unusual for these to only admit Master Masons. Many jurisdictions have well-established Research Lodges, which usually meet less frequently than Blue Lodges and do not confer degrees or initiate new candidates.

2. Lodges of Instruction. In Great Britain, these may be associated with a Lodge, but they are not constituted separately. The Lodge of Instruction provides the officers and those who wish to become officers an opportunity to rehearse ritual under the guidance of an experienced brother. There may also be lectures centering on the ritual and the symbolism of Masonry.

In some jurisdictions in the United States, the Lodge of Instruction serves as a warranted (fully authorized) lodge for candidate instruction in other aspects of Freemasonry besides ritual rehearsal. These may also host speakers on topics both Masonic and non-Masonic.

3. Mother Lodge. In Great Britain, the term Mother Lodge is used to identify the particular Lodge where the individual was first “made a Mason” (i.e. received his Entered Apprentice degree). “Mother Lodge” may also refer to a Grand Lodge which sponsors the creation of a new lodge, the “daughter lodge,” to be warranted or authorized under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge.

## **Lodge Officers**

Every Masonic Lodge elects certain officers to execute the necessary functions of the lodge’s work. The Worshipful Master (essentially the lodge President) is always an elected officer. Most jurisdictions will also elect the Senior and Junior Wardens (Vice Presidents), the Secretary, and the Treasurer. All lodges will have a Tyler, or Tiler who guards the door to the lodge room while the lodge is in session. This office is sometimes elected and sometimes appointed by the Master. In addition to these elected officers, lodges will have various appointed officers—such as Deacons, Stewards, and a Chaplain (appointed to lead a non-denominational prayer at the convocation of meetings or activities—often, but not necessarily, a clergyman). The specific offices and their functions vary between jurisdictions.

Many offices are replicated at the Grand Lodge levels with the addition of the word “Grand” somewhere in the title. For example, where every lodge has a “Junior

Warden,” Grand Lodges have a “Grand Junior Warden” (or sometimes “Junior Grand Warden”). Additionally, there are a number of offices that exist only at the Grand Lodge level.

### **Prince Hall Freemasonry**

Prince Hall Freemasonry derives from historical events in the early United States that led to a tradition of separate, predominantly African-American, Freemasonry in North America.

In 1775, an African-American named Prince Hall was initiated into an Irish Constitution military Lodge then in Boston, Massachusetts, along with fourteen other African-Americans, all of whom were free-born. When the military Lodge left North America, those fifteen men were given the authority to meet as a Lodge and do some Masonic functions. They were forbidden, however, to confer degrees. Other Masonic functions were forbidden to them. In 1784, these individuals applied for, and obtained, a Lodge Warrant from the Premier Grand Lodge of England (GLE) and formed African Lodge, Number 459. When the UGLE was formed in 1813, all U.S.-based Lodges were stricken from their rolls—due largely to the War of 1812. Thus, separated from both UGLE and any harmoniously recognized U.S. Grand Lodge, the African Lodge re-titled itself as the African Lodge, Number 1—and became a *de facto* (actual but not officially approved by usual laws) “Grand Lodge” (this Lodge is not to be confused with the various Grand Lodges on the Continent of Africa). As with the rest of U.S. Freemasonry, Prince Hall Freemasonry soon grew and organized on a Grand Lodge system for each state.

Widespread segregation in 19th- and early 20th-century North America made it difficult for African-Americans to join Lodges outside of Prince Hall jurisdictions—and impossible for inter-jurisdiction recognition between the parallel U.S. Masonic authorities.

Prince Hall Masonry has always been *regular* in all respects except constitutional separation, and this separation has diminished in recent years. At present, Prince Hall Grand Lodges are recognized by some UGLE-compatible Grand Lodges and not by others, but they appear to be working toward full recognition, with UGLE granting at least some degree of recognition. There is a growing number of both Prince Hall Lodges and non-Prince Hall Lodges that have ethnically diverse membership. Hence, the term “Prince Hall Masonry” has come to refer to lodges that cater to one particular ethnic group.

### **The Constitutions of the Modern Masons**

The “Constitution” of the Freemasons is intended to standardize the rituals, standards, regulations, and practices of Freemasons. A Constitution of the Antient (an old spelling for “ancient”) Grand Lodge of England or the Grand Lodge of the Antients

existed before the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The current constitution generally adopted by most all Masons was written by James Anderson for the Grand Lodge in England in 1723. It included material from the ancient constitution. Anderson re-wrote the Constitution in 1738. Relatively minor changes were made in an update in 1754 written by John Entick.

## **Degrees of Masonry**

The three degrees of *Craft* or *Blue Lodge* Freemasonry are:

1. *Entered Apprentice*—the degree of an Initiate, which makes one a Freemason.
2. *Fellow Craft*—an intermediate degree, involved with learning.
3. *Master Mason*—the “third degree”—a necessity for participation in most aspects of Masonry.

A candidate progresses through *degrees* gaining knowledge and understanding of himself, his relationship with others and his relationship with the Supreme Being (per his own interpretation). The degrees represent stages of personal development. While the philosophical aspects of Freemasonry tend to be discussed in Lodges of Instruction or Research, and sometimes informal groups, Freemasons, and others, frequently publish, with varying degrees of competence, studies that are available to the public. Any Mason may speculate on the symbols and allegories used commonly in Freemasonry. All Masons are required to some extent to speculate on Masonic meaning as a condition of advancing through the degrees. There is no one accepted meaning, and no one person “speaks” for the whole of Freemasonry. While each candidate is expected to interpret them for himself, his interpretation must be in line with the Constitution.

There is no degree of Craft Freemasonry higher than that of Master Mason—the Third Degree. Although some Masonic bodies and orders have additional degrees with higher numbers, these degrees may be considered to be supplements to the Master Mason degree rather than promotions from it. An example is the Scottish Rite, conferring degrees numbered from 4 up to 33. It is essential to be a Master Mason in order to qualify for these additional degrees.

In some jurisdictions, especially those in continental Europe, Freemasons working through the degrees may be asked to prepare papers on related philosophical topics and present these papers in a meeting of his Lodge. There is an enormous bibliography of Masonic papers ranging from fanciful abstractions to serious historical and philosophical papers entitled to academic respect.

## **Other Orders and Bodies**

There are a number of organizations of Masons that require being a Master Mason as a prerequisite for membership. These orders and bodies have no authority over the Blue or Craft Lodges. They are administered separately from the Craft Lodges.

These orders may bestow degrees and honors of their own. These may be described as additional or “appendant,” and often provide further perspectives and insights into some of the allegorical, moral and philosophical content of Freemasonry. Some of these organizations have additional requirements, such as religious adherence (e.g., requiring members to profess Trinitarian Christian beliefs) or membership of other bodies. Their jurisdictions often vary from those of the Craft Lodges.

Quite apart from these, there are organizations that are often thought of as being related to Freemasonry, but which actually have no formal or informal connections with Freemasonry. These include such organizations as the Orange Order, which originated in Ireland, the Knights of Pythias, or the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

### **Principles and Activities**

While Freemasonry has often been called a “secret society,” Freemasons themselves argue it is more correct to say that it is an esoteric society, in that certain aspects are private. The most common phrasing is that Freemasonry has, in the 21st century, become less a secret society and more of a “society with secrets.” The private aspects of modern Freemasonry are the modes of recognition amongst members and particular elements within the ritual.

Despite the organization’s great diversity, Freemasonry’s central preoccupations remain charitable work within a local or wider community, moral uprightness (in most cases requiring a belief in a supreme being) as well as the development and maintenance of fraternal friendship, as James Anderson’s Constitutions originally urged amongst brethren.

### **Ritual, Symbolism, and Morality**

Masons conduct their meetings using a ritualized format. There is no single Masonic ritual, and each jurisdiction is free to set (or not set) its own ritual. However, there are similarities that exist among jurisdictions. For example, all Masonic ritual makes use of the architectural symbolism of the tools of the medieval skilled stonemason. Freemasons, as figurative masons (meaning philosophical building rather than actual building), use this symbolism to teach moral and ethical lessons of the principles of “Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth,” or, as related in France, “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.”

Two of the principal symbolic tools always found in a Lodge are the *square* and the *compass*. Some Lodges and rituals explain these tools as lessons in conduct: for example, that Masons should “square their actions by the square of virtue” and to learn to “circumscribe their desires and keep their passions within due bounds toward all mankind.” However, as Freemasonry is non-dogmatic, there is no general interpretation for these tools (or any Masonic emblem) that is used by Freemasonry as a whole.

Some lodges make use of tracing boards. These are painted or printed illustrations depicting the various symbolic emblems of Freemasonry. They can be used as teaching aids during the lectures when an experienced member explains the various concepts of Freemasonry to new members. They can also be used by experienced members as self-reminders of the concepts they learned as they went through their initiations.

### **The Supreme Being and the Volume of Sacred Law**

Candidates for regular Freemasonry are required to declare a belief in a Supreme Being. However, the candidate is not asked to expand on, or explain, his interpretation of Supreme Being. The discussion of politics and religion is forbidden within a Masonic Lodge, in part so a Mason will not be placed in the situation of having to justify his personal interpretation. Thus, reference to the Supreme Being will mean the Christian Trinity to an orthodox Christian Mason, Allah to a Muslim Mason, Para Brahman to a Hindu Mason, etc. While most Freemasons would take the view that the term Supreme Being equates to God, others may hold a more complex or philosophical interpretation of the term. In the ritual, the Supreme Being is referred to as the Great Architect of the Universe, which alludes to the use of architectural symbolism within Freemasonry.

A *Volume of the Sacred Law* is always displayed in an open Lodge in those jurisdictions which require a belief in the Supreme Being. In English-speaking countries, this is frequently the King James Version of the Bible or another standard translation. There is no such thing as an exclusive “Masonic Bible.”

Every candidate for entered apprentice must enter into a horizontal oath or covenant with his brother Masons to live up to standards that he may set for himself. This covenant is referred to by Masons as the “obligation.” See more discussion of *obligations* below.

Furthermore, each candidate is given his choice of religious text for his obligation, according to his beliefs—his own Volume of Sacred Law. In Lodges with a membership of mixed religions it is common to find more than one sacred text displayed. In lodges that follow the Continental tradition other texts may be used, including texts that are non-religious in nature.

### **Signs, Grips and Words**

Freemasons use *signs* (gestures), *grips* or *tokens* (handshakes) and *words* to gain admission to meetings and identify legitimate visitors. From the early 18th century onwards, many exposés have been written claiming to reveal these signs, grips and passwords to the uninitiated. A classic response was deliberately to transpose certain words in the ritual, so as to catch out anyone relying on the exposé. However, since each Grand Lodge is free to create its own rituals, the signs, grips and passwords can

and do differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Furthermore, Grand Lodges can and do change their rituals periodically, updating the language used, adding or omitting sections. Therefore, any exposé can only be valid for a particular jurisdiction at a particular time, and is always difficult for an outsider to verify. Today, an unknown visitor may be required to produce a certificate, dues card or other documentation of membership in addition to demonstrating knowledge of the signs, grips and passwords.

## **Obligations**

Obligations are those elements of ritual in which a candidate swears to abide by the rules of the fraternity, to keep the “secrets of Freemasonry” (which are the various signs, tokens and words associated with recognition in each degree), and to act towards others in accordance with Masonic tradition and law. In regular jurisdictions these obligations are sworn on the aforementioned *Volume of the Sacred Law* and in the witness of the Supreme Being and often with assurance that it is of the candidate’s own free will.

Details of the obligations vary. Some versions are published while others are privately printed in books of coded text. Still other jurisdictions rely on oral transmission of ritual, and thus have no ritual books at all.

While no single obligation is representative of Freemasonry as a whole, a number of common themes appear in most all of them. These include: the candidate promises to act in a manner befitting a member of civilized society, promises to obey the law of his Supreme Being, promises to obey the law of his sovereign state, promises to attend his Lodge if he is able, promises not to wrong, cheat nor defraud the Lodge or the brethren, and promises aid or charity to a member of the human family, including brethren and their families in times of need if it can be done without causing financial harm to himself or his dependents.

The obligations are well-known to critics of Freemasonry. The critics are likely to refer to them as the Masons’ “bloody penalties”—an allusion to the apparent metaphorical physical penalties associated with each degree. This leads to some descriptions of the obligations as “Oaths.” A description of the penalties does not appear in authoritative, endorsed sources. The reason is that a decision was made and a policy observed “that all references to physical penalties be omitted from the obligations taken by Candidates in the three Degrees and by a Master Elect at his Installation but retained elsewhere in the respective ceremonies.” The penalties are interpreted by the Freemasons symbolically, and, of course, are not applied in actuality by a Lodge or by any other body of Masonry. The descriptive nature of the penalties alludes to how the candidate should feel about himself should he knowingly violate his obligation. Modern actual penalties may include suspension, expulsion, or reprimand.

## **Landmarks**

The “landmarks” of Masonry are defined as ancient and unchangeable principles—standards by which the regularity of Lodges and Grand Lodges are judged. As previously mentioned, each Grand Lodge is self-governing and no single authority exists over the whole of Freemasonry. The interpretation of these principles therefore can and does vary, leading to controversies of recognition.

The concept of Masonic landmarks appears in Masonic regulations as early as 1723, and seems to be adopted from the regulations of operative Masonic guilds. In 1858, Albert G. Mackey attempted to set down 25 landmarks. In 1863, George Oliver published a *Freemason’s Treasury* in which he listed forty landmarks. A number of American Grand Lodges have attempted the task of enumerating the landmarks. Numbers of landmarks differ from West Virginia (7) and New Jersey (10) to Nevada (39) and Kentucky (54).

### **Charitable Efforts**

The fraternity is widely involved in charity and community service activities. In contemporary times, money is collected *only* from the membership, and is to be devoted to *charitable* purposes. Freemasonry worldwide disburses substantial charitable amounts to non-Masonic charities, locally, nationally and internationally. In earlier centuries, however, there were elaborate regulations to determine a petitioner’s eligibility for consideration for charity, according to strictly Masonic criteria.

Some examples of Masonic charities include:

- Homes that provide sheltered housing or nursing care.
- Education with both educational grants or schools such as the Royal Masonic School (UK) which are open to all and not limited to the families of Freemasons.
- Medical assistance.
- Masonic Child Identification Programs (CHIP).

In addition to these, there are thousands of philanthropic organizations around the world created by Freemasons. The Masonic Service Association, the Masonic Medical Research Laboratory, and the Shriners Hospitals for Children are especially notable charitable endeavors that Masons have founded and continue to support both intellectually and monetarily.

### **Membership Requirements**

Contrary to common misconception, joining Freemasonry is not by invitation only. In fact, in many jurisdictions, the brothers of the lodge are not allowed to ask potential candidates to join (in these jurisdictions, the brethren must wait for the potential candidate to inquire). Other jurisdictions allow for varying degrees of solicitation.

However the initial introduction is made, the official process of becoming a Mason begins when a candidate for Freemasonry formally petitions a lodge. The brethren will then investigate the candidate, to assure themselves of his good character,

and hold a secret ballot election (often using an old fashioned ballot box). The number of adverse votes needed to reject a candidate varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction (in some, one “black ball” is enough to reject, in others up to three are required).

**General requirements.** Generally, to be accepted for initiation as a regular Freemason, a candidate must:

- Be a man who comes of his own free will.
- Believe in a Supreme Being (the form of which is left to open interpretation by the candidate).
  - Be at least the minimum age (from 18–25 years old depending on the jurisdiction. In some jurisdictions the son of a Mason, known as a “Lewis,” may join at an earlier age than others).
  - Be of good morals, and of good reputation.
  - Be of sound mind and body (Lodges had in the past denied membership to a man because of a physical disability. However, now, if a potential candidate says a disability will not cause problems, it will not be held against him).
  - Be free-born (or “born free,” i.e., not born a slave or bondsman). As with the previous, this is entirely an historical holdover, and can be interpreted in the same manner as it is in the context of being entitled to write a will. Some jurisdictions have removed this requirement.
  - Be capable of furnishing character references, as well as one or two references from current Masons, depending on jurisdiction.

Some Grand Lodges in the United States have an additional residence requirement, candidates being expected to have lived within the jurisdiction for a certain period of time, typically six months.

## **Membership and Religion**

Freemasonry explicitly and openly states that it is neither a religion nor a substitute for one. “There is no separate Masonic God,” nor a separate proper name for a deity in any branch of Freemasonry.

Regular Freemasonry requires that its candidates believe in a *Supreme Being*, but the interpretation of this term is subject to the conscience of the candidate. Consequently, Freemasonry accepts men from a range of faiths, including (but not limited to) Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism. As a result, Freemasonry uses *Volume of the Sacred Law* (VSL) as a generic term for a religious book. As UGLE-based Freemasonry also requires that a VSL be present on the Altar, many Lodges have multiple VSLs available, and a candidate can be obligated on his book of choice.

Since the early 19th century, in the *irregular* Continental European tradition (meaning *irregular* to those Grand Lodges in amity with the United Grand Lodge of England), a very broad interpretation has been given to a non-dogmatic Supreme

Being. In some jurisdictions even Western atheistic idealism or agnosticism is sufficient. Even though Freemasonry is not, strictly speaking a “church,” for some the organization functions as a de facto religion. Indeed, we may observe that Freemasonry is the ultimate ecumenical “religious” order.

The form of Freemasonry most common in Scandinavia, known as the Swedish Rite, on the other hand, accepts only Christians.

### **Freemasonry and Women**

Since the adoption of Anderson’s constitution in 1723, it has been accepted as fact by regular Masons that only men can be made Masons. Most Grand Lodges do not admit women because they believe it would violate the ancient landmarks. While a few women, such as Elizabeth Aldworth, were initiated into British speculative lodges prior to 1723, officially regular Freemasonry remains exclusive to men.

While women cannot join regular lodges, there are (mainly within the borders of the United States) many female orders associated with regular Freemasonry and its appendant bodies, such as the Order of the Eastern Star, the Order of the Amaranth, the White Shrine of Jerusalem, the Social Order of Beauceant, the Daughters of the Nile, and Job’s Daughters. These have their own rituals and traditions, but are founded on the Masonic model. Some require filial relationships with master Masons. In the French context, women in the 18th and 19th centuries had been admitted into what were known as “adoption lodges” in which they could participate in ritual life. However, men clearly saw this type of adoption Freemasonry as distinct from their exclusively male variety. From the late 19th century onward, mixed gender lodges have met in France.

In addition, there are many non-mainstream Masonic bodies that do admit both men and women or are exclusively for women. Co-Freemasonry admits both men and women, but it is held to be irregular because it admits women. The systematic admission of women into International Co-Freemasonry began in France in 1882. In more recent times, women have created and maintained separate Lodges, working the same rituals as the all male regular lodges. These Female Masons have founded lodges around the world, and these Lodges continue to gain membership.

### **Opposition to and Criticism of Freemasonry**

*Anti-Masonry* (alternatively called *Anti-Freemasonry*) has been defined as “opposition to Freemasonry.” However, there is no homogeneous anti-Masonic movement. Anti-Masonry consists of widely differing criticisms from diverse (and often incompatible) groups who are hostile to Freemasonry in some form. Critics have included religious groups, political groups, and conspiracy theorists.

There have been many disclosures and exposés dating as far back as the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These often lack context, may be outdated for various reasons, or could be outright hoaxes on the part of the author.

These hoaxes and exposés have often become the basis for criticism of Masonry, often religious or political in nature (usually by totalitarian dictatorial regimes, but also arising in the historical Anti-Masonic Party in the United States), or are based on suspicion of corrupt conspiracy of some form.

**The Morgan affair.** In 1826, an episode occurred, now referred to as the “Morgan affair.” Prior to this affair, Freemasonry was flourishing. William Morgan was born in 1774 in Virginia. He was probably a Mason. He worked as a brick layer and a laborer in a brewery. After a fire destroyed the brewery, he fell on economic hard times. He became a heavy drinker and was described by people who knew him as envious, malicious, vindictive, and neglectful of family. He was also in debt to several persons. In moving from Rochester to Batavia, New York, he applied for admission to a lodge in Batavia and was rejected in consequence of his intemperate and unworthy habits. This rejection infuriated Morgan. He set about to destroy Freemasonry and cash in by writing a sensational book that would reveal all of Masonry’s secrets. A local newspaperman David Miller agreed to print the book. The proposed publication of this book excited much furor among the Freemasons in Batavia. Morgan was jailed for stealing some clothing. On being released from jail, he was seized forcibly, thrust into a carriage and taken to Fort Niagara on Canadian border by a group of Masons. His presence in Fort Niagara was documented, but he was never seen again. Rumors arose that the Masons had killed Morgan by drowning him in the falls. That Morgan was killed has never been proven. However, an anti-Masonry movement, fueled by rumors, caught fire and spread literally to every state in the nation. The number of Masons dropped from 100,000 to 40,000 in ten years. Some grand lodges ceased to meet. It was only after the Civil War that Freemasonry made a significant comeback. The “Morgan Affair“ gave rise to the term “Anti-Masonry,” which is still in use today, both by Masons in referring to their critics and as a self-descriptor by the critics themselves.

### **Religious Opposition**

Freemasonry has attracted criticism from theocratic states and organized religions for supposed competition with religion, or supposed heterodoxy within the Fraternity itself, and has long been the target of conspiracy theories, which see it as an occult and evil power.

### **Christianity and Freemasonry**

Although members of various faiths cite objections, certain Christian denominations have had high profile negative attitudes to Masonry, banning or discouraging their members from being Freemasons.

The denomination with the longest history of objection to Freemasonry is the Roman Catholic Church. The objections raised by the Catholics are based on the allegation that Masonry teaches a naturalistic deistic religion which is in conflict with Church doctrine. A number of Papal pronouncements have been issued against Freemasonry. The first was Pope Clement XII's *In Eminenti*, 28 April 1738; the most recent was Pope Leo XIII's *Ab Apostolici*, 15 October 1890. The 1917 Code of Canon Law explicitly declared that joining Freemasonry entailed automatic excommunication. The 1917 Code of Canon Law also forbade books friendly to Freemasonry.

In 1983, the Roman Catholic Church issued a new Code of Canon Law. Unlike its predecessor, it did not explicitly name Masonic orders among the secret societies it condemns. It states in part: "A person who joins an association which plots against the Church is to be punished with a just penalty; one who promotes or takes office in such an association is to be punished with an interdict." This omission of Freemasons from this statement caused both Catholics and Freemasons to believe that the ban on Catholics becoming Freemasons may have been lifted, especially after the perceived liberalization of Vatican II. However, the matter was clarified when Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI), as the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued *Quaesitum est*, which states: "The Church's negative judgment in regard to Masonic association remains unchanged since their principles have always been considered irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Church and therefore membership in them remains forbidden. The faithful who enroll in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion." Thus, from a Catholic perspective, there is still a ban on Catholics joining Masonic Lodges. For its part, Freemasonry has never objected to Catholics joining their fraternity. Those Grand Lodges in amity with UGLE deny the Catholic Church's claims and state that they explicitly adhere to the principle that "Freemasonry is not a religion, nor a substitute for religion."

In contrast to Catholic allegations of *rationalism* and *naturalism*, Protestant objections are more likely to be based on allegations of mysticism, occultism, and even Satanism.

Free Methodist Church founder B.T. Roberts was a vocal opponent of Freemasonry in the mid 18th century. Roberts opposed the society on moral grounds and stated, "The god of the lodge is not the God of the Bible." Roberts believed Freemasonry was a "mystery" or "alternate" religion and encouraged his church not to support ministers who were Freemasons. Freedom from secret societies is one of the "frees" the Free Methodist Church was founded upon.

Since the founding of Freemasonry, many Bishops of the Church of England have been Freemasons, such as Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher. In the past, few members of the Church of England would have seen any incongruity in concurrently adhering to Anglican Christianity and practicing Freemasonry. In recent decades,

however, reservations about Freemasonry have increased within Anglicanism, perhaps due to the increasing prominence of the evangelical wing of the church. The current Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, appears to harbor some reservations about Masonic ritual, whilst being anxious to avoid causing offence to Freemasons inside and outside the Church of England. In 2003 he felt it necessary to apologize to British Freemasons after he said that their beliefs were incompatible with Christianity and that he had barred the appointment of Freemasons to senior posts in his diocese when he was Bishop of Monmouth.

In 1933, the Orthodox Church of Greece officially declared that being a Freemason constitutes an act of apostasy and thus, until he repents, the person involved with Freemasonry cannot partake of the Eucharist. This has been generally affirmed throughout the whole Orthodox Church. The Orthodox critique of Freemasonry agrees with both the Roman Catholic and Protestant versions: "Freemasonry cannot be at all compatible with Christianity as far as it is a secret organization, acting and teaching in mystery and secret and deifying rationalism."

Regular Freemasonry has traditionally not responded to these claims, beyond the often repeated statement that those Grand Lodges in amity with UGLE explicitly adhere to the principle that "Freemasonry is not a religion, nor a substitute for religion. There is no separate 'Masonic deity,' and there is no separate proper name for a deity in Freemasonry." In recent years, however, this has begun to change. Many Masonic websites and publications address these criticisms specifically.

### **Islam and Freemasonry**

Many Islamic anti-Masonic arguments are closely tied to both Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism, though other criticisms are made such as linking Freemasonry to Dajjal. Dajjal is a hypothetical one-eyed devil or anti-Christ alive only in Islamic myth. Some Muslim anti-Masons argue that Freemasonry promotes the interests of the Jews around the world and that one of its aims is to rebuild the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem after destroying the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Some countries with a significant Muslim population do not allow Masonic establishments within their jurisdictions. However, other predominantly Muslim countries do allow the establishment of Grand Lodges. Masonic lodges existed in Iraq as early as 1919, when the first lodge under the UGLE was opened in Basra, and later on when the country was under British Mandate just after the First World War. However the position changed in July 1958 following the Revolution, with the abolition of the Monarchy and Iraq being declared a republic, under General Qasim. The licenses permitting lodges to meet were rescinded and later laws were introduced banning any further meetings. This position was later reinforced under Saddam Hussein, the death penalty was "prescribed" for those who "promote or acclaim Zionist principles, including Freemasonry, or who associate [themselves] with Zionist organizations." With the fall of the Hussein government in 2003, a number of Lodges

have begun to meet on military bases within Iraq. These lodges primarily cater to British and American military units, but a few have initiated Iraqis. Several Grand Lodges have expressed a desire to charter Lodges with completely Iraqi membership in the near future.

### **Political Opposition**

Regular Freemasonry has in its core ritual a formal obligation to be quiet and peaceable citizens, true to the lawful government of the country in which they live, and not to countenance disloyalty or rebellion. A Freemason makes a further pledge, before being made Master of his Lodge, to pay a proper respect to the civil magistrates. The words may be varied across Grand Lodges, but the sense in the obligation taken is always there. Nevertheless, much of the political opposition to Freemasonry is based upon the idea that Masonry will foment (or sometimes prevent) rebellion.

In 1799 English Freemasonry almost came to a halt due to Parliamentary proclamation. In the wake of the French Revolution, the *Unlawful Societies Act, 1799* banned any meetings of groups that required their members to take an oath or obligation. The Grand Masters of both the Moderns and the Antients Grand Lodges called on the Prime Minister William Pitt (who was not a Freemason) and explained to him that Freemasonry was a supporter of the law and lawfully constituted authority and was much involved in charitable work. As a result Freemasonry was specifically exempted from the terms of the Act, provided that each Private Lodge's Secretary placed with the local "Clerk of the Peace" a list of the members of his Lodge once a year. This continued until 1967 when the obligation of the provision was rescinded by Parliament.

Freemasonry in the United States faced political pressure following the disappearance of William Morgan in 1826. Reports of the "Morgan Affair," together with opposition to Jacksonian democracy (Andrew Jackson was a prominent Mason) helped fuel an Anti-Masonic movement, culminating in the formation of a short lived Anti-Masonic Party which fielded candidates for the Presidential elections of 1828 and 1832.

Conspiracy theorists have long associated Freemasonry with the New World Order and the Illuminati, and state that Freemasonry as an organization is either bent on world domination or already secretly in control of world politics. Historically, Freemasonry has attracted criticism—and suppression—from both the politically extreme right (e.g. Nazi Germany) and the extreme left (e.g. the former Communist states in Eastern Europe). Masonry has encountered both applause for supposedly founding, and opposition for supposedly thwarting, liberal democracy (such as the United States of America).

Even in modern democracies, Freemasonry is sometimes viewed with distrust. In the UK, Masons working in the justice system, such as judges and police officers, were from 1999 to 2009 required to disclose their membership. While a parliamentary

inquiry found that there has been no evidence of wrongdoing, it was felt that any potential loyalties Masons might have, based on their vows to support fellow Masons, should be transparent to the public. The policy of requiring a declaration of Masonic membership of applicants for judicial office (judges and magistrates) was ended in 2009 by Justice Secretary Jack Straw, (who had initiated the requirement in the 1990s). Straw stated that the rule was considered disproportionate, since no impropriety or malpractice had been shown as a result of judges being Freemasons. The rescinding of the rule did not change the disclosure requirements for Police officers.

Freemasonry is both successful and controversial in France. Membership is rising, but reporting in the popular media is often negative.

### **The Holocaust**

The preserved records of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (the Reich Security Main Office) confirm the persecution of Freemasons during World War II. While the number is not accurately known, it is estimated that between 80,000 and 200,000 Freemasons were killed under the Nazi regime. Masonic concentration camp inmates were graded as political prisoners and wore an inverted red triangle.

### **Forget-Me-Not**

The small blue forget-me-not flower was first used by the Grand Lodge *Zur Sonne*, in 1926, as a Masonic emblem at the annual convention in Bremen, Germany. In 1938 the forget-me-not badge—made by the same factory as the Masonic badge—was chosen for the annual Nazi Party *Winterhilfswerk*, a Nazi charitable organization which collected money so that other state funds could be freed up and used for rearmament. This coincidence enabled Freemasons to wear the forget-me-not badge as a secret sign of membership.

After World War II, the forget-me-not flower was again used as a Masonic emblem at the first Annual Convention of the United Grand Lodges of Germany in 1948. The badge is now worn in the coat lapel by Freemasons around the world to remember all those that have suffered in the name of Freemasonry, especially those during the Nazi era.

### **Joseph Smith's Experience with Freemasonry in Nauvoo**

Let us now consider Joseph Smith's exposure to Freemasonry in Nauvoo. Regular Masonic procedure at the time called for an existing lodge to sponsor each new proposed lodge. Nauvoo's lodge was established without the normal sponsorship. In the summer of 1841, several Latter-day Saints who were Masons, including Lucius N. Scoville, a key figure in Nauvoo Freemasonry, requested Bodley Lodge No. 1, in Quincy, Illinois, to sponsor a lodge in Nauvoo and appoint several named residents of Nauvoo as officers of that Lodge. The Bodley Lodge No. 1 indicated that the persons named

were unknown in Quincy as Masons. The Quincy lodge, therefore, returned Scovil's letter of request with instructions for further action. Though they were not an officially recognized lodge, Mormon Masons began holding lodge meetings in Nauvoo as early as October 1841. It was not until after they became an official lodge, however, that they were permitted to add new members.

On March 15, 1842, Illinois Grand Master Abraham Jonas visited Nauvoo and installed the Nauvoo Masonic Lodge. Joseph Smith and other residents of Nauvoo were initiated. Grand Master Jonas apparently waived the rule of sponsorship and granted Nauvoo a "special dispensation" to organize. He also made Joseph Smith and Joseph's counselor, Sydney Rigdon, "Master Masons on sight." Some believe that Jonas was willing to follow this course because he envisioned the growing Mormon vote as a potential support to his own political ambitions. Although the action may have endeared Jonas to some Latter-day Saints, it antagonized other Masons. Joseph Smith had expected that the saints might benefit from the network of friendship and support normally associated with the fraternal organization, but instead, the Nauvoo Lodge only produced friction with members of other lodges, particularly since the lodge seemed to receive privileged treatment at its inception.

Jonas published an account of the March 15 installation of the Nauvoo Lodge in his newspaper, *Columbia Advocate*: "Never in my life did I witness a better dressed or more orderly and well-behaved assemblage," he wrote (*HC*, 4:565-66). During the installation ceremonies, held in the grove near the temple site, Joseph Smith officiated as Grand Chaplain. That evening, with the Masons assembled in his office, the Prophet received the rank of Master Mason. Nauvoo Masons then commenced weekly early morning meetings.

In August 1842, Bodley Lodge No. 1 protested the granting of a dispensation to the Nauvoo Lodge. This resulted in a temporary suspension of activities in Nauvoo. A formal investigation found that approximately three hundred Latter-day Saints had become Masons during the brief existence of the lodge, but there were no irregularities warranting dissolution. The Grand Lodge not only authorized reinstatement of the Nauvoo Lodge but subsequently granted dispensations for other lodges nearby made up principally of Latter-day Saints. Eventually nearly 1,500 LDS men became associated with Illinois Freemasonry, including many members of the Church's governing priesthood bodies—this at a time when the total number of non-LDS Masons in Illinois lodges barely reached 150.

The towns around Nauvoo had been rivals of the city for political and economic ascendancy in the state. Hence, neighboring Masons feared and resisted Mormon domination of Freemasonry. Charging the Nauvoo Lodge with balloting for more than one applicant at a time, receiving questionably-qualified applicants into the fraternity on the basis that they reform in the future, and making Joseph Smith a Master Mason on sight, enemies forced another investigation in October 1843. The Grand Lodge in

Illinois summoned Nauvoo Freemasonry officials to Jacksonville. Armed with pertinent books and papers, Lucius Scovil and Henry G. Sherwood answered the allegations. Though the examining committee reported that everything appeared to be in order, it expressed fear that there might be something wrong, and recommended a year's suspension. At this point, Grand Master Jonas, in an impassioned speech, declared that the books of the Nauvoo Lodge were the best-kept he had seen and stated his conviction that but for the fact that the Nauvoo Lodge was composed of Mormons, it would stand as the highest lodge in the state. A committee was appointed to make a thorough investigation in Nauvoo. Though the committee reported no wrongdoing, the Nauvoo Lodge was again suspended. The injunction was later removed, but the Nauvoo Lodge continued to lack the support of its fellow Masons.

In April 1844, the Nauvoo Lodge dedicated a new Masonic hall. By this time, the lodge had been severed from the Grand Lodge and one Illinois Mason had been expelled from his lodge for attending the dedication. The Nauvoo Lodge continued its activities in the newly built hall until April 10, 1845, when Brigham Young advised Lucius Scovil to suspend the work of the Masons in Nauvoo. Only a few additional meetings were held prior to the Latter-day Saints' departure for the Great Basin in 1846.

Joseph Smith participated minimally in Freemasonry and, as far as is known, attended the Nauvoo Masonic Lodge on only three occasions (Kenneth W. Godfrey, "Freemasonry in Nauvoo," *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 527-28). Nonetheless, LDS Masons commented on his mastery of its orders, tenets, and principles and of his understanding of the allegorical symbolism of its instructions.

Most scholars who have looked carefully at the history of the Nauvoo Masonic Lodge agree that it was more victim than villain. All agree that widespread anti-Mormon feelings and the extensive hatred of Latter-day Saints by local rivals, and not irregularities or misconduct, caused the controversy with regard to the Masonic Lodge in Nauvoo.

Students of both Mormonism and Freemasonry have documented clear relationships between the ritual of the LDS temple ceremony and that of the ritual of Freemasonry.. My intention is to consider generally these similarities. Before doing that, however, I want to report an experience of a friend that is most pertinent here.

### **The Lord's Preparation of the Environment of Western New York for the Restoration of the Gospel**

Brother Reed C. Durham tells a most interesting and instructive story that occurred during his graduate education. He was preparing himself to become a seminary instructor with hopes of eventually teaching in a university institute. He decided to include, in his education, a year in an orthodox Christian divinity school. He was accordingly admitted to the University of Southern California Graduate School of Theology.

During that year he signed up for a class titled “The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament” from Professor Gerald LaRue. It was a seminar-format class that met twice weekly in two-hour sessions. The professor and the rest of the class became aware, of course, that Reed was LDS. Near the end of the semester Professor LaRue announced that the last class session would be spent considering “the Mormons.” The instructor said to Brother Durham, “Reed, I will take the first hour, and why don’t you plan to take the second hour.” Reed, of course, was excited for the opportunity to explain something about his religion and the restoration of the gospel to this class, and he prepared himself accordingly.

The day arrived, and Dr. LaRue arose to speak. His subject was a complete surprise to Reed. He delivered a compelling, scholarly address on the environment of Joseph Smith at the time of the restoration. He was most persuasive. He explained that several things the prophet Joseph included in the “restored” gospel were already to be found in Joseph’s immediate environment in western New York. These included such things as (1) a pamphlet of the American Temperance Society containing some verbiage resembling what Joseph wrote into section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants; (2) revisions of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible; (3) the concept of Old World origin of the American Indians; (4) rituals in organizations such as the Freemasons that contained features similar to those Joseph wrote into the script of the temple endowment. The Professor’s implication and intention was unmistakable. He was trying to demonstrate that the Lord did not really “restore” the Church and gospel. Rather, Joseph looked around him and “pilfered” it from those influences he found.

Brother Durham recalls being “devastated.” He had planned to deliver an exciting missionary-like discussion of the restoration of the gospel. He recalls painfully and awkwardly stumbling through the next hour. This was a watershed moment in Brother Durham’s life and education. He resolved that never again would he be caught in such an embarrassing and uncomfortable situation. He vowed to be thereafter more completely informed and prepared.

Notwithstanding the painful memories, Brother Durham carried from that session two important messages: (1) The first was that the process of revelation Joseph so heavily depended on during those years was not one of simply sitting comfortably and being taught by the Lord “in a shaft of blue light” (Brother Durham’s words). Rather, the Lord expected Joseph to search, study, consider, contemplate, and only then inquire in prayer. If the Lord was satisfied with Joseph’s efforts, he would then provide the needed confirmatory revelation. (2) Further, Reed concluded that the Lord had indeed taken pains to prepare Joseph’s western New York environment for the gospel’s restoration. The Lord intended that Joseph would be prompted by his environment to discover things pertinent to the restored gospel. Joseph would then petition the Lord in prayer, and the Lord would confirm or refute them as concepts to be included in the restored Church and gospel.

## Freemasonry and the Temple

As one might expect, though the Freemasons' rituals are secret, it is possible to learn some of them on the internet. A review of these indicates that a few features of Freemasonry ritual are or were contained in the LDS Temple ritual. It is highly likely that Joseph was first exposed to these in the Masonry ritual in Nauvoo and then included them in the temple endowment ritual. We can only conclude he borrowed elements of Freemasonry in developing the temple ceremony.

Critics of the Church, as also might be expected, conclude and teach that there is nothing divine in the LDS Temple endowment. Temple ritual is simply a product of Joseph Smith's fertile mind. He obviously wanted to include ritual worship into "his" new church. And to do that he, at least to some extent, borrowed from the Freemasons. So, how might we best explain this seemingly "awkward" congruence?

First, it should be pointed out that similarities between the two rituals are limited to a small proportion of actions and words. The rest of the endowment is more congruous with the story of creation and the plan of salvation as we understand it from the modern-day scriptures including the book of Abraham and the Book of Moses. Even where the two rituals share symbolism, the fabric of meanings is quite different. One *similarity* is that both call for the participants to make covenants. But the endowment alone ties the covenants to eternal blessings and to Jesus Christ. The Masonic ceremony does not emphasize priesthood or the need to be commissioned by God to represent him. The active participation of God in the world and in men's lives is a distinctly LDS temple motif. While Masons mostly insist that their brotherhood consist only of men with a belief in a supreme being, there is no insistence on God's being a tangible personage and man's literal Eternal Father. The endowment looks to the eternities and to eternal lives, but Freemasonry is largely earthbound, pervaded by human tradition and hope for something practically better here on earth. Masonic ceremonies are allegorical, depicting life's states—youth, manhood, and old age—each with its associated burdens and challenges, followed by death and hoped-for immortality. Again, quoting Kenneth W. Godfrey:

Freemasonry is a fraternal society, and in its ritual all promises, oaths, and agreements are made between members. In the temple Endowment all covenants are between the individual and God. In Freemasonry, testing, grading, penalizing, or sentencing accords with the rules of the fraternity or membership votes. In the Endowment, God alone is the judge. Within Freemasonry, rank and promotions are of great importance, while in the LDS temple rites there are no distinctions: all participants stand equal before God. The clash between good and evil, including Satan's role, is essential to, and vividly depicted in, the Endowment, but is largely absent from Masonic rites. Temple ceremonies emphasize salvation for the dead through vicarious ordinance work, such as baptism for the dead; nothing in Masonic ritual allows for proxies acting

on behalf of the dead. Women participate in all aspects of LDS temple rites; though Freemasonry has women's auxiliaries, Masonic ritual excludes them. The Endowment's inclusion of females underscores perhaps the most fundamental difference between the two rites: LDS temple rites unite husbands and wives, and their children, in eternal families (see *Eternal Lives; Marriage*). Latter-day Saint sealings would be completely out of place in the context of Masonic ceremonies. Thus, Latter-day Saints see their temple ordinances as fundamentally different from Masonic and other rituals and think of similarities as remnants from an ancient original ("Freemasonry and the Temple," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 volumes, 529).

In the temple endowment, all covenants are between the individual and God. Among the Freemasons, all promises, oaths, and agreements are made between members.

There is a conflict of timing that renders it unlikely that Joseph looked to the Masonic ritual in receiving the inspiration to write the endowment ritual. On January 19, 1841, well before his initiation into Freemasonry, Joseph Smith recorded a revelation that speaks clearly of the need for a temple in Nauvoo and of some of the ordinances to be carried out there (see D&C 124:27-42). Quite obviously, Joseph Smith's understanding of the priesthood temple endowment began long before his initiation into Freemasonry. It is true that a number of early LDS leaders had been Freemasons long before Joseph Smith was initiated in 1842, thus he could have known about the inner Masonic workings before the Nauvoo period. This seems unlikely, however, because the Freemasons would have been sworn to secrecy with regard to their inner workings.

Having said all this, the details of any specific relationship which Masonic ritual may have with the LDS endowment are difficult to evaluate, since few persons are intimately familiar with both ceremonies or have the qualifications (including freedom from obligations of confidentiality) to publish an objective comparison. The following statement by an LDS scholar who has been a Freemason for fifty years is pertinent: "No Mason—or anyone else—acquainted with the rituals of the Order can honestly claim there is the slightest resemblance of those ordinances or procedures [of the LDS endowment ceremony] to anything presented in a Symbolic Lodge of Freemasonry" (Mervin B. Hogan, "The Historicity of the Alleged Masonic Influence on Mormonism," 17, 30-31 [January 15, 1984])

I will propose two general explanations for the few similarities that do exist between Temple endowment ritual and Freemason ritual:

1. Though we acknowledge our inability to directly trace our ritual directly all the way back to ancient temple times, it is possible it is a revealed restoration of ancient temple ceremony. It is also possible that fragments of this ancient ceremony persisted over the ages and found their way into the ritual of Freemasonry. Perhaps the two are both of the same ancient origin.

The Prophet Joseph Smith suggested that the endowment and Freemasonry in part emanated from the same ancient spring. Thus, some Nauvoo Masons thought of the endowment as a restoration of a ritual only imperfectly preserved in Freemasonry and viewed Joseph Smith as a master of the underlying principles and allegorical symbolism (Heber C. Kimball to Parley P. Pratt, June 17, 1842, Church Archives).

It is not inconceivable that the Prophet, sensing something about the ancient roots of Masonry, inquired of the Lord about it. In that sense it may have been one of the influences that prepared the way for the revelations that restored the ceremonies of the temple. If the Prophet was merely copying Masonry, he certainly chose the wrong time, the wrong place, and the wrong people among whom to do it. Many of the leaders of the Church were involved in the Masonic lodge in Nauvoo, among them those with whom he worked most closely and who were destined to be his successors in leading the Church. If they had sensed that the LDS temple endowment was merely a pirated copy of Masonry, they would have been disillusioned. These were men who would yet prove their willingness to sacrifice their all to build temples and see that every faithful Latter-day Saint had the privilege of participating in the ordinances of the temple.

Neither organization discourages research regarding the ancient origins of their two ceremonies. Though in this dispensation the LDS endowment dates from Kirtland and Nauvoo, many Latter-day Saints believe that temple ordinances are as old as man and that the essentials of the gospel of Jesus Christ, including its necessary ritual and teachings, were first revealed to Adam. These saving principles and ordinances were subsequently revealed to Seth; Noah; Melchizedek; Abraham, and each prophet to whom the priesthood was given, including Peter. Many Latter-day Saints believe that the ordinances performed in LDS temples today replicate rituals that were part of God's teachings from the beginning.

Again, quoting Brother Kenneth Godfrey:

Many sacred ceremonies existed in the ancient world. Modified over centuries, these rituals existed in some form among ancient Egyptians, Coptic Christians, Israelites, and Masons, and in the Catholic and Protestant liturgies. Common elements include the wearing of special clothing, ritualistic speech, the dramatization of archetypal themes, instruction, and the use of symbolic gestures. One theme common to many—found in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the Egyptian pyramid texts, and Coptic prayer circles, for example—is man's journey through life and his quest, following death, to successfully pass the sentinels guarding the entrance to eternal bliss with the gods. Though these ceremonies vary greatly, significant common points raise the possibility of a common remote source.

The Egyptian pyramid texts, for example, feature six main themes: (1) emphasis on a primordial written document behind the rites; (2) purification (including anointing, lustration [purification by an offering or other ceremony], and clothing); (3) the Creation (resurrection and awakening texts); (4) the garden (including tree and ritual meal

motifs); (5) travel (protection, a ferryman, and Osirian texts); and (6) ascension (including victory, coronation, admission to heavenly company, and Horus texts). Like such ancient ceremonies, the LDS temple Endowment presents aspects of these themes in figurative terms. It, too, presents, not a picture of immediate reality, but a model setting forth the pattern of human life on earth and the divine plan of which it is part ("Freemasonry and the Temple," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 volumes, 528).

There is no universal agreement concerning when Freemasonry began. Some historians trace the order's origin to Solomon, Enoch, or even Adam. Others argue that while some Masonic symbolism may be ancient, as an institution it began in the Middle Ages or later.

2. In the Lord's interactions with mankind, it is obvious there is nothing of arbitrariness. Everything the Lord does has potential impact on the quality of the eternal existence of each individual. Throughout the scriptures we see evidences of the Lord's wont to utilize ritual in man's worship of God. The Lord intends that his people on earth involve themselves in appropriate ritual. The Lord wants us home, and man's participation in ritual obviously has a potential role in man's spiritual progression and in his eventually qualifying himself to return to his celestial roots. I have previously considered the several reasons why ritual is important in the spiritual progress of man (please review "The Lord's Use of Ritual" in volume 3, chapter 29 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*).

The particulars of the rituals vary in scripture. For example, the Syrian military captain Naaman, suffering with leprosy, was told to dip himself seven times in the muddy Jordan River by the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 5:1-27). The Lord desired to improve the spiritual vision of Enoch and asked his prophet-in-training to anoint his eyes with clay and then wash them (Moses 6:35). The Lord healed the blind man by spitting on the ground, making clay of the spittle, and having the man anoint his eyes and then wash them in the waters of the pool of Siloam (John 9:6-7).

A question may reasonably be raised. Was there something intrinsically sacred and vital in the Jordan's muddy water, in Enoch's clay, in the Lord's saliva combined with the dust of the ground, or in the water in the pool of Siloam? Or were they sacred and vital because the Lord commanded their use in working his miracles. Are the physical details of rituals, in and of themselves, particularly critical, or does the sacredness begin when the Lord commands their use. Are the specific gestures, grips, posturings, and instructions utilized in the temple endowment essential in any way except that the Lord commands us to utilize them? Might it be that the Lord may condone the use any object, action, or combination of words he chooses as he involves us in sacred ritual? Might it be that the ritual itself is less important than his commanding us? Perhaps the Lord saw in a few particulars of the Freemasons' ritual, gestures and words satisfactory for our use in the temple endowment. And perhaps the fact that the LDS and the Freemasons share in these is of little moment.

## First Vision—No Man Hath Seen God

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Some of those critical of the Church have objected to our belief in Joseph Smith's first vision experience. They point out that the scriptures say, "No man hath seen God" (John 1:18; 1 John 4:12). Yet you Mormons say that Joseph Smith saw God.

We have learned from modern scripture that both of these verses have had significant truths—"plain and precious things"—removed from them (1 Nephi 13:28-29). Joseph Smith's inspired revision of these verses has them: "And no man hath seen God at any time, except he hath borne record of the Son; for except it is through him no man can be saved" (JST-John 1:19). "No man hath seen God at any time, except them who believe. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12).

What John actually taught was that the Father had never appeared to any man, except for the purpose of introducing and bearing record of the Son. The joint appearance of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith shows the pattern that has always been followed (JS-H 2:14-20).

The whole body of revealed truth bears record that Deity has been seen by man. An experience of a vision in Old Testament times is "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend" (Exodus 33:11). Similarly, Moses "saw God face to face, and he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence" (Moses 1:2). "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Genesis 32:30). The vision of Stephen in Acts 7:55-56 is no less vivid: "He, being full of the Holy Ghost . . . said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Comparable is the vision of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon recorded in D&C 76:19 "The Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they were opened. . . . And we beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father."

When people reject or stray from the will of the Lord, they withdraw from his spirit (Mosiah 2:36), and visions cease. And, as declared in Proverbs 29:18: "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

## Need for a Prophet and Continuing Revelation

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According to Evangelical Protestants, the day of revelations has ceased. Please study carefully “Does God Continue to Speak to Prophets?” in *Continuing Revelation and Modern Scripture* in volume 4, chapter 8 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. There, Evangelical scholar Craig Blomberg claims that the days of the Lord’s prophets’ prophesying and writing scripture were winding down even before the beginning of the New Testament. He maintains, with the exception of the apostle John (Revelation 22:18-10), the New Testament authors wrote with the spirit of inspiration, but were not actually “prophets” who prophesied and then wrote those prophecies into scripture. It is apparent that his understanding of the concepts of revelation, prophecy, and prophets are limited to an academic definition. He seems to define a “prophet” narrowly as one who prophesies. “Revelation” is divine communication that allows the prophet to prophesy. He further implies that the Christian world is doing fine without prophets.

We LDS contend that the Lord intends to maintain a continuous channel of communication with his children in his earthly kingdom through ordained man called prophets (or apostles). While the Lord’s gospel and doctrine do not change, people and circumstances do. The prophet is indispensable in interpreting God’s word and applying it to present situations. The Lord communicates, in an ongoing way, with prophets by the process of revelation. Wouldn’t it be tragic if the Lord wished to communicate with his people but were unable due to a lack of a prophet?

Revelation is any communication from God to mankind. Through revelation to prophets, the Lord is able to provide constant instruction to those in his earthly kingdom. On occasion these revelations may be recorded and then canonized as scripture, as the Lord sees fit. Also, on occasion, these revelations may contain actual prophecies of future events. The term *prophecy* is richer than referring only to the foreseeing of future events. It also refers to revelatory instructions of every sort. It is apparent that the Lord intends that we have prophets upon the earth until “we all come to a unity of the faith” (Ephesians 4:11-13). And that has certainly not yet occurred.

A belief in prophets and their messages lies at the heart of our doctrine. We recognize as prophets the biblical (Old and New Testament) and Book of Mormon prophets and apostles.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

Devout persons of all Christian faiths readily accepted the truth that revelation was poured out upon the faithful, from age to age, from Adam to the days of Christ’s apostles. They suppose, however, that since the apostolic era the heavens have been sealed and that revelation has ceased. In reality souls are just as precious in the sight of God today as

they ever were, and revelation is still poured out in abundance so that souls may be led to salvation (*Mormon Doctrine*, 648).

In the Church, a “prophet” may be defined on three levels.

1. On one level, there is a single prophet who heads the Church—the president—the one who presides. The word “prophet” comes from the Greek *prophetes*, which means “inspired teacher.” Although the Greek term does not include the meaning of foretelling or prophesying, that function is included with the other implications of the word. In the Church the president/prophet conveys the words of the Lord to the Church. Those words may come in the form of counsel, warning, direct instruction, commandment, encouragement, or a prophetic foretelling of events. What he pronounces in the name of the Lord is counted as scripture, though at other times he may choose to comment or opine in a less formal way and setting without the implication of creating doctrine.

2. On another level, all of those ordained to be apostles in the Lord’s earthly kingdom are prophets. They also are ordained, divinely enabled, and expected to receive revelation.

3. On yet another level, a prophet is anyone who has a testimony of Jesus Christ and is moved by the Holy Ghost (Revelation 19:10; cf. TPJS, 119, 160). Moses, voicing his approval of two men who had prophesied, exclaimed, “Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!” (Numbers 11:29). In modern times, speaking of Brigham Young, Elder Wilford Woodruff said, “He is a prophet, I am a prophet, you are, and anybody is a prophet who has the testimony of Jesus Christ, for that is the spirit of prophecy” (*JD* 13:165).

It follows that the spirit of prophecy does not operate in every utterance of its possessor. The prophet Joseph Smith explained that “a prophet [is] a prophet only when he [is] acting as such” (*HC* 5:265).

Joseph Smith said, “Revelations of the mind and will of God to the Church are to come through the Presidency. This is the order of heaven, and the power and privilege of this priesthood. It is also the privilege of any officer in this Church to obtain revelations, so far as relates to his particular calling and duty in the Church” (*TPJS*, 111).

Following his first vision in 1820 (*JS-H* 1:11-20) Joseph was visited by a succession of angel-prophet-messengers. These committed to him the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods and the “keys” of the priesthood. These keys authorized him to preside over the Church.

Joseph Smith’s prophetic office was officially recognized when the Church was organized on April 6, 1830. A revelation to him says, “Thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church . . . being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof” (*D&C* 21:1-2). He subsequently, and to the time of his death, served as presiding officer, the “President of

the High Priesthood.” In March 1836, under the prophetic leadership of Joseph Smith, the membership of the Church sustained the first presidency and the quorum of the twelve apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators (*HC* 2:417). Their successors have been similarly sustained.

An unbroken series of prophet/presidents have led the Church since the death of Joseph Smith in 1844. Since 1847, these prophets have administered the affairs of the Church from Church headquarters in Salt Lake City. They have dedicated themselves to their appointed mission of helping the people of the world prepare for eternal life, and for the second coming of Jesus Christ. They have provided leadership for the international missionary program of the Church and for the building of temples. The living prophet continues to receive revelations, select and ordain leaders by the spirit of prophecy, and serve as the principal teacher of the Church, instructing its members in doctrine and in righteous living.

Prophets and their messages have occupied a central place in God’s dealings with his children from the beginning. Elder Bruce R. McConkie, an apostle, has written that a foreordained prophet has stood at the head of God’s church in all dispensations of the gospel from the time of Adam (see *Moses* 5:9-10) to the present, including, for example, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Peter, and Joseph Smith (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, Salt Lake City, 1985, 2).

Prophets are always witnesses of Jesus Christ. The experience common to all the church’s prophets is the witness they bear of Jesus Christ, the Messiah—of his divine sonship and his earthly mission.

The Hebrew prophets spoke for God for many centuries until the post-apostolic era, from the second to the nineteenth centuries, when faith in continuing prophecy had vanished in that part of the world and when people assumed, even as did some in Jesus’s day, that the prophets were dead (*John* 8:53) and their offices abolished.

No true prophets, ancient or modern, have ever called themselves to their positions. Some, such as Moses, Amos, and Jeremiah, have even accepted the calling reluctantly. Some, including John the Baptist, Samuel, and Joseph Smith, were called in childhood or youth.

The calls made to individual prophets and God’s further communications with and through them have been accomplished in various ways: (1) through the ministering of angels; (2) in dreams; (3) in day or night visions; (4) by prophetic inspiration—an intense conviction verified by subsequent events; (5) by the literal voice of God; and (6) in face-to-face visitations such as those experienced by Moses (*Exodus* 33:11), Enoch (*Moses* 7:4), Isaiah (*Isaiah* 6), and Joseph Smith (*JS-H* 1:17). (7) Sometimes the call has come with blinding intensity, as in those of Paul and Alma; (8) sometimes, as with Elijah, the prophet has heard “a still small voice” (*1 Kings* 19:12). God has often spoken to his prophets in answer to prayer, but true prophets have not been mystics who try to make contact with the unseen by self-induced trances or similar means.

The calling of a prophet has always been made, and his messages have been written or spoken, through the power of the Holy Ghost, sometimes called the Spirit of the Lord (Acts 2:1-4, 37-42).

### **Has Revelation Ceased?**

An old favorite of those who say revelation has ceased is 1 Corinthians 13:8—“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.”

The correct interpretation of this passage is found by a careful reading of the context. Let us look at the rest of the passage: “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Corinthians 13:9-12).

Paul is saying that there will eventually come a day, indeed, “when that which is perfect is come,” when prophecies and tongues, and study will no longer be necessary. Even then, charity will exist and prevail. And when is this “perfect day”? This is made clear in D&C 50:24. The “perfect day” is when we have earned all the gifts, received all the light, indeed, when we have become like God.

Note that Paul was using analogies. He was saying that the mortal man is to the perfect man what a mortal child is to a mortal man. Also he was saying that revelation, as we have it today in mortality, is like “seeing through a glass darkly.” When we come to see and know all things, these partial glimpses into eternity will seem as nothing and no longer be necessary.

Certainly this passage does not indicate an end of revelation while men remain in mortality. While imperfection still abides, while men are still sojourning through this mortal trial, prophets continue to be necessary.

Yet another scripture which is misinterpreted to mean that prophecy will cease is Matthew 11:13—“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.” Opponents of the Church have written and preached that this verse explains that revelation would cease after John the Baptist.

This verse actually teaches that all the prophets foretold the coming of Christ until John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, or Elias. To prophesy meant to foretell or testify of Jesus (see Revelation 19:10). Jesus taught the two men on the road to Emmaus: “Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken . . . And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”

John the Revelator was no less a prophet in having the testimony of Jesus than was John the Baptist. Prophecy—foretelling—is not the only form of revelation. Even if there were no new prophecies in it, the New Testament is all revelation and was all written after John. God revealed many future events to John the Revelator which was all revelation.

2 Timothy 3:14-17 is another great favorite of the anti-revelation faction: “But continue thou in the things which thou has learned and has been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrines for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” In using this passage against revelation, the argument of these anti-revelation types runs along these lines: If Timothy had enough to make him “wise unto salvation,” why do we need more than him? Besides, verse sixteen says that “all scripture is given.” If all scripture has been given and if we have the Bible, then why expect more?

Opponents of living prophets also quote Acts 20:20, 27, and interpret them the same way: “And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house . . . For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” If Paul “held back nothing” and declared “all the counsel of God” to the Ephesians, why should we think there would be any more?

The simplest and most obvious explanation is that if Timothy and the Ephesian saints had all or enough, then there are several books of the New Testament which must be rejected. At the time Paul wrote his epistle to Timothy, other New Testament books were yet to be written and must therefore be excluded from the Bible. These would include the book of Revelation, given on Patmos some years after, together with John’s gospel, and John’s epistles. The enemy of new revelation in his fanatical zeal to close up the volume of inspiration, has done away the very scriptures which he pretends so firmly to believe.

Another implication that modern false teachers see in these passages is that “enough” scripture has been given to perfect the man of God—that “enough” has been given to thoroughly furnish him unto all good works. But the word *enough* is not found in these passages: one reads, “All scripture is given, etc.” The righteous man has no authority from this passage to assume that he has enough, but he should continue to seek for “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little,” and if he gives heed unto “all scripture” which God may condescend to reveal, it will perfect him, and thoroughly furnish him unto all good works. These passages, therefore, leave the man of God to be perfected by “all scripture” which God has given by inspiration, in early ages, or which he may give in latter times. He is not limited to any particular number of books which uninspired man has happened to find and compile into a Bible.

## **Joseph Smith Was a Prophet of God.**

An investigator may well wonder why we feel that Joseph Smith was truly a prophet of God. After all, do not other churches claim they were founded by inspired men—prophets?

Each investigator must, of course, decide for himself whether or not Joseph is a prophet of God. Perhaps the most important activity for each investigator is to read and pray about the Book of Mormon. If the Spirit bears witness to them of the authenticity and truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, then it naturally follows that Joseph is a prophet.

There are other criteria for a true prophet of God:

1. Numbers 12:6—“And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.”

Joseph, obviously, had many visions. The missionary may wish to tell Joseph’s own story from JS-H 1.

2. Deuteronomy 18:22—Moses taught that we may identify a false prophet by the fact that his prophecies do not come to pass. He wrote, “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

Two good examples of Joseph’s prophecies did come to pass.

**The Civil War.** On Christmas day 1832, Joseph was inspired to prophesy that a war between the states would occur. Of course, this war did take place and is known to us as the Civil War—between 1861 and 1865. Joseph wrote:

Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls; And the time will come that war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place. For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain, as it is called, and they shall also call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves against other nations; and then war shall be poured out upon all nations (D&C 87:1-3).

Joseph prophesied that South Carolina would take the initiative. On April 12, 1861, the Confederate forces laid siege to Fort Sumter. This fort, garrisoned by United States troops, was located in the harbor off Charleston, South Carolina. Indeed, South Carolina did take the initiative.

He further prophesied that this war would bring death to many. As it turned out, the Civil War was one of the bloodiest wars in history. The number killed or wounded

varies considerably depending upon the source you chose to believe. Most Civil War studies give casualty figures in excess of 600,000. One indication of just how high the losses were is shown by a comparison with casualties in other U.S. wars. The aggregate figure for the Civil War is usually held to be about 618,000 (360,000 North, 258,000 South). The next highest casualty figure is for World War II, during which 318,000 died. World War II is followed by World War I with 115,000. Other casualty figures include: The American Revolution—4,044; War of 1812—2,200; Mexican War—13,270; Korean War—33,000; and Vietnam War—46,616.

The prophet Joseph foretold the nature of the antagonists in this conflict. He specifically stated that the North would fight the South, which is in fact what occurred. Joseph also prophesied that the southern states would call upon Great Britain and other nations for aid. Once war broke out, the South did send commissioners to various European nations to seek diplomatic recognition and military aid.

Critics of the prophet Joseph have maintained that this revelation was not published until after the Civil War. It is true that the revelation was not published in the Doctrine and Covenants until 1876. It was published, however, in the Pearl of Great Price in 1851. Furthermore, the leaders of the Church were fully aware of Joseph's prophecy as early as the 1830s. Orson Pratt, for example, recalled: "When I was a boy, I traveled extensively in the United States and the Canadas, preaching this restored gospel. I had a manuscript copy of the revelation [section 87] which I carried in my pocket, and I was in the habit of reading it to the people among whom I traveled and preached" (*JD*, 13:135).

Critics have also maintained that Joseph is a false prophet because the Civil War was not followed immediately by the second coming of Christ. In the revelation Joseph wrote, "I prophesy, in the name of the Lord God, that the commencement of the difficulties which will cause much bloodshed *previous to the coming of the Son of Man* will be in South Carolina" (D&C 130:12, emphasis added). What the prophecy says is that these events will occur prior to the second coming—and they did. Anti-Mormons contend that Joseph meant that Christ would come immediately following the bloodshed. That is not what Joseph wrote, nor is it what he meant.

**The migration of the saints to the Great Basin.** In 1842, at the very height of the saints newly-found prosperity in Nauvoo Joseph predicted: "I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some of you will live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains" (Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols., introduction and notes by B. H. Roberts [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-1951], 5: 85). We know that Joseph's prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. The saints were later driven

from Nauvoo, their temple was destroyed and desecrated, and many perished during their long exodus to the Great Basin.

3. Hebrews 9:16—“For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.” The prophet Joseph sealed his testimony with his blood on June 27, 1844 at Carthage Jail.

We have been accused of worshipping Joseph Smith. Mormons worship only God. We honor and admire and respect the prophets and apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ like Noah, Moses, Abraham, Daniel, Isaiah, Peter, and Paul. Joseph Smith belongs in that same category, and we pay him the same homage. We revere him as a prophet called of God to lay the foundation of the Kingdom of God in the last days. While we believe that Joseph acted as an instrument in God’s hands just as Moses and Noah and Paul did in their day, we do not worship him. The “creature” should not be worshipped or served more than the Creator (see Romans 1:25). An instrument or tool is never as great as its creator.

President Gordon B. Hinckley said:

We do not worship the Prophet [Joseph Smith]. We worship God our Eternal Father, and the risen Lord Jesus Christ. But we acknowledge [Joseph Smith], we proclaim him, we respect him, we reverence him as an instrument in the hands of the Almighty in restoring to the earth the ancient truth of the divine gospel” (“Joseph the Seer,” *Ensign* [May 1977], 65).

### **All Prophets Knew and Taught of Christ**

Some critics of the Church object to our claim that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been on the earth since the time of Adam. Certainly there is no biblical evidence of Christianity or the Church and gospel of Jesus Christ before the time of Christ’s mortal sojourn.

Generally Christians take too narrow a view of the church and gospel of Jesus Christ, assigning it a too recent entry into the world. Quite generally they regard “Christianity” as originating with Jesus Christ some two thousand years ago, and they have little or no conception of “Christianity before Christ.” For them the whole of it began with the birth of the Savior; this, or at most with the birth and ministry of John the Baptist, the Messiah’s forerunner or special minister. We rejoice in the sacred truth that every prophet since Adam existed to prophesy of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider first the following New Testament scriptures:

1. Jesus taught the Jews on the Sabbath at the Pool Bethesda: “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

2. Following his resurrection, the Lord walked the road to Emmaus and encountered two of his disciples who did not at first recognize him. They described to

Jesus the story of his own crucifixion and resurrection, expressing surprise at the fact that he had been resurrected. Luke describes the Savior's reaction to these two disciple's account: "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things [in other words, should you not have been expecting the resurrection?], and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:25-27).

3. The Apostle Peter knew also of this truth when he wrote: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21).

4. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).

5. "Paul, a servant of God . . . in hope of eternal life which God that cannot lie promised before the world began" (Titus 1:1-2).

6. "For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:18-20).

7. "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

We proclaim to the world that the fulness of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ has been on the earth intermittently since the time of Adam. We testify to the fact that all of the holy prophets on the earth since the world began have known of and have testified of Jesus Christ. In fact their central mission was to testify of Christ. Those who lived before his mortal advent looked forward to his birth and ministry, while those who live subsequently will testify that he did come.

The reason why so little is known concerning the gospel in the ancient world, from the days of Adam, through the patriarchal period of Enoch to Noah, and then through Shem to Abraham, Moses, and the prophets of Israel, is because of the fragmentary character of some parts of the Old Testament and the New Testament. In some cases whole books are missing. In the Bible, however, there is much incidental mention of and allusion to the gospel previous to the coming of the Christ. This leads one to believe that the world must have had some knowledge of that coming and of the gospel, before the earthly advent of the Savior.

For example in the very earliest scripture, in the conversation of the Lord God with the serpent and the woman Eve, it is written: "I will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman; and between thy seed and her seed; it [the woman's seed—Christ] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). The

woman's "seed" is given in the singular, "It shall bruise thy head," that is the Christ shall bruise the serpent's head—shall wound him in a vital part. The serpent shall have power only to wound the woman's "seed" in the heel, a non-vital part. The victory shall be given to the seed of the woman. The Christ will overcome Lucifer. A prophecy of the future world-battle of good and evil forces—between the Christ and Lucifer, with assurance from God of victory with the Christ.

There is also the strange fact in Genesis of the offerings of Cain and Abel—sacrifices. One an offering of the fruit of the earth, the other the offering of the firstling of his flock, and of the fat thereof—the first and choicest. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." And why? Why "offering" at all? Where did the idea of sacrifice come from? Then why "fruit of the earth" in the one case, and "a Lamb without blemish" in the other? Did the father, Adam, teach these sons the offering of sacrifice? Did Adam offer sacrifice? Why was the fruit offering of Cain rejected and the necessary blood-offering of Abel approved and accepted? Why did it not meet with divine approval? None of these questions find authoritative answers from the scriptures. Not only was Cain's offering rejected, according to Genesis, but Cain was severely reprov'd for his anger, at his offering's being rejected. But he is told that if he doeth well, he shall be accepted. "And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door, and to thee shall be his [Satan's or sin's] desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (Genesis 4:1-7). God took cognizance, then, of this matter of "sacrifices" by these brothers; but gives no explanation of the matter. What an interesting mystery. This difference of sacrifices and what grew out of it resulted in the crime of fratricide by Cain. He became his brother's murderer.

In this dispensation, God has revealed some of the writings of Moses which the world has lost. In these writings it is made known that sacrifices began with Adam because God commanded him to offer sacrifices. Adam was commanded that he should worship the Lord God, by offering the firstlings of his flocks, for an offering to the Lord. And "Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord." Then the following: "And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And then the angel spake saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore. And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will. . . . And thus the gospel began to be preached, from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost. And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance, and

the gospel preached, and a decree sent forth, that it should be in the world, until the end thereof" (Moses 5:6-9; 58, 59).

Now we know the "why" of sacrifice. We know why Cain's offering of fruit was not acceptable. God had commanded what kind of sacrifice must be offered. Cain's sacrifice of the fruit of the earth contained no element of a symbol of the "atonement" which the Son of God was to make for the redemption of man. No wonder God rejected it. In every way it was an insult to him. It was an impudent rejection of what he had commanded, and it substituted something else for the thing God had desired foreshadowed; it was a mockery of the means designed of God for the symbol of the redemption of the race and the salvation of man. It could well have been designed by Lucifer who rebelled in heaven, and renewed his warfare upon the things of God among men on earth.

Jude also tells us something of Enoch, "the seventh from Adam," how he prophesied of certain evil characters of the last days, saying: "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly that are among them" (Jude 1:14-15). Thus Enoch's knowledge of the things of God and his vision of the movements of our Lord was projected forward even to the glorious coming of the Son of God in the end of the world! Enoch knew of the Savior and of his second coming!

And what of the prophet Noah? Did he know of Christ and his gospel? Peter says: "The Christ . . . being put to death in the flesh was quickened by the spirit by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient when the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was a preparing" (1 Peter 3:18-20). He [the Christ] . . . "preached to the spirits in prison;" and what did he preach? Undoubtedly what he had been preaching to those on earth—the gospel of Jesus Christ. And "also" he went and preached it to the "spirits in prison" who had lived in the days of Noah, and had rejected the same message—the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Again, Peter: "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to man in the flesh [i.e. as men in the flesh are judged]; but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 4:5-6). The "Gospel was preached to them that are dead"! This could refer to no other "preaching" than that of the Christ just above mentioned, and to those who had once rejected that gospel in the days of the righteous Noah who had preached it unto them in vain. But now it was preached to them in the spirit world by the Christ. We cannot suppose that the Christ preached to them a gospel that was of no avail to them—that would not result in their redemption. It would be out of character for the Christ to preach the gospel that could only be a taunt, a mockery, to those who heard it. He would only preach to them the saving gospel. Then we have Paul's startling inquiry: "What shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the

dead” (1 Corinthians 15:29)? How these fragments of revealed truth piece together! Noah who was a preacher of righteousness preached the gospel, but the people of his day rejected it. And they were destroyed from life by the Flood, and their spirits gathered to the spirit prison where they are held under limitations imposed by their disobedience. Then after three thousand years they are visited by the Son of God in the spirit, who again preached to them the gospel; and for this cause; that they might be judged as men are in the flesh to whom the gospel is preached; but live according to God in the spirit, that is in loving obedience to it, if they will! And if they will, provision is made for them to receive that gospel by the sign of its acceptance through baptism—“baptism for the dead”!

And what of Abraham? Paul wrote: “And the scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith preached before the gospel to Abraham; saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed” (Galatians 3:8). What gospel? Fortunately in this same epistle Paul lays it down most emphatically that there is but one gospel: “Some would trouble you,” he says, to these same Galatians: “But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” There is but one gospel then; and when this same apostle, in this same book, says the “gospel was preached unto Abraham,” he could mean no other than that same gospel which he had preached unto the Galatians. And it had previously had been preached unto Abraham, as it had been to Adam, Enoch and Noah, they having looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, and to the atonement.

Paul, in Galatians, further emphasizes his doctrine of the gospel’s having been preached unto Abraham, by the following inquiry: “Wherefore then serveth the law?” Having in mind the law of Moses, under which Israel had lived from his advent into Canaan, at least, unto the coming of the Christ. That is to say, if the gospel had been preached to Abraham, “Wherefore then serveth the law?” Paul answered his own question: “It was added because of transgression until the seed [i.e. the Christ] should come to whom the promise was made.” “It [the law of Moses] was added because of transgression.” Added to what? Added to the gospel, of course, which before had been preached unto Abraham, and as we shall see, to Israel also. The whole of Paul’s reasoning as follows. The gospel had been preached to Abraham, as to the more ancient patriarchs, perhaps in the case of Abraham, by Melchizedek—that great “priest of the most high God” who brought forth unto Abraham “bread and wine,” beyond question a sacramental ceremony of tremendous significance.

And what about Moses? Again, from Paul: “But with whom was he [God] grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them;

but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Hebrews 3:17-19; 4:1-2).

And again Paul: “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat: And did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:1-5). Now we are prepared to better understand Paul’s—“the gospel preached to Abraham,” and also “the gospel preached to Ancient Israel under Moses,” but the word preached profited them nothing, “not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” and hence the law of Moses—confessedly a lesser law than the gospel—a law of “carnal commandments”—a law of “types and symbols of things and not the very things themselves”—continued in Israel. “For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did” (Hebrews 7:19). “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices . . . make the comers thereunto perfect” (Hebrews 10:1).

## The Need for Divine Authorization

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Some religions claim that all the authority they need is the Bible: “We don’t need any further authority in our church, we have the Bible.”

A knowledge of the Bible does not give a man authority to act for God any more than a knowledge of the civil law of the land gives to any man the authority to administer (direct, enforce, or interpret) that law. In order to act for God, one must be authorized by God. The Bible is a source of knowledge, not a source of authorization.

We declare that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true and living church on the earth. Our claim is centered on the concept of authority. Our belief is well stated by a modern-day prophet President Joseph F. Smith: “As to the question of authority, nearly everything depends upon it. No ordinance can be performed to the acceptance of God without divine authority. No matter how fervently men may believe or pray, unless they are endowed with divine authority they can only act in their own name, and not legally nor acceptably in the name of Jesus Christ, in whose name all things must be done” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 102).

In making this claim, we do not say that others have no truth. Some of them have much truth. Nor do we imply that members of other denominations are insincere in their attempt to follow their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ based upon their best understanding of his will. Often the clergy and adherents are not without dedication and many of them practice remarkably well the virtues of Christianity. They are, nonetheless, incomplete. The Lord described them as “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:5).

Authority is a divine commission or calling from God. For example, Jesus gave his apostles specific authority to preach and to administer his gospel (Matthew 10:1; John 15:16), and certain individuals were empowered to baptize and perform miracles by this authority (Acts 5:12-16; 8:5-17). As conveyed by Jesus Christ, this authority meant that ordinances performed on earth would be honored in heaven and, conversely, to loose (dissolve an ordinance) on earth would mean it was loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19). The name given to this kind of authority in the scriptures is *priesthood* (Hebrews 7:11-12, 14, 24; 1 Peter 2:5, 9).

As Christ’s authority was based on power from on high, so does the Church rest its claim as the only true and living church upon possessing the divine authority to act for God. This authority differentiates the Church from all others. Other systems and organizations may possess other types of authority, but the divine authority associated with Christ’s church, the priesthood, resides only in this one.

First, “no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron” (Hebrews 5:4). Divine authority cannot be obtained by study, graduation

from school, or mere desire (Acts 19:13-16). It must be obtained in the divinely appointed way, as was the case with Aaron (Exodus 28:41).

Obtaining the authority to act in the name of God comes by the laying on of hands by one already holding this authority or priesthood (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; Deuteronomy 34:9). Simon, for example, desired to purchase the apostles' authority, as he might have done with other types of authority. He was condemned by Peter for desiring to obtain the "gift of God" with money (Acts 8:14-20).

Ordinances performed in the Church are spiritually binding only when performed under this divinely commissioned authority, received in the proper way (2 Samuel 6:6-7). For example, Paul re-baptized certain Ephesians who had been previously baptized by an unauthorized person (Acts 19:1-6).

The priesthood authority was lost from the earth sometime after the resurrection and ascension of Christ into heaven, so a restoration of divine authority was needed (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-7). In 1829 heavenly messengers, previously endowed with divine authority by Christ himself, conferred authority upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery as part of the restoration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

## The Character of Joseph Smith and the Smith Family

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Anti-Mormons have suggested that the Smith family were known for their “vicious habits” and their “lack of moral character.” Also they have proffered that Joseph Smith, Jr., was well-known for his “indolence, exaggeration, and untruthfulness.” They also claim that “more than sixty of Smith’s neighbors in Palmyra, New York, signed a statement to this effect.” They also suggest that Joseph, Sr., was “obsessed with the notion that somewhere near their home lay buried the fabled treasures of Captain Kidd.” Further, “The Smiths spent their time fortune telling and divining with the aid of forked sticks and seer-stones. They practiced magic and used occult methods in their endless, fruitless digging for the hidden.”

The purpose of this chapter is to first carefully examine the origin of these claims. Then, we will consider from a few different perspectives more legitimate evidences of the character of both Joseph’s family and Joseph himself.

The reader is first requested to read the material on Philastus Hurlbut in the resource article “Understanding the Anti-Mormon Movement.” Please read the section titled “The Basic History of the Anti-Mormon Movement” in its entirety.

Philastus Hurlbut in the early 1830s was hired by an anti-Mormon committee to find those who would attest to Joseph Smith’s “dishonesty.” He allegedly gathered affidavits from former Smith neighbors which attested to the Smith family’s questionable character. Hurlbut’s “research” and ill-gotten affidavits produced much of the libelous history of Joseph Smith and his family and of the early Church that is referenced by anti-Mormon writers today. These affidavits have remained an anti-Mormon treasure trove to which generations of critics have turned and returned for years.

Research by Brother Donald L. Enders contains an analysis of the Hurlbut-Howe affidavits (*FARMS Insights*, September 1993). In the affidavits, Hurlbut described the Prophet’s family as, among many other derogatory things, “lazy” and “indolent.” A neighbor, Joseph Capron, for example, declared that the Smiths’ “great object appeared to be, to live without work.” “It was a mystery to their neighbors,” said another neighbor David Stafford, “how they got their living.” Brother Enders found evidence, however, in the land and tax records, farm account books, and other credible public documents of that day, that on questions of testable fact, the affidavits cannot be trusted. Brother Enders has demonstrated that the Smiths’ farming techniques were virtually a textbook illustration of the best recommendations of the day, showing them to have been, by contemporary standards, intelligent, skilled, and responsible people. And they were very hard working. To create their farm, for instance, the Smiths moved many tons of rock and cut down about six thousand trees, a large percentage of which were one hundred feet or more in height and from four to six feet in diameter. Then they fenced

their property, which required cutting at least six or seven thousand ten-foot rails. They did an enormous amount of work before they were able even to begin actual daily farming. Furthermore, in order to pay for their farm, the Smiths were obliged to hire themselves out as day laborers. Throughout the surrounding area, they dug and rocked up wells and cisterns, mowed, harvested, made cider and barrels and chairs and brooms and baskets, taught school, dug for salt, worked as carpenters and domestics, built stone walls and fireplaces, flailed grain, cut and sold cordwood, carted, washed clothes, sold garden produce, painted chairs and oil-cloth coverings, butchered, dug coal, and hauled stone. And, along the way, they produced between one thousand and seven thousand pounds of maple sugar annually. “Laziness” and “indolence” are difficult to detect in the Smith family.

And what resulted from the Smiths’ hard work? The 1830 tax records for Manchester Township appraised the family’s holdings at the average level per acre for farms in the vicinity. Of the ten farms owned by the Staffords, Stoddards, Chases, and Caprons—residents of the neighborhood who affixed their signatures prominently to affidavits denigrating the Prophet’s family—only one was assessed as more valuable per acre than the Smiths’. The others received lower appraisals—and, in some cases, significantly lower ones. So what conclusions may we draw? If the Hurlbut-Howe affidavits cannot be trusted on matters that can be quantified and tested, there seems little reason to trust their judgments in the less tangible matter of character. Clearly, in some cases they reflect religious hostility and perhaps envy from their less successful neighbors. As the Prophet’s brother expressed it, “We never knew we were bad folks until Joseph told his vision. We were considered respectable till then, but at once people began to circulate falsehoods and stories in a wonderful [extraordinary] way” (*Deseret Evening News*, 20 January 1894, 11).

Further research into census records of the day has shown that some of those attesting in the affidavits to specific conversations and observations were not even in the same state at the time of the alleged signings. It is possible that, in some instances, Hurlbut, eager to discredit Joseph Smith and Mormonism by any means, simply wrote these affidavits himself.

### **Did Joseph Tell the Truth?**

Please consider carefully the following two-verse extract from Joseph Smith’s own account of his First Vision experience:

I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air.

One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him! (JS-H 1:16-17).

Perhaps we should add to his account of the first vision his own simple autobiographical testimony of that event:

I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; 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 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 deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation (JSH 1:25).

Have you ever seriously considered just how important it is to you that Joseph literally had this encounter with the Father and the Son—that he was telling the absolute truth in recounting his experience in the grove?

Most all of you reading this chapter would acknowledge that Joseph did indeed have the experience exactly as he reported it, but let us assume for just a moment that he did not. Let us suppose he was not being truthful—that he was lying. How then should we regard him? Should we think him a guileless and well-meaning young man who simply desired to start a wholesome new religious movement? Was he someone who failed to find fulfillment in the religions of his day, and he felt he needed to do something about it? He certainly possessed the tools to do just that. He was a bright, charismatic young man with uncommon spiritual intuition and outstanding leadership skills. If he didn't actually have this experience in the grove exactly as he represented it, perhaps we ought to forgive him. Even if he stretched the truth a bit, look at all the good that has come from his efforts.

One is reminded of C. S. Lewis's statement about Jesus Christ:

"I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to (*Mere Christianity*, 55-56).

In like manner, if Joseph was not a prophet of God who conversed with God and with angels, then he was a damnable charlatan who pulled off a major and tragic religious scam that continues even today amongst a sincere and devoted people.

Joseph simply must have been a prophet of God just as he said he was. Today, the very spiritual lives of those of us in the Church depend utterly on the fact that he spoke the absolute truth. If he did not, then I and many of my Latter-day Saint friends are spiritually, emotionally, and mentally bereft and desperately without hope. I personally would have nothing left but profound despair.

There can be no doubting Joseph's personal abilities. He possessed nearly irresistible charm, a magnetic personality, and unrivaled physical strength. But what about his integrity, his character? Was he the kind of person we can trust absolutely and unreservedly? Did he tell us the complete, absolute truth about all of his spiritual experiences?

It is vital that each of us avoids being merely "willing" to acknowledge that Joseph was a divinely called prophet. Each of us must possess the desire and expend the effort necessary to obtain an abiding, proactive testimony of his prophetic calling— independent of anyone else or anyone else's beliefs. If we do not, then our entire relationship with the Church is on shaky ground. What about you? Do you have such a testimony? Can you bear, in any company and in any setting, a sincere and passionate testimony that he was a prophet of God?

In a peculiar way—because of our human nature—it is somehow easier for us to believe in the prophets in the distant past. It is not difficult, for example, to accept Moses, Isaiah, Lehi, or Nephi, or even Jesus Christ himself, but Joseph Smith is somehow more difficult to accept. The reason has to do with our temporal proximity to him. He lived less than two centuries ago. We are keenly aware of many of the non-prophetic aspects and issues of his life. Somehow this makes a difference. The American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: "The ancients are only venerable to us because distance has destroyed what was trivial; as the sun and stars affect us only grandly, because we cannot reach to all their smoke and surfaces and say, Is that all?" (*The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, volume 6: *Natural History of Intellect, and Other Papers*, "Past and Present," 387). The tendency for men to readily accept the dead prophets but struggle to accept living ones has apparently always existed. Hugh Nibley observed:

It is a plain fact that the true church upon the earth must and will always have at its head a living prophet. But that is unwelcome news to the world. It has always been poison. It is the one teaching that has made the restored gospel unacceptable to the wisdom of men. A dead prophet the world dearly desires and warmly cherishes; he is a priceless tradition, a spiritual heritage, a beautiful memory. But woe to a living prophet! He shall be greeted with stones and catcalls even by pious

people. The men who put the apostles to death thought they were doing God a favor [John 16:2], and the Lord tells us with what reverence and devotion men adorn the tombs of the prophets whom they would kill if they were alive (Luke 11:47-48).

Men can read the words of a dead prophet and apply his heavy charges to that dead generation to which the prophet spoke, piously shaking their heads the while and repeating, "If we had been present in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." By that very statement, the Lord tells those devout lovers of dead prophets, "Ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets" (Matthew 23:30-31). Christ predicted that he, too, like the other prophets, would be eagerly sought after once he had left the earth—but then it would be too late.

Here we have something in the nature of a general principle. The rejection of living prophets and the veneration of dead ones is not a folly limited to one nation or to one generation. It meets us throughout the long history of Israel as a sort of standard procedure. Nor did it cease with the coming of Christ, who promised his disciples that they would be treated as badly and rejected as completely as he. The wise men of his time had a ready answer to Jesus: "Abraham is our father" (John 8:39), they protest. "We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God" (John 8:41). "We are Moses's disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is" (John 9:28-29).

God had visited the earth in remote times; he had spoken to Abraham and to Moses. Venerable traditions burdened with a magnificent weight of art, poetry, scholarship, and ritual attested the sincere devotion of the race to the memory of God's visits to men in times past. But to ask men to believe that that same God had spoken in their own day, and to a plain man who walked their streets—that was simply too much to take! That was the test that Christ's generation could not pass (*The World and the Prophets*, 7).

In this chapter, we will concentrate on your own personal testimony of the prophet Joseph. We will examine four specific lines of evidence supporting Joseph's spiritual claims about himself and his work: (1) What his contemporaries said about him; (2) The uncontested authenticity of the Book of Mormon; (3) The fruits of Joseph Smith's ministry; and (4) The testimonies of noble men today.

### **What His Contemporaries Said of Him**

How did his friends—those who associated with him most closely—really regard him? What about those who knew him most intimately? Would it not have been

impossible for him to hide his real self from those closest to him during his ministry? Brigham Young is a prime example. Was Brigham perceptive and sensitive? Was he sophisticated in the ways of men? Did he have sound common sense, keen insights, and correct discernment? Might we expect him to have been able to detect disingenuousness, hypocrisy, deceit, and artificiality? Brigham Young declared of Joseph: “I feel like shouting hallelujah, all the time, when I think that I ever knew Joseph Smith, the Prophet” (*JD*, 3:51). Brigham later declared, “I honor and revere the name of Joseph Smith. I delight to hear it; I love it. I love his doctrine” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 458). And with his last breath on earth he reportedly whispered, “Joseph! Joseph! Joseph!” (*JD*, 13:216).

Lorenzo Snow said, “There never was a man that possessed a higher degree of integrity and more devotedness to the interests of mankind than the Prophet Joseph Smith” (*CR*, October 1897, 64).

When Zion’s Camp made the arduous journey from Kirtland to Missouri in 1834, one of the participants was a young man, L. O. Littlefield. He observed closely the prophet Joseph. According to Brother Littlefield’s journal, Joseph demonstrated on many occasions his “natural and inspired characteristic” of integrity. Littlefield said, “It is due his memory for me to here place on record the fact that I never, in that camp or during the trials of his later life, saw Joseph Smith the Prophet falter or shrink from the performance of any duty or undertaking that the Lord had commanded or inaugurated” (*Juvenile Instructor*, 27:223-24).

Another participant, Moses Martin, also wrote in his Journal of the Zion’s Camp march: “The road was so bad that we twice during the day had to unhitch our teams from our wagons and draw them by hand. Here I saw the Prophet wade in mud over the tops of his boot legs and help draw the wagons out” (*Journal History*, May 27, 1834).

Yet another member of the camp made similar observations: “Zion’s Camp, in passing through the State of Indiana, had to cross very bad swamps, consequently we had to attach ropes to the wagons to help them through, and the Prophet was the first man at the rope in his bare feet. This was characteristic of him in all times of difficulty” (Statement by John M. Chidester, *Juvenile Instructor*, 27:151).

George A. Smith also wrote concerning the Zions Camp ordeal:

The Prophet Joseph took a full share of the fatigues of the entire journey. In addition to the care of providing for the Camp and presiding over it, he walked most of the time and had a full proportion of blistered, bloody and sore feet, which was the natural result of walking from 25 to 40 miles a day in a hot season of the year. But during the entire trip he never uttered a murmur or complaint, while most of the men in the Camp complained to him of sore toes, blistered feet, long drives, scanty supply of provisions, poor quality of bread, bad corn dodger, frouzey [sic] butter,

strong honey, maggotty [sic] bacon and cheese, etc. Even a dog could not bark at some men without their murmuring at Joseph. If they had to camp with bad water it would nearly cause rebellion, yet we were the Camp of Zion, and many of us were prayerless, thoughtless, careless, heedless, foolish or devilish and yet we did not know it. Joseph had to bear with us and tutor us, like children (*George A. Smith's Journal*, June 25, 1834).

One of the most credible testimonies of the prophet Joseph came, ironically, from a man who was excommunicated from the Church in 1838, and never returned. This was David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon. He was born a Pennsylvania German and carried into adulthood a hint of a German accent. He was about the same age as the Prophet Joseph. He was an outspoken rugged individualist and this quality verged on stubbornness. This utterly honest personality would have been the first to detect fraud and expose it. If Joseph had been intending to perpetrate some type of fraud, David Whitmer is not one he would have picked as a partner in his conspiracy. Throughout his eight years in the Church and his fifty years strictly separated from it, he never wavered regarding his testimony of the Book of Mormon and, by implication, of the prophet Joseph.

In addition to being one of the three Book of Mormon witnesses, David Whitmer became prominent in the leadership of the Church, serving as the "president of the Church in Missouri" which would be comparable to a stake president in terms of the current church organization.

Following his excommunication he moved to Richmond, Missouri, where he lived in a society hostile to his religious views, a situation that continually highlighted his rugged independence. There he ran a livery stable and haulage business. He remained in Richmond for fifty years until his death in 1888 at the age of 85.

David earned the solid respect of his non-Mormon townsmen through a half century of private integrity and doing business with them. He was also active in civil government. During fifty years in non-Mormon society, he insisted with the fervor of youth that he knew that the Book of Mormon was divinely revealed. Relatively few people in Richmond could accept such testimony, but none doubted his intelligence or complete honesty. No one summarized this view more clearly than Hiram Parker, a prominent businessman, who lived near Whitmer for a decade: "No one could know Uncle Davy and not like and trust him. . . . Children like him, men respected him and trusted him, and I never heard a word from anyone during my ten years' acquaintance with him and those who had known him intimately for years that spoke a harsh word or uttered a doubt as to his truthfulness and general kindness of heart" ("Mormon Reminiscences," published letter of Hiram Parker, Detroit, uncertain date). Parker had obviously reflected a good deal on how one might admire the man without accepting his message. Few of his townsmen could accept his Book of Mormon testimony, but "on

any other subject or statement of fact neither myself or others could doubt.” Hiram Parker spent most of his life in selling in several states but had never met “a more honest guileless man”—How one can account for the delusion that must have possessed this old man is beyond me” (*Ibid.*).

The well-known story of the episode in 1833 in the public square at Independence, Missouri was told by New York convert John P. Greene:

When the mob assembled they went to the houses of several of the leading Mormons. And taking Isaac Morley, David Whitmer, and others, they told them to bid their families farewell, for they would never see them again. Then driving them at the point of the bayonet to the public square, they stripped and tarred and feathered them, amidst menaces and insults. The commanding officer then called twelve of his men. And ordering them to cock their guns and present them at the prisoners’ breasts, and to be ready to fire when he gave the word, he addressed the prisoners, threatening them with instant death unless they denied the Book of Mormon and confessed it to be a fraud; at the same time adding that if they did so, they might enjoy the privileges of citizens. David Whitmer, hereupon, lifted up his hands and bore witness that the Book of Mormon was the Word of God. The mob then let them go (*Facts Relative to the Expulsion of the Mormons*, 17).

David became widely known as “the last surviving witness,” and consequently he was interviewed far more extensively than the others. He claimed that thousands came to inquire, and more than fifty of these conversations are reported in reasonable detail in contemporary diaries, letters, and newspapers, supplemented by later recollections. These reports furnish us with a detailed historical record. So, today an investigator can test David Whitmer’s convictions almost as well as the visitor of the past century who talked with him personally. The following replies are taken from the better recorded interviews of about the last decade of his life. This composite interview has been constructed by the historian Richard Lloyd Anderson and reported in his book, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (80-82):

Q: Is your published testimony accurate?

A: “As you read my testimony given many years ago, so it stands as my own existence, the same as when I gave it, and so shall stand throughout the cycles of eternity” (Letter of David Whitmer to Dr. James N. Seymour, December 8, 1875).

Q: When did this event [the experience of the three Book of Mormon witnesses] take place?

A: “It was in June, 1829, the very last part of the month” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 242).

Q: What was the approximate time of day?

A: “It was about 11 AM” (*Journal of Edward Stevenson*, December 22, 1877).

Q: What were the circumstances of the vision?

A: “[We] went out into the woods nearby, and sat down on a log and talked awhile. We then kneeled down and prayed. Joseph prayed. We then got up and sat on the log and were talking, when all at once a light came down from above us and encircled us for quite a little distance around, and the angel stood before us” (Letter of William H. Kelley to *Saints’ Herald*, January 16, 1882, Coldwater, Michigan).

Q: Describe the angel.

A: “He was dressed in white, and spoke and called me by name and said, ‘Blessed is he that keepeth His commandments.’ This is all that I heard the angel say” (*Ibid.*).

Q: Did the angel have the Book of Mormon plates?

A: “[He] showed to us the plates, the sword of Laban, the Directors, the Urim and Thummim, and other records. Human language could not describe heavenly things and that which we saw” (*Journal of George Q. Cannon*, entry dated February 27, 1884, cited in *Instructor* 80:520).

Q: Did the vision take place under natural circumstances?

A: “The fact is, it was just as though Joseph, Oliver, and I were sitting right here on a log, when we were overshadowed by a light. It was not like the light of the sun, nor like that of a fire, but more glorious and beautiful. It extended away round us. I cannot tell how far, but in the midst of this light, immediately before us, about as far off as he sits (pointing to John C. Whitmer, who was sitting 2 or 3 feet from him) there appeared, as it were, a table, with many records on it—besides the plates of the Book of Mormon, also the sword of Laban, the Directors, and the Interpreters. I saw them as plain as I see this bed (striking his hand upon the bed beside him), and I heard the voice of the Lord as distinctly as I ever heard anything in my life declaring that they were translated by the gift and power of God” (*Journal of Joseph F. Smith*, cited in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 242).

Q: Can you explain the supernatural power that surrounded you?

A: “All of a sudden I beheld a dazzlingly brilliant light that surpassed in brightness even the sun at noonday, and which seemed to envelop the woods for a considerable distance around. Simultaneous with the light came a strange entrancing influence which permeated me so powerfully that I felt chained to the spot, while I also experienced a sensation of joy absolutely indescribable” (*Omaha Herald*, October 17, 1886).

Q: Did you see the Urim and Thummim?

A: “I saw the Interpreters in the holy vision; they looked like whitish stones put in the rim of a bow—looked like spectacles, only much larger” (Letter of James H. Hart to *Deseret News*, August 23, 1883, Seneca, Missouri, cited in *Deseret Evening News*, September 4, 1883).

Q: Did you see an actual table?

A: “You see that small table by the wall? . . . Well, there was a table about that size, and the heavenly messenger brought the several plates and laid them on the table before our eyes, and we saw them” (*Ibid.*).

Q: Did you handle the plates?

A: “I did not handle the plates—only saw them” (*Journal of James H. Moyle*, June 28, 1885).

“Joseph, and I think Oliver and Emma told me about the plates, and described them to me, and I believed them, but did not see except at the time testified of” (*Journal of Nathan Tanner, Jr.*, April 13, 1886).

Q: How clearly could you see the plates?

A: “The angel stood before us, and he turned the leaves one by one” (Letter of P. Wilhelm Poulson to *Deseret News*, August 13, 1878, Ogden, Utah, cited in *Deseret Evening News*, August 16, 1878).

“He held the plates and turned them over with his hands, so that they could be plainly visible” (*Chicago Times*, October 17, 1881).

Q: Did the angel turn all the leaves before you as you looked on it?

A: “No, not all, only that part of the book which was not sealed, and what there was sealed appeared as solid to my view as wood” (*Journal of Edward Stevenson*, December 22, 1877).

Q: Can you describe the plates?

A: “They appeared to be of gold, about six by nine inches in size, about as thick as parchment, a great many in number and bound together like the leaves of a book by massive rings passing through the back edges. The engraving upon them was very plain and of very curious appearance” (*Kansas City Daily Journal*, June 5, 1881).

Q: Is it possible that you imagined this experience?

A: “Our testimony is true. And if these things are not true, then there is no truth; and if there is no truth, there is no God; and if there is no God, there is no existence. But I know there is a God, for I have heard His voice and witnessed the manifestation of his power” (Letter of James H. Hart to *Deseret News*, August 23, 1883, Seneca, Missouri, cited in *Deseret Evening News*, September 4, 1883).

Q: Do you remember the peculiar sensation experienced upon that occasion?

A: “Yes, I remember it very distinctly. And I never think of it, from that day to this, but what that spirit is present with me” (*Ibid.*).

More than one person appealed privately to the last-surviving witness to disclose deceit if it existed. James H. Moyle was later Assistant Secretary of Treasury in two U.S. administrations. Graduating with legal training at the University of Michigan in 1885, he determined to cross-examine the remaining Book of Mormon witness before returning to Utah. Young Moyle journeyed to Richmond, secured an appointment with David Whitmer, and spent some time recounting the persecutions and sacrifices of his family because of belief in Mormonism. He further contrasted his own situation with Whitmer’s. He was just beginning his own life’s career, and Whitmer was not far from death: “And so I begged of him not to let me go through life believing in a vital falsehood.” The thoughtful law student requested not confirmation, but disclosure: “Was there any possibility that he might have been deceived in any particular?” All of his life Moyle remembered the “unequivocal” affirmation of the testimony: “There was no question about its truthfulness” (James H. Moyle, “A Visit to David Whitmer,” *Instructor* 80 [1945]: 401).

George Q. Cannon spoke of the Prophet’s integrity, as manifested throughout his life of tribulation and persecution:

Think of what he passed through! Think of his afflictions, and think of his dauntless character! Did any one ever see him falter? Did any one ever see him flinch? Did any one ever see any lack in him of the power necessary to enable him to stand with dignity in the midst of his enemies, or lacking in dignity in the performance of his duties as a servant of the living God? God gave him peculiar power in this respect. He was filled with integrity to God; with such integrity as was not known among men. He was like an angel of God among them. Notwithstanding all that he had to endure, and the peculiar circumstances in which he was so often placed, and the great responsibility that weighed constantly upon him, he never faltered; the feeling of fear or trembling never crossed him—at least he never exhibited it in his feelings or actions. God sustained him to the very last, and was with him, and bore him off triumphant even in his death (*JD*, 23:36).

Josiah Smith described a personal encounter with Joseph:

When he grasped my hand in that cordial way (known to those who have met him in the honest simplicity of truth), I felt as one of old in the presence of the Lord, my strength seemed to be gone, so that it required an effort on my part to stand on my feet; but in all this there was no fear, but the serenity and peace of heaven pervaded my soul, and the still small voice of the spirit whispered its living testimony in the depths of my soul,

where it has ever remained, that he was a Man of God (*Deseret News*, 8:117).

Elder Stephen L. Richards said:

My grandfather [Willard Richards] was a close friend and companion of this man. He knew him as intimately as one man may know another. He had abundant opportunity to detect any flaws in his character and discover any deceit in his work. He found none, and he has left his testimony to his family and to all the world that this man was true, that he was divinely commissioned for the work he had to do, and that he gave his life to the fulfillment of his mission (*CR*, October 1951, 117).

Such sentiments were widespread and of lasting significance among the Prophet's acquaintances. As James B. Bracken recalled Joseph's conduct during a trying experience in Missouri, he observed, "I never saw a nobler looking or acting man than Joseph Smith appeared on that occasion" (*Juvenile Instructor*, 27:203). Said Daniel D. McArthur, "To me he seemed to possess more power and force of character than any ordinary man. I would look upon him when he was with hundreds of other men, then, he would appear greater than ever" (*Ibid.*, 128-29).

Sometimes first impressions, even among those who ought to have considered him their enemy, were telling. While a prisoner in Missouri, Joseph Smith was delivered into the custody of his bitter enemy, General Moses Wilson. Later General Wilson said of him, "He was a very remarkable man. I carried him into my house, a prisoner in chains, and in less than two hours my wife loved him better than she did me." Some years later, when the Wilsons had moved to Texas, the General was engaged in raising a mob against some Mormon elders in that area. Upon hearing of these plans, Mrs. Wilson, although an aged lady, mounted her horse and rode thirty miles to warn the elders. No doubt her esteem for the Prophet largely motivated her in this action (*JD*, 17:92).

Eliza R. Snow wrote of Joseph: "Though his expansive mind grasped the great plan of salvation and solved the mystic problem of man's destiny—though he had in his possession keys that unlocked the past and the future with its succession of eternities, in his devotions he was humble as a little child" ("Sketch of My Life," 136).

John Henry Evans wrote:

If the Prophet was a pretender, then he must also have been a good actor. For it would require . . . no small amount of skill in the dramatic art to keep such men as Brigham Young, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, the two Pratts, Wilford Woodruff, Heber C. Kimball, Dr. Willard Richards, Orson Spencer, and hosts of others equally intelligent and alert, from becoming disillusioned with respect to the New Movement. That they did not, was a tribute either to the leader's art in covering up his deception or to his sincerity (*Joseph Smith, an American Prophet*, 323).

“I never saw another man like Joseph,” said John W. Hess, as he spoke of the “kindness and simplicity” of his nature. “There was something heavenly and angelic in his looks that I never witnessed in the countenance of any other person.” The Prophet stayed for thirteen days at the Hess home, after which John, then a lad of fourteen, related that he “became very much attached to him, and learned to love him more dearly than any other person” he ever met, his father and mother not excepted (*Juvenile Instructor*, 27:302).

James W. Woods, the Prophet’s last attorney, was with him on the morning of June 27, 1844. Never a Latter-day Saint, he observed: “I do not think that Joe Smith was at heart a bad or wicked man, and you could see from his face that he was not naturally an unkind one” (*Iowa Democrat*, May 13, 1885).

Hyrum L. Andrus, in his book, *Joseph Smith, the Man and the Seer*, concluded his chapter on Joseph’s character:

Men with such a rare blend of admirable qualities as Joseph Smith possessed seldom appear on the scene of history. His physical appearance was commanding and inviting to look upon. His personality was charming and magnetic. While he possessed the strength of a giant, he had the agility of a chipmunk. Yet he was gentle and easy to approach, even by those in lowly stations. His keen penetrating eye was ever alert and discerning; and when truth was revealed, his courage and integrity in following its course knew no bounds. Such traits of character . . . caused Joseph Smith to stand out as a man among men and contributed to his stature as a Latter-day prophet of God (24-25).

### **The Book of Mormon**

In the spring of 1829 Joseph Smith was in his twenty-fourth year. He was an unlettered young man with little formal education. He was reared in the backwoods of New York and never looked inside a high school or a college. His wife Emma wrote of him: “Joseph Smith could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon” (Joseph Smith, III, “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” *Saints’ Advocate* 26:289-90). Between April and July of that year, Joseph dictated the entire contents of the Book of Mormon without any resource except an old hat, his seerstone, and “the gift and power of God” (D&C 135:3). Oliver Cowdery functioned as scribe.<sup>1</sup>

In the past twenty or so years, the Book of Mormon has successfully withstood repeated and aggressive multidisciplinary academic scrutiny.<sup>2</sup> It is simply impossible that Joseph Smith, or any man in 1829, however scholarly his background, could have produced and written the book. I maintain, with comfortable assurance, that anyone today who does not believe that the Book of Mormon is an authentic ancient document does not have sufficient knowledge of its content.

In a recent general conference, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland spoke powerfully of his own personal testimony of the Book of Mormon. He spoke of Joseph and his brother Hyrum Smith in Carthage Jail. They both knew their martyrdom was imminent. Both bore powerful testimony of the Book of Mormon to each other and to the guards. Elder Holland said:

As one of a thousand elements of my own testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon, I submit this as yet one more evidence of its truthfulness. In this their greatest—and last—hour of need, I ask you: would these men blaspheme before God by continuing to fix their lives, their honor, and their own search for eternal salvation on a book (and by implication a church and a ministry) they had fictitiously created out of whole cloth? . . . Tell me whether in this hour of death these two men would enter the presence of their Eternal Judge quoting from and finding solace in a book which, if not the very word of God, would brand them as imposters and charlatans until the end of time? *They would not do that!* They were willing to die rather than deny the divine origin and the eternal truthfulness of the Book of Mormon (“Safety for the Soul,” *Ensign*, November 2009, 89, italics in the original).

Elder Holland then spoke of the almost endless array of fruitless attacks, scholarly and otherwise, made on the Book of Mormon in the past 179 years. He emphasized the importance of each member’s striving for his or her own personal testimony of the book:

I testify that one cannot come to full faith in this latter-day work—and thereby find the fullest measure of peace and comfort in these, our times—until he or she embraces the divinity of the Book of Mormon and the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it testifies. If *anyone* is foolish enough or misled enough to reject 531 pages of a heretofore unknown text teeming with literary and Semitic complexity without honestly attempting to account for the origin of those pages—especially without accounting for their powerful witness of Jesus Christ and the profound spiritual impact that witness has had on what is now tens of millions of readers—if that is the case, then such a person, elect or otherwise, has been deceived, and if he or she leaves this Church, it must be done by crawling over or under or around the Book of Mormon to make that exit (*Ibid.*, 89-90, italics in original).

Elder Holland then concluded his talk with a powerful and poignant testimony:

I ask that my testimony of the Book of Mormon, and all that it implies, given today under my own oath and office, be recorded by men on earth and angels in heaven. I hope I have a few years left in my “last days,” but whether I do or do not, I want it absolutely clear when I stand

before the judgment bar of God that I declared to the world, in the most straightforward language I could summon, that the Book of Mormon is true, that it came forth the way Joseph said it came forth and was given to bring happiness and hope to the faithful in the travail of the latter days (*Ibid.*, 90).

### **By His Fruits Ye Shall Know Him**

The Lord gave the key for recognizing true prophets. He said: “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:15-20). Let us look briefly at a few church statistics that illustrate the fruits of Joseph’s brief ministry.

Following the Church’s organization in a small log cabin in upstate New York in 1830, it took 117 years—until 1947—for the Church to grow from its initial six members to one million. The two-million-member mark was reached just 16 years later, in 1963, and the three-million mark in eight years more. This accelerating growth pattern has continued with about a million new members now being added every three years or so. Church membership as of 2007 was just over thirteen million.

At the time of this writing, there are over 50,000 full-time missionaries serving in 348 missions throughout the world. There are nearly 28,000 congregations and 124 temples located throughout the world, and church materials are available in 157 languages.

The Church sponsors four universities or colleges, and there are nearly 340,000 college-age students enrolled in institutes of religion.

### **The Testimonies of Noble Men Today**

During this final dispensation, we in the Church have been led by a group of men whom we refer to as “general authorities.” These are apostles (members of the quorum of Twelve and the quorum of the First Presidency) and members of the quorums of Seventy. Many of us have had the opportunity to know them personally and observe them closely. They are the cream of our culture. They are the finest, most noble, most dignified, most trustworthy people we know. Their integrity and honesty is unquestioned. We love them and are willing to follow them unquestioningly. To a man, they not only believe Joseph Smith told the truth about himself, but they have dedicated their lives to all Joseph taught.

I must of course, on my own, earn a testimony of the prophet Joseph independent of any other. But it is also true that the testimonies of these brethren have tangibly impacted my testimony. Though it is probably inappropriate to single one of them out, I can say with poignant feeling, “If Elder Neal A. Maxwell believed Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, then so do I.”

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A, *The Process of Translating the Book of Mormon*.

<sup>2</sup> For examples, see *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (FARMS).

## The Great Apostasy—Did it really happen?

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Some of those critical of the LDS Church have suggested that the great apostasy did not really happen. They opine that it is absurd to suppose that the Lord would come to the earth and bring his Church, only to have it fall away. In Matthew 28:19-20, the Lord promised to be with his Church “always, even unto the end of the world.” In Ephesians 3:21 we read, “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.” We also have the Papacy which can be traced right back to Peter. Christ said to Peter, “thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Paul said in Hebrews 12:28, “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace.” In Hebrews 13:5, the Lord said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

For additional notes on the great apostasy, see the “Medieval Church” in *Evangelicals and the Restored Gospel* in volume 4, chapter 1 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. See also *The Great Apostasy—Did It Really Occur?* in volume 4, chapter 5 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

In Matthew 28:19-20, the Lord was promising to be with his apostles (see also verse 16) and not the Church. Regarding Matthew 16:18, we teach that the Savior was referring to the process by which Peter received his testimony of the Christ—revelation. He said in effect, “It is on the rock of revelation that I will build my Church.” Obviously the only “kingdom which cannot be moved” (Hebrews 12:28) is the kingdom of heaven and not the earthly kingdom of God as the following scriptures will demonstrate. In Hebrews 13:5, the Lord was promising to be with all those that obey him. An identical promise was given to the prophet Joshua (see Joshua 1:5).

In 1909 James E. Talmage wrote *The Great Apostasy*, in which he gathered Old and New Testament passages that are useful in demonstrating clearly that a great apostasy was predicted by Jesus Christ, Paul, and other apostles and prophets. These include:

1. The prophet Amos foresaw the apostasy when he said, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11-12).

2. Isaiah foresaw that the Church of Jesus Christ would break the everlasting covenant established by Christ: “The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant” (Isaiah 24:5; see also Hebrews 13:20). The law of Moses was never referred to as “the everlasting covenant,” so it had to be the Church of Jesus Christ.

3. The prophet Micah saw the day when “the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them” (Micah 3:6). In these days the heads of the churches will, “judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us?” (Micah 3:11). Micah then reassures us that “In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it” (Micah 4:1).

4. Jesus preached to the Jews, “Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matthew 21:43).

5. Jesus taught his disciples, “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:4-13). Also he taught them, “Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not” (Matthew 24:23-26).

6. As the Apostle Paul said goodbye for the last time to some of the members of the church he had grown to love so deeply on his missionary journeys, he gave them this chilling warning of things to befall the growing body of disciples: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). Peter taught that a great restoration—the “times of restitution of all things”—would not occur until after a great apostasy: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of

restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19-21).

7. In several other verses in the New Testament, the apostasy is clearly taught. The erosive forces of apostasy invaded the church even during the ministry of the apostles. For example, apostasy was rampant among the Galatian saints during Paul’s ministry. Mainly the Galatians were trying to harmonize their newly found faith with the law of Moses, so as to preserve the laws and ordinances of both the old and the new covenants. One of the main issues was the practice of circumcision. They were trying to practice Christianity, yet hold on to the traditions of the Law of Moses. An apt analogy: It was as if members of the Church today were trying to harmonize the truths of the restored gospel with the beliefs and practices of the sectarian world. Paul wrote to them: “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:6-8).

8. Paul foresaw that the second coming of the Lord would not occur until a great apostasy had occurred in 2 Thessalonians 2:3: “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” Paul then continues: “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [restrains or hinders the forces of apostasy] will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8). In other words, Paul says the spirit of iniquity and apostasy (the “mystery of iniquity”) is already active, though restrained or hindered for a time—perhaps by the presence of the apostles. Later on, this restraint will be removed—the apostles will be killed—and the evil one will be in power.

9. Paul also warned Timothy: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

Also, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses,

and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:1-7).

And, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me” (2 Timothy 1:13-15).

And finally, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” An analysis of the Greek of this verse indicates that the phrase “having itching ears” modifies “they”—the church members—not teachers. That is, the Christian believers have fickle ears for new teachers that please them” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

10. “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:3-4). Paul warns not merely of erroneous teachings, but of scheming leaders. Those “certain men” were not foreordained in the premortal world to lead people from the truth. Rather, during their mortal lives they were ungodly men who had been condemned for false teachings.

11. The apostle Peter prophesied in language so plain that none may fail to comprehend, concerning the heresies that would be preached as doctrine in the period of the apostasy; and he reminds the people that there were false teachers in olden times, even as there would be in times then future: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (2 Peter 2:1-3).

12. The prophet Nephi foresaw: “For it shall come to pass in that day that the churches which are built up, and not unto the Lord, when the one shall say unto the other: Behold, I, I am the Lord’s; and the others shall say: I, I am the Lord’s; and thus shall every one say that hath built up churches, and not unto the Lord—And they shall contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another, and they shall teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance” (2 Nephi 28:3-4).

13. The prophet Moroni prophesied: “Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be churches built up that shall say: Come unto me, and for your money you shall

be forgiven of your sins. O ye wicked and perverse and stiffnecked people, why have ye built up churches unto yourselves to get gain? Why have ye transfigured the holy word of God, that ye might bring damnation upon your souls? Behold, look ye unto the revelations of God; for behold, the time cometh at that day when all these things must be fulfilled. Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you” (Mormon 8:32-34).

Brother Talmage also chronicled the persecution of early Christians, especially the martyrdom of the apostles, that hastened the great apostasy and described the primitive Church as changing internally in several respects. He argued that the simple principles of the gospel were mixed with the pagan philosophical systems of the day such as asceticism (i.e., hatred of the body, of sexuality, of the physical world), Gnosticism (belief that salvation came through knowledge), and Greek Christianity (God does not have a body, man cannot become divine). The rituals were changed and added to in unauthorized ways (simple early Christian rites were replaced by complex pagan-influenced ceremonies). Baptism by immersion was lost. The baptism of infants was introduced. Sacrament or communion was changed. And the church organization was altered (the apostles and prophets, the necessary foundation of the church of Christ, were martyred, leaving a void that could not be filled by bishops; thus the medieval church showed little similarity to the organization or practices of the New Testament church).

LDS teachings on the early Christian apostasy have received additional support in the twentieth century as some scholars have argued that the primitive Church began as a centralized Judaic organization, was faced with the challenge of multiple other philosophies including Greek Christianity and Oriental ascetic Christianity, and Gnostic Christianity, and it became like its enemy in order to compete.

The Protestant churches have a difficult case to make since they claim that the Church of Rome fell into apostasy. Christ taught that a good fruit cannot grow on a corrupt tree (Matthew 7:18). Roger Williams, considered by many to be the founder of the Baptist Church wrote that there was “no regularly constituted church of Christ on earth, nor any person authorized to administer any church ordinance, nor can there be until new apostles are sent by the great head of the Church, for whose coming I am seeking” (*Picturesque America*, 503).

The secular Christian world today has deteriorated to a myriad of fragmented churches wherein it is difficult to determine what is orthodox and what is heretical. For instance, Augustine’s influential doctrine of original sin, with its concomitant ritual, infant baptism, was derived from his Gnostic background and was, in reality, heretical. Another early Christian doctrine that did not survive in Western Christianity was deification, or the idea that one’s salvation was earned by progressing to become like God—in fact becoming a god.

The concept of a historical apostasy from early Christianity can present a barrier between Latter-day Saints and others concerned with interfaith relationships. But Latter-day Saints do not view these events in a judgmental way. Brigham Young emphasized that good men before the restoration had “the spirit of revelation” and stated that John Wesley was as good a man “as ever walked on this earth” (*JD*, 7:5; 6:170; 11:126). President Young held that all churches and religions have “more or less truth” (*JD*, 7:283), and he admonished the saints to seek and accept truths wherever they might be found. In conference talks, General Authorities, including President Spencer W. Kimball and President Thomas S. Monson, have quoted or praised such luminaries as Billy Graham and Mother Teresa. For additional notes on how we must regard other Christian churches and non-Christian churches, see chapter , *What of the World’s Many Churches, Christian and Non-Christian? Are We Really the Only True Church?*

## The Necessity of Baptism

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The fourth article of faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints declares that “baptism by immersion for the remission of sins” is one of the “first principles and ordinances of the Gospel.” Latter-day Saints believe, that baptism is an essential initiatory ordinance for all persons who are joining the Church, as it admits them to Christ’s church on earth (John 3:3-5). It is an essential primary step in the process whereby members may receive ongoing remission of their sins (justification), spiritual gifts (sanctification), and eventual admission to the Celestial Kingdom and eternal life (see Mark 16:15-16; 2). For a more complete discussion of the purposes of the ordinance of baptism, see *Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 18.

Baptism marks an individual’s entering into a solemn covenant agreement with the Lord. The individual promises to become a member of the earthly Kingdom of God, to take upon themselves the name of Christ, to stand as a witness for Christ, to keep his commandments, and to bear one another’s burdens—manifesting a determination to serve him to the end. The Lord, as his part of the covenant, promises to pour out his Spirit upon them, redeem them from their sins, raise them in the first resurrection, and give them eternal life.

The rich symbolism of the ordinance invites candidates and observers to reflect on its meanings. Burial in the water and arising out of the water symbolize the candidate’s faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as well as the future resurrection of all people. It also represents the candidate’s new birth to a life in Christ, being born of God, thus born again of the water and of the spirit (Romans 6:3-6).

**Is baptism really necessary?** The New Testament teaches the necessity of baptism. Jesus taught that baptism is necessary for salvation. He told Nicodemus, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:1-5). The Savior required baptism of those who professed to become his disciples (John 4:1-2). His farewell commission to his apostles was that they should go to all nations, teaching and baptizing (Matthew 28:19), and he declared, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). Paul wrote, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). Paul, after his miraculous vision on the road to Damascus, was taught the gospel by Ananias who told him to “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16). To the penitent multitude on the day of Pentecost, Peter proclaimed, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).

From the early days of the restored Church, missionaries have been sent to declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism. This is the central teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**I've already been baptized. Do I really have to be baptized again?** The authority to baptize was lost from the earth at the time of the great apostasy following the death of the apostles. It was restored by John the Baptist to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on May 15, 1829 (JS-H 1:68-72).

Latter-day Saints do not accept the baptismal practices of those Christian churches that arose in the centuries after the death of the apostles, including infant baptism, baptism by means other than immersion, and the idea that baptism is not necessary for salvation.

Consequently, persons coming into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at age eight or older are required to submit to baptism, even though they may have been previously baptized in other churches (D&C 22).

**Does the method of baptism really matter?** The form of the ordinance is prescribed in latter-day revelation, which makes clear that the baptism must be performed by a person who has priesthood authority and that it requires completely immersing the penitent candidate below the water and then bringing the person out of the water (3 Nephi 11:22-26; D&C 20:72-74).

In the early Church, at the time of Christ and for the several years after his death and resurrection, baptism was administered on profession of faith and evidence of repentance, and was performed by immersion at the hands of one invested with the requisite authority of priesthood.

The writings of early Christian historians provides us with ample proof that in the first century after the death of Christ, baptism was administered solely by immersion. Tertullian thus refers to the immersion ceremony common in his day: "There is no difference whether one is washed in a sea or in a pool, in a river or in a fountain, in a lake or in a channel; nor is there any difference between those whom John dipped in Jordan, and those whom Peter dipped in the Tiber. . . . We are immersed in the water" (James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 160).

Justin Martyr describes the ceremony as practiced by himself. First describing the preparatory examination of the candidate, he proceeds: "After that they are led by us to where there is water, and are born again in that kind of new birth by which we ourselves were born again. For in the name of God, the Father and the Lord of all, and of Jesus Christ, our Savior, and of the Holy Spirit, the immersion in water is performed; because the Christ hath also said, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven'" (*Ibid.*, 437).

Instances of baptism in the New Testament suggest that baptism by immersion was the method used in that day (Matthew 3:13-17; Acts 8:36-39; Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12).

Baptism is followed by the laying-on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

**Baptism for the dead.** A belief that baptism is necessary for the salvation of all persons who reach the age of accountability should not condemn persons who have died without the opportunity to hear the true gospel of Jesus Christ and who have not been baptized by proper priesthood authority. Latter-day Saints believe that proxy baptism for the dead can, and should be, performed vicariously (1 Corinthians 15:29), and that a baptism so performed becomes effective if the deceased beneficiary accepts the gospel while in the spirit world awaiting their resurrection (see 1 Peter 3:18-20; 1 Peter 4:6). This vicarious work for the benefit of previous generations, binding the hearts of the children to their fathers (Malachi 4:5-6), is one of the sacred ordinances performed in Latter-day Saint temples.

## The Premortal Existence of Man

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A premortal existence? There is no evidence of a premortal existence in the Bible. Christ existed before coming to earth, but man did not.

For a more complete discussion of the premortal existence of man, please see “The Premortal World” in volume 1, chapter 4 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

Several biblical references refer to Christ’s premortal existence (Revelation 13:8; 19:13-16; John 1:1, 3; 8:56-58; 17:5; 1 Peter 1:19-20; D&C 93:6-9), but what about the pre-existence of all mankind? Consider the following scriptural references:

1. Jeremiah 1:5 The Lord said to the prophet Jeremiah: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” Note particularly the words knew, sanctified, and ordained. These are the steps in the process of foreordination and logically apply not just to Jeremiah, but to all of the Lord’s prophets. The Lord knew Jeremiah prior to his birth and was familiar with his spiritual attitudes and abilities. Because of Jeremiah’s obedience and diligence in the premortal world, he was sanctified, that is he grew in spiritual stature as he received gifts of the Spirit. He was then ordained, or foreordained a prophet to ancient Judah even before his birth.

2. God the Father is referred to in the Old Testament as “the God of the spirits of all flesh” (Numbers 27:16). We are told that when we die the body returns to the earth and “the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

3. Job 38:4, 7 In the book of Job, the Lord Jehovah implies that Job was alive when he (Jehovah) created the earth: “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. . . . When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” The Lord also refers to a glorious premortal day when “all the sons of God shouted for joy.” Why would the Lord ask Job where he was during this event, if Job had not also had a prior existence? If all the sons of God shouted for joy, did they not also have a premortal existence?

4. The New Testament references include Paul’s reference to the “fathers of our flesh” and “the Father of spirits [God]” (Hebrews 12:9). Paul further indicates that he and other followers were chosen by Christ “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4).

5. Christ himself clearly had a premortal existence. We are taught by John that Jesus “was in the beginning with God” and later “was made flesh” (John 1:2, 14). Christ suggested to his disciples that he would “ascend up where he was before” (John 6:62). Jesus helped create this earth (see John 1:1-3), and he speaks of his own life before this life, when he tells his apostles that he lived before Abraham (see John 8:58) and that he came forth from the Father and would leave the world to go again to the Father

(see John 16:28). In his last prayer in Gethsemane, Christ asks God to glorify him “with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5). In perhaps the most direct statement of all, John says, in the New Testament, “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven” (John 3:13).

6. Colossians 1:15 “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” See also Hebrews 1:6 and Romans 8:29. These verses teach that Christ was the “firstborn” of every creature and that he is our elder brother. Does this refer to the birth of Christ’s body of flesh and bones? Certainly not. There were hundreds of millions who were born upon our earth before the body of Jesus was born. How then is he our elder brother? We must go back to the previous birth, to the point when he was begotten of the Father with a body of spirit.

7. John 9:2 “And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” The question itself, along with Jesus’s answer, implies a premortal life for the blind man. The disciples assumed the man’s blindness was due to sin. Since he was born blind, when might the man or his parents have committed the sin? The only conceivable time is in some premortal state. Christ said nothing to correct any mistaken presupposition about a premortal existence, but he did correct the notion that the blindness was due to transgression. He said, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:3).

8. See also examples of Paul’s teachings on God’s foreknowledge and foreordination of men and nations (Acts 17:26; Romans 9:4-11); and Paul’s statements that man is the “offspring of God” (Acts 17:29; Romans 8:16). In addition, Paul, Jude, and John have described the War in Heaven where angels “kept not their first estate” (Jude 1:6) and where Michael and his angels fought against Lucifer (Revelation 12:7; see also Isaiah 14:13; Luke 10:18).

There is also abundant reference in the documents of antiquity to the concept of a premortal existence. The sources of these documents include the ancient Greek writers (Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Seneca), Jewish theologians, apocryphal and other writings (from Qumran, Nag Hammadi, and the Mandaeans), and early Christian writers (Brent L. Top, *The Life Before*, 1-36).

In A. 543, the Roman emperor, Justinian, coerced the pope to convene a council to reject the teachings of Origen of Alexandria, a third century Christian theologian. Origen had been particularly influential and prolific in writing of man’s premortal existence and immortality. In an edict known as the Anathemas Against Origen, the teachings of Origen were declared heresy in the Church. From this date on, the doctrine of man’s premortal state and relationship to God was viewed as heretical and unfounded in scripture of early Christian religious thought. Today conventional Christianity vehemently rejects the notion of a premortal existence and ignores the fact that the doctrine was widely taught prior to that Council of AD 543.

Today there are several modern-day Christian scholars who view this council and its repudiation of Origen's teachings with a degree of regret and skepticism (*Ibid.*, 18-19).

Joseph Fielding McConkie concluded his review of apocryphal writings having to do with a premortal existence as follows: "The doctrines of premortal existence, heavenly councils, and foreordinations were all a part of the theology of the ancient saints and as such are a necessary part of the promised restoration of all things. Not found in the theology of the rest of the so-called Bible-believing world, these doctrines stand as an evidence that Joseph Smith was a prophet and that ours is an ancient church restored. . . . These doctrines, of such importance to the ancient saints, have been restored once again to a place of prominence among the saints of the latter days." (*Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*, 194-95.)

The doctrine of man's premortal existence was one of the "plain and precious" doctrines that were lost from the Bible (1 Nephi 13:28-29). In spite of this loss, as pointed out above, there are still several biblical glimpses which remain. Coupled with modern revelation (Alma 13:3; Moses 3:5; 4:1-4; 6:36; Abraham 3:22-23; D&C 29:36-37; 38:1; 49:17; 93:29, 33; 138:55-56), they provide strong evidence of the belief in the doctrine among peoples of the Bible.

## Is Mormonism a Cult? What is a Cult Anyway?

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The nasty name sometimes flung at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by its detractors is “cult.” While there are no particular objective criteria separating cults from religions, generally the term *cult* is used for religions that are thought to be unorthodox or extremist. The word also seems to suggest a religion heavy in unusual rites or ceremonies. Perhaps the term is meant to call up images of Druids burning captives alive in wicker baskets, of painted priests flinging virgins into volcanoes, or of satanic rituals performed in the dark of the moon. When critics call the LDS church a “cult,” the implied logic seems to be that there are objective criteria for distinguishing “cults” from “religions,” and that since Mormonism is a “cult” and Christianity is a “religion,” Mormons can’t be Christians. There actually are no such criteria.

Those who use the term cult for the LDS Church obviously have negative meanings in mind. They want to communicate their negative opinions. They mean to imply something like: It is smaller than mine or newer than mine, and I don’t like it. It is unorthodox and spurious (false, counterfeit).

To both the pagans and the Jews, earliest Christianity was a “cult,” but this says nothing objective about Christianity except that it was disliked by those who so described it. There is no objective definition for the word cult in standard English that does what the anti-Mormons want it to do (from Stephen E. Robinson’s, *Are Mormons Christians?*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991).

I suppose our best approach to this name calling is simply to ignore it. Sticks and stones will break my bones, but . . .

## Of Course Marriage is Forever!

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The critic may say, "I understand it is the teaching of the Mormon Church that to enter the highest degree of the first heaven or celestial kingdom, you must be married in a Mormon temple. And you think marriage lasts forever! How do you account for the fact that Christ was not married and that undoubtedly many of the other apostles were not married?"

The Bible teaches that marriage is ordained of God. Man was told to "multiply and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28). The Creator said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). Genesis 2:24 says, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Christ taught the Pharisees, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6). Paul taught, "Neither is man without the woman, neither woman without the man in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11).

We simply don't know whether or not Jesus or all of his apostles were married during Jesus's mortal sojourn.

Also, we may be asked, "How do you account for Matthew 19:12?" This verse says: "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

Some added background and additional information is needed to understand fully what is meant by this teaching about eunuchs. In the true Church and among normal people, there is no place for the practice of celibacy. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: "Apparently those who made themselves eunuchs were men who in false pagan worship had deliberately mutilated themselves in the apostate notion that such would further their salvation. It is clear that such was not a true gospel requirement of any sort. There is no such thing in the gospel as willful emasculation; such a notion violates every true principle of procreation and celestial marriage" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 223).

The Jehovah's Witnesses and others will always claim that death terminates the marriage bond and marriage cannot last forever. They may cite Romans 7:2: "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband" and Matthew 22:30: "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."

Romans 7:2 simply describes the tenet in the law of Moses that applied to civil marriage. Let us consider carefully the discussion between Jesus and his Sadducean detractors in Matthew 22:23-30. Just previously Jesus had clearly taught the principle

of eternal marriage to the Pharisees: “The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (Matthew 19:4-9).

The Lord explained to the Pharisees that the Israelites had not been able to live the higher law of eternal marriage, therefore “because of the hardness of your hearts” they were given the lesser law or the law of Moses which included a provision for divorces for certain few transgressions including that of fornication.

We know that marriage is an eternal principle. Paul wrote: “Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11). Ecclesiastes 3:14 declares: “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever.”

Now, back to Matthew 22:23-30:

The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven (Matthew 22:23-30).

In this interchange, Jesus was being confronted by the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection and were challenging the Savior on that point. It is apparent from the context of these verses that the Jewish nation in general believed that marriage was eternal. That fact is assumed by the Sadducees who were present. It is apparent from the text that the Sadducees knew that marriage after death was a commonly held belief among the Jews. Without doubt, Jesus, the apostles, the seventies, and the disciples generally had discussed this doctrine. The Sadducees, in order to challenge the concept of resurrection, concocted a preposterous scenario and

presented it as a question to Jesus. Not wanting to cast pearls before swine, Jesus did not answer as if he had been asked a sincere question by one who was genuinely seeking the truth. He also did not deny the prevailing belief in marriage after the resurrection. Rather, he told them that for people like them, there would be no marriage in the life to come.

The Lord said very much the same thing to Joseph Smith in this dispensation:

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. Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory. For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever (D&C 132:15-17).

Thus, in the resurrection, the unmarried remain everlastingly as angels or servants, but the married gain exaltation and godhood. This latter group consists of those who enter into that “order of the priesthood” named “the new and everlasting covenant of marriage,” and who then keep the terms and conditions of that eternal covenant (D&C 131:1-4)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 volumes, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-1973, 1: 607).

## Doctrine of Original Sin and Infant Baptism

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Fundamental to this discussion are the concepts of the edenic or pre-fall conditions of Adam and Eve and the consequences of the transgression of Adam and Eve. I will review these concepts here. For a more complete discussion of the fall of Adam and Eve, please see *Understanding the Eden Experience—The Fall*, volume 2, chapter 1 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

### Four Edenic (Pre-Fall) Characteristics of Adam and Eve

Adam and Eve were both premortal spirit children of our Father in heaven. They are therefore the brother and sister of us all. In the garden their circumstances were unique. Let us examine four conditions that characterized them in that setting:

1. They were immortal and not subject to pain, disease, or death. The word *immortal* means that Adam and Eve would live indefinitely in their edenic condition. Their bodies were not identical to the bodies of immortal *resurrected* beings. In speaking of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17), implying that in the interim, until such an eating should occur, Adam and Eve would enjoy a state of immortality. They would not die.

2. They lived in the presence of God the Father. They walked and talked with him. The prophet Joseph Smith spoke of those glorious days when “God conversed with him [Adam] face to face. In his presence, he was permitted to stand, and from his own mouth he was permitted to receive instruction. He heard his [God’s] voice, walked before him, and gazed upon his glory, while intelligence burst upon his understanding” (*Lectures on Faith*, 13).

3. They were in a state of *innocence*. We are often tempted to interpret scriptural words or phrases intuitively, based on our secular experience with the word. Sometimes the scriptural meaning of a word or phrase is quite different from its secular meaning. When we say Adam and Eve lived in a state of *innocence*, what does that mean? Does it mean they were not guilty of sin?

There is a richer meaning implied. *Innocence*, in Adam and Eve’s situation, means they had an incomplete knowledge of good and evil (see 2 Nephi 2:22-23). This was an obstacle to their individual spiritual development and progression. Without a complete knowledge of good and evil, they could not fully exercise their agency. They could not grow spiritually. They could not progress toward godhood.

Aside from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, there were no challenges, no temptations, and no obstacles in that quasi-heavenly setting. Accordingly, there could be no progression. They were unable to experience a fulness of joy because they knew

no sorrow. They were temporarily stuck in a world of spiritual and emotional sterility (see also 2 Nephi 2:12).

4. They could not procreate. Though they were married by divine authority while still in the Garden, they were unable to bear children (2 Nephi 2:23). Thus, they could experience no “joy and rejoicing” in a posterity. They were unable to obey the command to multiply and replenish the earth which was the foremost design and object of their married life. A continuation of this edenic condition would literally defeat the plan of salvation for all those in the premortal state awaiting a mortal experience.

In spite of their innocence, it does seem they were aware of the reason they had been placed on earth. They knew they were to become parents of all mankind—to populate the earth with the family of man—but they were temporarily bereft of a way to accomplish that.

### **Dual Nature of the Fall**

Fundamental to a full appreciation of the “fall of man” is an understanding of its two-fold nature. There are two aspects of the fall, each quite distinct.

**The fall of Adam and Eve.** Adam and Eve transgressed, and their transgression resulted in a reversal of all four of the edenic, pre-fall conditions that characterized them in the garden (see above). Consequently:

1. They were no longer immortal. When Adam and Eve partook of the fruit, the seeds of death were planted in their veins. They became subject to physical death, pain, disease, and all the ailments of mortal life.

2. They were cast out from God’s presence. This separation from God is called spiritual death. They did not lose all communication with him. That loss would have thwarted the plan of salvation. Yet, they were cast out from his physical presence. Other forms of communication were left open.

This spiritual death, or separation from God due to Adam’s transgression, is referred to in scripture as the “first death” (2 Nephi 9:15; Alma 11:45; Helaman 14:16).

3. Adam and Eve were blessed to “[become] as Gods, [fully] knowing good from evil” (Alma 12:31).

4. Adam and Eve’s mortal bodies could now procreate and fulfill the divine command to multiply and replenish the earth (2 Nephi 2:25; Moses 6:48; Moses 5:11). As offspring of the mortal Adam and Eve, we have inherited all four of these mortal characteristics. Two are spiritually beneficial, and two are not. Knowledge of good and evil and the ability to procreate are two spiritually productive characteristics. Physical and spiritual death are two adverse consequences of the fall. We will learn, however, that these latter two are necessary and only temporary. Man is not subjected to them in any kind of punitive spirit. They are due to Adam’s transgression. The second Article of Faith reads, “We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression.” We may be temporarily inconvenienced because of Adam’s

transgression, but we will not be punished permanently. Because of the Savior's atonement, all men will eventually be resurrected, and no man will suffer a permanent spiritual death because of Adam's sin.

**The fall of you and me.** The second aspect of the fall's dual nature is the fall of you and me as individuals. Each man falls on his own when he commits sin. This is quite a separate phenomenon from the fall of Adam. No one lives without sin (Romans 3:23). Our sin results in our spiritual death. This spiritual death is known as the second death (Helaman 14:18-19; D&C 76:37). The consequence of this spiritual death is different than the spiritual death we experience because of Adam's transgression. Adam's transgression brought upon us only a temporary separation from God. The spiritual death wrought by our own sins is permanent, at least until it is overcome. This latter spiritual death, the second death, continues to be permanent if the law of justice cannot be satisfied.

### **Accountability**

Another LDS concept foundational to this discussion is that of accountability. In LDS doctrine, to be "accountable" means that one must answer to God for one's conduct. Only those capable of committing sin and of repenting are accountable (D&C 20:71). Children younger than eight and the mentally impaired are not. Satan has no power to tempt little children or other unaccountable individuals (D&C 29:46-50).

Catholics believe all mankind is born in sin and that unless they are "born again"—baptized—before death in mortality, they cannot enter heaven. This applies to all individuals even to newborn infants. Catholics acknowledge no age of accountability before which—should death occur—the infant or child is not accountable for sin. They may use Psalm 51:5 to support their view: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." They associate this scripture with John 3:3: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

We declare that "It is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children" (Moroni 8:9). When David wrote Psalm 51:5 he was experiencing extreme remorse. He had been chastened by Nathan the prophet, who had prophesied the death of his child that was to be born of Bathsheba, with whom David had committed adultery. In this moment of great sorrow and anguish, he spoke bitterly of himself and his sins.

They may also use Romans 5:12, 19: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned . . . Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Paul also taught, "For where no law is, there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15). Since little children have no law, they have no transgressions. Paul taught that the only "sin" inherited from Adam was physical death, and that Christ paid for that sin so "all would be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

#### Original Sin

While The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that the transgression of Adam and Eve brought death into the world and made all mortals subject to temptation, suffering, and weakness, it denies that any culpability is automatically transmitted to Adam and Eve's offspring. All mortals commit sin, but they will be punished "for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression" (A of F 2).

IN OTHER FAITHS. The doctrine of original sin as taught traditionally states that, due to the Fall of Adam, infants are born tainted with actual sin, resulting in the "privation of sanctifying grace"; this dogma "does not attribute to the children of Adam any properly so-called responsibility for the act of their father," nor is it a voluntary sin "in the strict sense of the word," yet it is a "real sin" (S. Harent, "Original Sin," in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911 ed., vol. 11, 315). All people, according to this doctrine, except the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ, inherit an actual, existing personal guilt (see -->Immaculate Conception). A corollary of this belief is the doctrine of infant baptism, holding that infants are to be baptized to remove this sin because those who die without baptism remain unsanctified and forever excluded from heaven and the presence of God. The doctrine of original sin derives from an interpretation given to the writings of Paul, particularly Romans 5:12-21, by some theologians of the second and third centuries. More than any other, Augustine in the fifth century transformed Paul's teachings on the Fall into the doctrine of original sin. His views were adopted as doctrine and formally canonized by the decrees of the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century. According to this view, Adam's sin is considered "original" because it arose with the "origin" of man.

Protestantism largely accepts this doctrine. John Calvin stated: "We believe that all the posterity of Adam is in bondage to original sin, which is a hereditary evil" (R. Reed, *The Gospel as Taught by Calvin* [Grand Rapids, Mich., 1979], p. 33). Protestant views emphasize the inherited nature of the sin, reflecting the German word for "original sin," Erbsunde (literally "inherited sin"). Rabbinic Judaism teaches of two inclinations, one evil and one good; and some Jews consider "circumcision as a means of escaping damnation" (Samuel Cohon, *Essays in Jewish Theology* [Cincinnati, Ohio, 1987], p. 265).

IN LDS DOCTRINE. Latter-day Saints believe that infants inherit certain effects of the Fall, but not the responsibility for any sin as a result of Adam's or Eve's transgression. From the foundation of the world, the Atonement of Jesus Christ makes amends "for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam" (Mosiah 3:11). Therefore, baptism is not needed until children reach a state of accountability,

generally at the age of eight years, for little children cannot sin and are innocent (see -->Children: Salvation of Children). They are redeemed from the beginning by the grace of Jesus Christ (D&C 29:46-47), whose Atonement cleanses them of the effects of the Fall (D&C 137:10). The Prophet Mormon wrote the following words of Christ: "Little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them" (Moro. 8:8). In one account in the Pearl of Great Price, Adam learned that he had been forgiven for his transgression in the Garden of Eden, and that "the Son of God hath atoned for original guilt, wherein the sins of the parents cannot be answered upon the heads of the children" (Moses 6:54). However, as a consequence of the Fall, evil is present in the world and all "children are conceived in sin, [and] so when they begin to grow up, sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good" (Moses 6:55). Begetting children in marriage is not a sin (cf. Heb. 13:4), but the propensity for sin is inherited. No mortal person bears the burden of repenting for Adam's transgression. Nevertheless, all inherit the effects of the Fall: All leave the presence of God at birth, all are subject to physical death, and all will sin in some measure. From the moment of conception, the body inherits the seed of mortality that will eventually result in death, but only as a person becomes accountable and chooses evil over good do personal sins result in further separation from God. Thus Adam was counseled: "Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there" (Moses 5:57).

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#### Infant Baptism

[This entry has two parts: the -->LDS Perspective concerning this practice, and the -->Early Christian Origins.]

##### LDS Perspective

Children are baptized as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when they reach age eight and receive a bishop's interview to assess their understanding and commitment. This age for baptism was identified by revelation (D&C 68:25, 28). The Church does not baptize infants.

The practice of baptizing infants emerged among Christians in the third century A.D. and was controversial for some time. According to the Book of Mormon, it similarly became an issue and was denounced among the Nephites in the fourth century A.D. When Mormon, a Nephite prophet, inquired of the Lord concerning baptism of little children, he was told that they are incapable of committing sin and that the curse of Adam is removed from them through the Atonement of Christ. Hence little children need

neither repentance nor baptism (Moro. 8:8-22). They are to be taught "to pray and walk uprightly" so that by the age of accountability their baptism will be meaningful and effective for their lives.[See also -->Accountability; -->Children: Salvation of Children; -->Fall of Adam; -->Original Sin.]BibliographyMcConkie, Bruce R. "The Salvation of Little Children." Ensign 7 (Apr. 1977):3-7.ROBERT E. PARSONSEarly Christian OriginsAlthough the New Testament never mentions infant baptism either to approve or to condemn the practice, many passages therein associate baptism with faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, and forgiveness of sins, none of which are appropriate requirements for infants (Mark 1:4-5; 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-38; 19:4; 22:16; Romans 6:1-6; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 3:26-27; Colossians 2:12-13; Hebrews 6:1-6; 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21).The assumption that those baptized are committed disciples continues through the second century in Christian literature (Didache 7.1; Shepherd of Hermas: "Vision" 3.7 and "Mandates" 4.3; Epistle of Barnabas 11; Justin, First Apology 1.11, 15). The earliest explicit reference to the practice of baptizing infants dates to shortly after A.D. 200 in the writings of Tertullian, a North African theologian who opposed it on the grounds that baptism carries an awesome responsibility and should be delayed until a person is fully committed to living righteously (De baptismo 18). A decade later Hippolytus, who would become a schismatic bishop in Rome, wrote a handbook of rules for church organization and practice. Some versions of his Apostolic Tradition (21.3-4) refer to baptizing "little ones," who should have an adult relative speak for them if they are unable to do so themselves. However, since Hippolytus prescribed a normative three-year preparatory period of teaching, reading, fasting, and prayer prior to baptism (Apostolic Tradition 17), the infant baptism passage has been questioned as a later interpolation.

The first Christian writer to defend infant baptism as an apostolic practice was apparently Origen, the preeminent theologian of the Greek-speaking church, who wrote on the subject around A.D. 240 in Alexandria, Egypt. Origen referred to the frequently asked question of why the church should baptize sinless infants (Homily on Luke 14). In response, he argued that baptism takes away the pollution of birth. Origen's Commentary on Romans further elaborates this theme, asserting that because of hereditary sin, "the church has a tradition from the apostles to give baptism even to infants" (5.9). However, this passage is suspect because it is found only in a Latin translation by Rufinus, who tended on several occasions to "correct" Origen according to later doctrine. A few years later, Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, addressing the question of the timing of infant baptism, wrote that a child's soul should not be placed in jeopardy of perdition even one day by delaying the grace of baptism (De peccatorum meritis 1.34).

Historically, then, infant baptism cannot be demonstrated as beginning before the third century, when it emerged as a topic of extended controversy. Not until Augustine wrote against the Donatists two centuries later was infant baptism established as a

universal custom (Jeremias, pp. 94-97; Jewett, p. 16). Thereafter, the practice went largely unquestioned until the Protestant Reformation, when a radical group in Zurich broke with the reformer Zwingli over this and other issues in 1525. These so-called Anabaptists (those who denied the validity of their baptism as infants and were rebaptized as adults) were precursors of the Baptist movement.

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KEITH E. NORMAN

## Did the Savior Establish His Church on the Day of Pentecost?

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Those in the Pentecostal Church feel that the Lord established his Church on the day of Pentecost. As scriptural evidence for this they point to Acts 1:6-8 “When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

We believe that the Savior established his Church before his crucifixion. In Matthew 18:17, when confronted with a problem concerning the law of the Church, he said, “And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” The Savior here refers to his church that contemplates the exercise of the power to judge between brethren offended with each other; to determine wherein the fault lies and to render decision as to what shall be done by the one found in fault, and if he refuse to abide the decision then he is to be cast out of the church – to “become as an heathen man and a publican.”

In Luke 17:20-21 the Savior was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would be established. He replied, “And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” Many translations read “the kingdom of God is among you” because the pronoun “you” is plural here in the Greek. Also Joseph Smith rendered this verse in the JST, “. . . has already come unto you.”

## The Book of Mormon and “Anachronisms”

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**Concern** The Jehovah’s Witnesses and others delight in pointing out what they call “anachronisms” in the Book of Mormon. An anachronism is an error in chronology in which a person, object, or event is assigned a date or period other than the correct one. These are specific prophecies of the Savior’s birth, mortal life, atonement, and resurrection. They are considered anachronisms by the Witnesses because there are no corresponding prophecies in the Bible, and the Witnesses don’t believe that specific events of the Savior’s life were ever prophesied. They feel that these Book of Mormon prophecies must have been written after the Savior’s mortal sojourn.

**Discussion** We rejoice in the sacred truth that every prophet since Adam existed to prophesy of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (see also the resource article “All Prophets Taught of Christ”). The Apostle Peter knew also of this truth when he wrote: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19-21). Also: “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). See also Jacob 4:4; Moses 6:51-68; 7:55; 8:24; JST, Genesis 15:11-12; Jacob 7:11; Mosiah 13:33; 3 Nephi 20:24; Helaman 8:17-19; John 8:56.

**Concern** An almost comical objection which the Witnesses raise against the Book of Mormon is reflected in the following statement from their anti-Mormon propaganda collection: “As might be expected when events are talked about out of time-order, The Book of Mormon occasionally slips and refers to them in the past tense instead of in the future tense.” They then give examples of Book of Mormon prophecies of Christ written centuries before his mortal birth which are written in the past tense. Consider for example 2 Nephi 33:6: “I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell.” They then betray their ignorance by asking the question, “How can a person supposedly living long before Christ made his sacrifice say that Christ *had redeemed* him?”

**Discussion** The reason this objection has an element of humor is that in the language of the Hebrew prophets, it is common and well understood usage to speak of future events, seen in prophecy, as if they had already happened. This has been called the “prophetic perfect” tense. For example, referring to the Babylonian captivity, which culminated in 587 B.C., Isaiah, writing in 720-740 B.C., said, “Therefore my people are gone into captivity” (Isaiah 5:13). Speaking of Christ’s mortal ministry, Isaiah said, “People that walked in

darkness have seen a great light” (Isaiah 9:2). Prophesying of the birth of Christ, Isaiah wrote, “For unto us a child is born.” A more literal translation is “for a child has been born unto us” (Isaiah 9:6). What the Witnesses consider an error in the Book of Mormon is actually a testimony of the authenticity of the book.

The Witnesses also betray their lack of understanding of the infinite nature and timelessness of the Savior’s atonement by criticizing Mosiah 4:2: “O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men.” They say of this verse: “How can a people cry for forgiveness of sins by the atoning blood of Christ long before that blood was shed?” The Jehovah’s Witnesses badly need our help.

## Joseph Smith's Political Concept of Zion

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Most histories of early Mormonism and biographical treatments of Joseph Smith have focused on his religious experiences, doctrinal teachings, and ecclesiastical projects. Any political perspectives or agenda he may have had have not been much examined. Today, most all members of the Church see Joseph's life and efforts as having been focused on establishing the restored Church of Jesus Christ or the Kingdom of God ("Zion") upon the earth. The newly restored Church was understood to be a church among many other incomplete or "apostate" Christian churches. It would provide access to new scripture and additional spiritual truths. It would include divinely sanctioned and authorized ordinances. It would provide direct heavenly oversight through the leadership of the Lord's one true prophet. It would provide an opportunity for its members to belong to a loving, supportive, and edifying fellowship to the end that its members would be enabled to progress to become more like God and one day return to live with him. The setting for the establishment of Zion was the United States of America, a country whose founding was divinely orchestrated and carried out by men especially called up and prepared by the Lord. While those men created a Constitution that guaranteed the free exercise of religion to all the nation's inhabitants, the Constitution's *particular* divine purpose was to allow the establishment of the Lord's one true Church and kingdom on the earth.

The purpose of this chapter is to make the case that Joseph had additional and powerful motives—indeed *political* motives—as he set about establishing the Lord's kingdom here on earth. He actually saw Zion as a new society—a new and independent nation—one that would initially arise along side the United States of America. Then, in relatively short order, it would actually replace the United States and its government. This new Zion would ensure divine, righteous, and stable governance to the land and people of North America. This new nation would persist until and during the thousand years following the Lord's second coming.

This chapter will consider questions that have arisen concerning the disparities between Joseph's early political concept of Zion and our present practical and "limited" concept. These include such questions as: How are we to regard this unmistakable element in Joseph's political thinking—this Mormon nationalism? Was it actually *the Lord's* intention that the early saints should set about to establish a nation and government independent of the American government? Or, did that notion come from Joseph himself? Surely the Lord knew in advance the result of Joseph's attempts to establish, in his day, a Zion independent of and outside United States governmental control. If Joseph was

indeed a prophet in close touch with God, why did Joseph not understand earlier the inevitable need to fully accommodate the government of the United States of America in his plans to establish Zion? Why did not the Lord peremptorily inform Joseph of the consequences of his trying to establish this Zion in Missouri? Why did Joseph and the Church have to learn the hard way? Why were the saints not allowed and enabled to avoid the severe persecutions and loss of properties that resulted from Joseph's misunderstandings? These are questions for which we will seek answers. We will also explore other implications and impacts of Joseph's political perspectives on the early saints.

Much of the resource material used for this chapter comes from the 2008 PhD dissertation (Arizona State University) of Dr. Mark Roscoe Ashurst-McGee, "Zion Rising: Joseph Smith's Early Social and Political Thought" (hereafter *Ashurst-McGee*). In his dissertation, Brother Ashurst-McGee compellingly points out the unequivocal existence of Joseph's concept of "Mormon nationalism." He then, painstakingly, attempts to analyze the origins of that nationalism. I gratefully acknowledge him and his thoughtful and thorough analysis of this topic.

### **The Lord's Preparations for the Restoration of his Gospel and Kingdom**

We will first consider the several influences in the environment of Joseph Smith that shaped the milieu into which the Lord would restore his earthly kingdom. The land and its inhabitants had to be prepared. The Lord gave particular attention to the specific setting in which his Church would be organized—The United States of America and particularly the area of Western New York.

**The United States of America.** There can be no doubt of the Lord's role in orchestrating the founding of the United States of America. The Lord's Spirit was over this land early on. Thus began the arrival of the pilgrim settlers from Europe seeking religious freedom. Other immigrants followed looking for a new life and new opportunities. The spirit of revolution certainly had divine trappings, and the Lord attended those who led and those who fought to ensure the necessary independence. He then inspired and assisted with the writing of the Constitution and the establishment of the principles of government. These would provide the vital guarantees and protections necessary for the establishment and survival of the nascent Kingdom of God on earth.

**The prophet Joseph Smith.** We would not expect the Lord to insert himself and his Church and gospel "of a sudden" into an unprepared environment and to an unprepared people. A need had to be created so that at least some of the people would yearn for, seek for, recognize, and then accept the gospel. And one individual in particular had to be carefully prepared—the Lord's future prophet Joseph Smith, Jr. A need and yearning had to be established in his

heart for the restoration. Then, features of the Church and gospel the Lord intended to be included in the restored Church had to be introduced to him in his life's setting so that he would recognize, embrace, and incorporate them. He had to come to feel passionately about what would transpire even before it transpired. He would not be enabled to take direct and clear heavenly dictation and instruction on every decision and issue that lay in his path. Joseph would be prepared over his lifetime, and his environment would also be organized and readied. Then Joseph himself would take the reins and lead—albeit with considerable heavenly inspiration along the way.

Critics of the Church often misinterpret the Lord's preparatory steps. They look at the setting of the restoration and the interactions of Joseph and others with that setting and conclude that Joseph needed no direct divine intervention. The Church came about quite "naturally" as the result of the needs and desires of the people in the area of Western New York at that time. Critics reason that the Church and all its features were already found in the mind and heart of Joseph Smith. Joseph had acquired them through interacting with his environment over his lifetime. He did not have to receive them by revelation from God. Further, they reason, Joseph's First Vision experience was manufactured by him as his own strategy for setting the movement in motion.

**The influences of Joseph's family's experiences.** Joseph Smith lived at a time when we would expect him and his contemporaries to be highly patriotic. He was born within a quarter century of the Revolutionary War in which both of his grandfathers had served. He grew to manhood in the intense period of nationalism following the War of 1812.

Joseph's paternal grandfather, Asael, was a soldier in the Revolutionary War. Following the war, Asael's writings indicated that he viewed the war in terms of the millennial prophecy of Daniel 2. He saw the defeat of the monarchical British government and the formation of a republican government as step toward the secular millennial reign of the Savior which he assumed to be imminent. He felt that the peoples of the world should look upon the American Revolution as a model as to what ought to happen in their nations. He also viewed the war as a model for what should happen in the religions of the world. In other words, he saw the war as a symbolic defeat for all false religions and religious contention and intolerance. He viewed it as a step toward the Lord's establishing his earthly spiritual kingdom in the proximate future. He believed in the imminence of the world millennial peace and rest.

Asael's son Joseph, with his wife Lucy Mack Smith, suffered a life of constant economic disappointment and hardship. Joseph tried farming but soon left it and became involved in merchandising. He tried selling roots and herbs for healing. He even conceived of a plan to distribute ginseng in China, and he

traveled to New York and Boston to try to arrange the details. This venture failed, and, in shame and deeply in debt, Joseph returned to the Smith family cooperative farm in Tunbridge, Vermont. He eventually had to sell his share of that farm to pay his debts. He and Lucy became tenant farmers. Their landlord was Solomon Mack, Lucy's father. Solomon was also a Revolutionary War veteran.

Lucy became a constant seeker after true religion. She tried affiliation with various sects, but remained unsatisfied. She respected her elder brother Jason Mack who, at age sixteen, had become a "seeker" and by twenty, a "minister of the gospel," as Lucy put it, though connected with no particular institution. Jason held that there was no church in existence that held to the pure principles of Christ's gospel. Lucy remembered hearing in her youth Jason publicly declare that the primitive church established by Jesus Christ "was not now among the Christian denominations of the day" (*Lucy's Book*, 464). But he held out hope that the pure church may soon be established. Jason may have contributed to Lucy's eventual rejection of the churches of the day. She was eventually joined, in her conviction that the true church of Jesus Christ was not to be found on earth, by her husband. Joseph and Lucy passed down to their children both their Christian devotion and their alienation from the existing churches.

It was on the Mack farm in the hills of Vermont, about twenty miles up the White River from its mouth on the Connecticut River, that Joseph Junior was born on 23 December 1805. Vermont was part of the newly settled American west within which Joseph Smith would live out his entire life—moving westward again and again. The trajectory of his life would follow that of the expanding nation.

[Joseph] Smith was born in the moment of America's territorial exploration. The previous year, President Thomas Jefferson had sent Lewis and Clark to explore the Missouri River—where [Joseph] Smith would later try to build the New Jerusalem. In December 1805, Lewis and Clark had crossed over the continental divide and were wintering on the Columbia. By 1805, Vermont was no longer frontier, but was still very young and was northwestern New England both geographically and culturally.

The state's transition to America's new market economy was well underway but far from complete. The cultural environment of Vermont during Joseph's early childhood consisted of a mixture of the egalitarian values of the rural agrarians who settled the state and the more acquisitive habits of more recent immigrants (*Ashurst-McGee*, 40-41).

In his earliest childhood, young Joseph was powerfully influenced by both his grandfathers. He lived within a short walk from the home of his grandfather Solomon Mack and within a half dozen miles of the Smith family farm [and his grandfather Asael Smith] in Tunbridge. Joseph Junior would later be reported as saying that “civil and religious liberty—were diffused into my soul by my grandfathers, while they dandld [sic] me on their knees” (*Joseph Smith Journal*, 9 July 1843, Joseph Smith Collection).

In March 1807, Solomon Mack mortgaged the farm on which the Lucy and Joseph Smith were living. The Smiths soon moved on—perhaps because of Mack’s financial difficulties—apparently falling back once again on the Smith family farm in Tunbridge.

About 1812, the family moved again, this time to western Lebanon Township in New Hampshire, just across the Connecticut from the mouth of the White. This township was only a few miles downriver of Hanover and Dartmouth College—the cultural capital of the upper Connecticut. During this time, their son Hyrum attended a Dartmouth-associated charity school. Down from the hills of Vermont, the Smiths may have felt scorned by the cultural elite of Hanover and Dartmouth.

The Smiths were able to improve their economic situation in Lebanon and had begun saving for land and retirement when calamity struck. A typhoid epidemic raged through the Connecticut valley in which all the Smith children came down with the dreaded disease. Sophronia, just older than Joseph, nearly succumbed. Lucy had seen death among her sisters and had faced it herself. She and Joseph, Sr., prayed and exercised faith in God. Lucy felt her prayer was answered. But when Sophronia stopped breathing, some present told Lucy to give up. Lucy refused. She pressed her daughter tightly against her breast and walked with her until her daughter cried and breathed. She then began her recovery.

Young Joseph’s bout with the disease may have been less life-threatening, but it was more expensive. After a “physician” was unable to cure an infection in the bone of his lower leg, Joseph’s parents sought a second opinion in a “council of surgeons”—now identified as Dartmouth surgeon Nathan Smith and his students. According to Lucy, the surgeons initially wanted to amputate the leg. Dr. Smith, however, was pioneering a new treatment for osteomyelitis that had shown promising results. Having been involved in medical malpractice suits before, Dr. Smith apparently used the threat of the extreme case of amputation to elicit explicit consent for his successful yet still unorthodox technique of osteomyelitis treatment. Dr. Smith saved the leg, but in Lucy’s telling, she herself had saved it by withholding her consent for amputation. While Lucy was forced to look to doctors for help, in her accounts of Sophronia and

Joseph's illness, she remains the one very much in charge of their care. Her narration further suggests an anti-professional temperament, contrasting her simple faith and maternal protection against the learning of "incompetent" physicians and amputating surgeons. Yet while Lucy claimed the high ground of character, the doctors certainly claimed the fees. The Smiths lost the financial ground they had recently gained.

Joseph recovered slowly. Lucy believed that sea breeze would improve his health, so he was sent with his uncle Jesse Smith on a trip to Salem, Massachusetts. Salem was at the time one of the largest American cities and a key port in the Atlantic trade. Joseph's visit to Salem would have enlarged his perception of the country and exposed him to its developing market economy.

By 1815, the Smiths had moved back to Vermont, this time to nearby Norwich, where they set to work as tenant farmers. In March of that year, Joseph and his family were served with a notice warning them to leave the town. This notice—which probably functioned to preclude them from applying for the township's welfare—indicates their quasi-vagrant status. To their further misfortune, adverse weather ruined their chances to make progress there. Mount Tambora erupted in April of that year—half a world away in the Pacific but spreading its volcanic debris throughout the global atmosphere. In the cold that followed, Vermont crops froze and were ruined.

After an additional crop failure in Norwich, Joseph, Sr., resolved to move on and make a new start in western New York. In July 1816, he left to scout out a new location for the family. Lucy stayed behind with the children to settle the family's affairs and satisfy their creditors. With resources reduced to next to nothing, the family trekked through the snow to join Joseph, Sr., in the village of Palmyra and make another go at establishing a sustainable family economy in a rapidly developing America.

Asael Smith, Joseph, Sr.'s father, had been optimistic in his expectations of the future of the nascent country. He had trusted in God's providence and was hopeful that the republic would continue to thrive and that freedom would extend throughout national government and religion. The economic struggles of Joseph and Lucy failed to match Asael's optimistic expectations. Also Asael's concerns over divisive secular religions had passed down to his son, Joseph, Sr. Joseph eventually came to feel he could not respect the church in any of its forms. His family's Vermont years were marked by religious controversy, desperate seeking, and an eventual rejection of denominational Christianity.

We may summarize the socioeconomic situation of Joseph, Jr.'s immediate family: The country was changing economically, with the market revolution creating a new and more stratified social structure. Joseph, Sr., came to sense this socioeconomic division in society and his lowly station within it.

Setting aside his father Asael's advice to be content in farming or any other ordinary and "honest" occupation, Joseph invested in merchandizing and trade. He failed in both. Over the next dozen years, Joseph and Lucy moved a half dozen times attempting to secure their financial well-being, twice falling back on the family farm in Tunbridge. Asael had advised his family not to trouble themselves with socioeconomic status but to cooperate on the family farm. Instead, Joseph and Lucy repeatedly broke away, attempting to establish a positive family economy. But when they moved down from the hills of Vermont to the Connecticut River, they felt scorned by the more prosperous residents. Unpaid store credit, sickness and doctor's bills, bad weather and bad luck had all conspired against their financial fortune and social standing. The family was reduced near to the status of vagrants. The family's anti-professional attitude serves as further evidence of their class consciousness and resentment of their social position.

**Joseph's own youth experiences.** Young Joseph's experiences growing to manhood during a time of transformation in American society help us understand some of his perspectives of the new Kingdom of God he would establish in 1830. Joseph inherited his family's hopes and frustrations. He was indoctrinated in the revolutionary ideas of civil and religious liberty by his grandfathers, and he learned from his father to respect liberty of conscience. He spent his childhood in Vermont's culture of revolutionary heritage and pride. His family, like many others, had moved quickly into the early republic's new world of economic opportunity but had met with failure and disappointment. Joseph probably began to sense his family's economic marginalization while in his Vermont adolescence.

Joseph inherited his grandfather Asael Smith's penchant for a free yet harmonious society. He inherited his parents' religious seeking and their desire for primitive Christianity, as well as their frustration with religious controversy and confrontation. As he helped develop the family's New York farm and hired out for labor to contribute to the household economy, he also inherited their desires for socioeconomic stability and respectability. He also shared in their shame of poverty and failure. He came to realize that society was divided into economic classes and he came to recognize his place in the lower strata.

Joseph also grew to manhood during the disintegration of what was called the political Era of Good Feelings. During this period Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe had served as president, and politics was a relatively peaceful and dignified affair with little rancor. However, the election of 1824 was different. None of the candidates that year received a majority of electoral votes. The field consisted of four candidates: John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, William Crawford, and Henry Clay. Based on electoral votes

the field was narrowed to three after Henry Clay was ousted. The election of the president then passed to the House of Representatives. Though Andrew Jackson had received the most electoral (and popular) votes, John Quincy Adams was made president after Henry Clay threw his support to Adams in exchange for being made Secretary of State—a traditional stepping stone to the presidency. Jackson was angry and charged Adams and Clay with conspiracy to subvert the will of the people. He leveled the charge of “corrupt bargain” against Adams and Clay. This charge spread throughout the nation and blighted the ensuing administration.

Most Americans preferred a limited government and believed that the Era of Good Feelings was over and the Age of Jackson had begun. They feared it would feature shady deals, unfair privilege, embezzlement, and other forms of corruption. Many believed that the government had been corrupted. From his apocalyptic standpoint, Joseph, Jr., probably considered this political competition as a detrimental division in society and an indication of national decline, and a sign of the end-times.

The Smiths were among thousands caught in the tide of westward migration. For three centuries settlement had been confined to the Atlantic seaboard. But in the wake of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, Americans crossed the Appalachians and streamed into the Mississippi basin. Joseph, Sr.’s own westward course landed him in Palmyra, New York. He may have aimed there in expectation of the financial opportunities that would be opened by the Erie Canal, which had been approved in April 1816 and was surveyed during the summer and early autumn of that year. On arriving in Palmyra, the Smiths found a place on Main Street, where they scraped together a living running a small “cake and beer shop” featuring ginger bread and root beer. Joseph, Sr., and the boys supplemented the family income by hiring out as harvesters and well-diggers. The family planned to work and save their money to buy a farm.

Joseph Smith’s exposure to Christianity consisted initially of religious “pluralism”—the idea that all religions, though different from one another were valid and adequate. Later he was exposed to a period of “awakening” which consisted of campaigns of religious regeneration, religious revivals, camp meetings, and fierce religious competition. Ministers preached hell fire and damnation, and many converts came forward to be baptized. These revivals began in 1817 and continued intermittently through 1825. Because of the intensity and frequency with which western New York underwent these revival “baptisms by fire,” historians commonly refer to the area as “the burned-over district.” These resulted in religious contention between sects.

Both of these phases were interesting but confusing to Joseph. Meanwhile, Joseph pondered and stewed over his religious concerns. While religious turbulence at that time could be found throughout the country, the frontier was especially susceptible. Joseph found the doctrinal contentions of the various denominations not merely emotionally upsetting, but intellectually distressing. He recounted that, “so great was the confusion and strife amongst the different denominations,” a young person like himself could hardly think clearly. He recalled that while “in the midst of this war of words, and tumult of opinions,” he often asked himself, “Who of all these parties are right? Or are they all wrong together? And if any one of them be right which is it? And how shall I know it?” (HC, 1-2). He eventually concluded “that God could not be the author of so much confusion.” Turning to the Bible, he determined “to investigate the subject more fully, believing that if God had a church, it would not be split up into factions” (Smith, “Latter-day Saints,” in Rupp, ed., *An Original History of the Religious Denominations*, 3-5).

About 1819, the Smith family moved southward to the Palmyra-Manchester township line. There, in the wake of the national depression that followed the Panic of 1819, the Smiths attempted to establish a new family farm. Joseph later recounted, “While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first Chapter and fifth verse which reads, ‘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’” (JSH 1:11-12). The passage deeply impressed him. While the revival had convinced Joseph of his sins, the ensuing sectarian strife led to confusion over true doctrine and which church to join. The Bible led him to take his concerns directly to God.

Joseph did so and reported that God the Father and the resurrected Jesus Christ descended in a bright beam of light. The Father introduced the Son, who informed Joseph that his sins were forgiven. He also instructed him not to join any of the churches, as they were all wrong. The resurrected Christ declared that “all their creeds were an abomination in his sight, that those professors were all corrupt” (JSH 1:13-20).

Like his parents, Joseph then believed the world was in apostasy from the purity of the primitive church. And, like his parents, he came to understand that apostasy in terms of the competing denominational ministers and their doctrinal contentions.

In the vision, the Lord had also stated, “mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth,” and stated that he would soon “visit them according to their ungodliness and to bring to pass that which [hath] been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Apostles behold and lo I come quickly” (Smith,

History, 1832, in Smith, Letterbook 1, 3, *Joseph Smith Collection*). Joseph's apocalyptic vision of the future stood in stark contrast to the generally optimistic vision growing out of the great Protestant revival and awakening occurring at the time. The Protestant clergy sought to reform America and then the world, establishing righteousness and perfection and thus hastening the onset of the millennial thousand years. In Joseph's view, the Lord would return because of wickedness, not righteousness, and to fulfill the apocalyptic prophecies in the Bible. Joseph did receive a promise, however, at the end of his vision, "that the fullness of the gospel should at some future time be made known unto me" (Smith, "Latter-day Saints," in Rupp, ed., *An Original History of the Religious Denominations*, 405).

Joseph claimed that he shared his experience with a Methodist minister, who denounced the vision "with great contempt" and informed him that "all such things had ceased with the apostles." The minister's condemnation served only to complete Joseph's severance with the churches of the day (*HC*, 3-4). At that time, while most Evangelicals wanted to feel God's presence in enthusiasm and spiritual gifts, the Methodists had become wary of dreams, visions, and other manifestations of the power of God. They were becoming socially established, and had begun to attract the more religiously conservative emerging middle class. Joseph's rejection by the Methodist minister may be understood not only in religious terms, but in socioeconomic terms as well.

In Joseph's day, the water witches, treasure diviners, and other practitioners of folk magic held fervently to overt divine manifestations. Joseph's vision of deity and the rebuke of the minister may have served to drive Joseph away from the churches and even more into the world of water witching and treasure dowsing (see chapter , *The Role of Divination ["Magic"] in Joseph Smith's Early Life*). The water witching and dirt digging of the Smith males probably contributed to the negative view of them that some of their neighbors later expressed. Young Joseph's realization of the family's social position in Palmyra may have begun soon after moving there.

Though financially unfortunate, and perhaps not among the most money wise, the Smiths were far from lazy. Starting anew in New York, the family had worked hard to establish a sustainable economy of farming and sugaring—supplemented by Joseph, Sr.'s coopering (barrel making) and Lucy's home crafts (see chapter , *The Character of Joseph Smith and the Smith Family*). Young Joseph probably felt the sting of social status most acutely when visiting Palmyra village. Villager Orsamus Turner recounted seeing Joseph when he brought wood "from his backwoods home" to sell in the village. Turner, a printer's devil, saw him at least once a week when Joseph "would stroll into the office of the old Palmyra Register, for his father's paper." Turner described Joseph as a curious

country boy loitering about the village—”sometimes patronizing a village grocery, sometimes finding an odd job to do about the store of Seymour Scovell.” He remembered that on more than one occasion, when Joseph got in the way of the work of the press, the devils would use their inking balls to “blacken the face of the then meddling inquisitive loungeur” (*History of the Pioneer Settlement*, Rochester, NY: William Ailing, 1851, 213-214).

The local youth organizations of the day included a Young Men’s Literary Club that formed “for the purpose of debate and general improvement.” Current issues of the day were often vigorously discussed by the attenders. One participant noted that “even an evening of mutual improvement at the Young Men’s Literary Club, among age and class peers, could end in bitter quarrels over national politics” (“Literary Club Journal,” 29 September 1832, in Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class*, 130; see also 128-30, 141-42). Politics was also a subject in Palmyra’s youth debating club. Orsamus Turner recalled Joseph Smith participating in grave discussions of “political ethics” (*History of the Pioneer Settlement*, 214).

While exposed to such social developments of village living, Joseph’s experience was still primarily rural. Work on the family farm and hiring out for labor on the farms of others occupied most of his time. On occasion he searched for buried treasure.

On the night of September 21, 1823 an angel named Moroni appeared to Joseph and showed him the location of an ancient scriptural record, akin to the Bible, that was inscribed on metal tablets that looked like gold. The record had been made by former inhabitants of the land descended from Israel. The angel informed Joseph that “the Lord had prepared spectacles for to read the Book.” With the plates, “there were two stones in silver bows” with which to translate the record into English. The plates and spectacles lay buried in a stone box in a nearby hill.

The angel Moroni also repeated the millenarian message of Joseph’s initial vision. He informed him that “the preparatory work for the second coming of the Messiah was speedily to commence; that the time was at hand for the gospel in all its fulness to be preached in power, unto all nations, that a people might be prepared for the millennial reign” (Smith, “Latter-day Saints,” in Rupp, ed., *An Original History of the Religious Denomination*, 405). Moroni quoted several millenarian passages from the Bible and explained them to Joseph, telling him of “great judgments which were coming upon the earth, with great desolations by famine, sword, and pestilence,” and that these grievous judgments would come on the earth in this generation” (JS-H 1:45). Joseph claimed that he went to the hill the following day and found the plates, but that the angel forbade him from taking them at that time as he was not yet spiritually

prepared. Joseph's mother stated that following his vision of the plates he received further visions and divine communications. She recalled the family "all seated in a circle, father, mother, sons and daughters" to hear Joseph share his experiences, from which "the sweetest union and happiness pervaded our house" (*Lucy's Book*, 344-45).

The family's peace and happiness were shattered with the death of Alvin, the eldest child. When Alvin became acutely ill, the family sought out a local doctor they preferred, but he was unavailable. A substitute came to the Smith home and over Alvin's objections insisted on administering an oral dose of mercurous chloride, on which Lucy blamed his subsequent death. As she reported it, Alvin was "murdered as it were by the hand him at whose hand relief was expected—cut off from the face of earth by a careless quack" (*Ibid.*, 350-355).

Joseph's younger brother William remembered his father's anger when Benjamin Stockton, a local Presbyterian reverend, preached at Alvin's funeral and "intimated very strongly that he had gone to hell, for Alvin was not a church member" ("William. B. Smith's last Statement," in Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* 1:512-13). Joseph, Jr., and Lucy later recounted the family's deep grieving at the loss of the beloved Alvin, killed and condemned by the doctors of medicine and theology. Alvin's death thus invoked, and probably deepened, the family's anti-professional disposition.

Lucy sought for comfort in the religious revival that began the following year. She couldn't stand to hear more of the golden plates at that time, as it reminded her of Alvin—who of all the family was the most interested in their recovery. Though she had earlier determined to remain apart from the churches, she now joined the Presbyterian Church in Palmyra. Like other women responding to the revivals of the day, Lucy took initiative and leadership. She brought her children Hyrum and Samuel into the fold with her ("Records of the Sessions of the Presbyterian Church in Palmyra," in Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* 3:496-501; also "William. B. Smith's last Statement," in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 1:512-13).

Lucy's decision to join a church and to join with the Presbyterians, the most respectable denomination in the village, may reflect some of the status anxiety that appears here and there in her memoir—such as the financially premature push to replace the family's log home with a frame home. Social stratification was further reflected within the walls of the church house. Palmyra's church had pew fees like the rest, seating the wealthiest congregants in the best seats in the house. Ministers knew that their survival depended on the donations of their congregation. This introduced the social pressure to shape their preaching to attract and retain congregants as well as to please them and

encourage them to open their wallets. Sustaining meetinghouse and minister required congregants who attended and paid. Ministers stood to gain the most by suiting their sermons to satisfy and gratify those with the most money to give. Conversely, those with the least to donate commanded the least pastoral attention. Markers of class and prestige among ministers and their congregants struck Joseph, Jr., wrongly. Reflecting back on his youthful study of the Bible, he wrote, "I learned in the scriptures that God . . . was no respecter to persons" (Joseph Smith, Letterbook 1-2, *Joseph Smith Collection*. Compare Acts 10:34-35). Joseph was highly aware of the connections between his religious and social status.

While some of the older children converted with Lucy, Joseph, Sr., and Joseph, Jr., would not. Joseph, Sr., was still upset with the Presbyterian reverend who had condemned Alvin. During the earlier revival, Joseph had attended the meetings "as often as occasion would permit," but following his visions, he declared he would join no church and refused to attend the meetings. Lucy recounted his expressing respect for her choice though disagreeing with it: "Mother I do not wish to prevent your going to meeting or joining any church you like or any of the family who desire the like, only do not ask me to go, for I do not wish to go. But I will take my Bible and go out into the woods and learn more in two hours than you could if you were to go to meeting two years" (*Lucy's Book*, 357). Joseph felt he could pursue religion on his own. Though his education was meager, he was a literate Christian and could read the Bible for himself just as well as a good citizen reads the newspaper. He neither needed nor wanted a creed-bound cleric to explain the scripture to him. Joseph believed he could understand the Bible well enough to see that the churches of the day did not measure up to the purity of the primitive church in the New Testament. Unlike others Joseph felt he could not answer doctrinal questions by an appeal to the Bible. He wanted guidance, but not from an apostate clergy. Instead, he sought for guidance from heaven.

Referring to secular clerics, Joseph also told his mother that she "did not know the wickedness of their hearts." On one occasion, Lucy recounted, Joseph gave an example and said they could record it as prophecy: "You look at Deacon Jessup," said he, "and you hear him talk very piously. Well, you think he is a very good man. Now suppose that one of his poor neighbors should owe him the value of a cow, and that this poor man had eight little children; moreover, that he should be taken sick and die, leaving his wife with one cow, but destitute of every other means of supporting herself and family—now I tell you, that Deacon Jessup, religious as he is, would not scruple to take the last cow from the poor widow and orphans, in order to secure the debt, notwithstanding he himself has an abundance of everything." "At that time," as Lucy remembered it,

“this seemed impossible to us, yet one year had scarcely expired when we saw Joseph’s prophecy literally fulfilled” (*Lucy’s Book*, 357-8).

Joseph and his father thus rejected the false and self-righteous piety they perceived in Reverend Stockton and Deacon Jessup. While his mother and some of his siblings affiliated themselves with the Presbyterians, Joseph and his father remained “unchurched treasure seekers.” The family, so recently in “the sweetest union,” was now divided. Earlier Joseph had despaired at the division in society that grew out of the revivals. Now religious division had made its way to the core of his family. This violated the need for familial harmony that was so central to his personality.

The Smiths moved into their newly finished frame home about October 1825. That month they were approached by Josiah Stowell of South Bainbridge, in south-central New York, to help find a legendary Spanish mine. It is likely Stowell hired Joseph because of his seer stones and his reputation for having a gift in using them. Joseph’s mother Lucy also remembered Stowell’s offer of “high wages to those who would dig for him” (*Lucy’s Book*, 360). Joseph and his father joined the venture, following Stowell to Harmony, Pennsylvania—down the Susquehanna River from Stowell’s home in South Bainbridge, New York. In addition to earning wages as laborers, Joseph and his father stood to gain in a share of any treasure they might find. In Harmony, Joseph and his father boarded with the rest of Stowell’s digging crew on the property of Isaac Hale. After half a month of unsuccessful digging, as Joseph remembered it, he “prevailed with the old gentleman to cease digging after it” (*HC*, 8).

While Joseph and his father were away, the Smiths lost the title to their farm. They had not been able to make their recent payments. Instead of saving their earnings for the day payment came due, they had invested in the new frame home. Through a complicated series of events—initiated by the deceitful machinations of a pair of men who meant to obtain the land for little expense—the title was transferred to Palmyra resident Lemuel Durfee. After receiving word of this shocking development, Joseph, Sr., returned home to attempt to iron out the difficulty.

Joseph, Jr., stayed in the upper Susquehanna country, working for Stowell in South Bainbridge. While there, Joseph and Stowell participated in further treasure seeking. In March of 1826, a nephew of Stowell attempted to stop his uncle’s participation by having Joseph arrested on the misdemeanor charge of “disorderly person.” This vague catch-all statute was used in New York against vagrants and other undesirables. Joseph was arrested, taken by the constable to Bainbridge, held overnight, and then delivered for trial. It is unclear in what manner of custody Joseph was detained during the night—whether the constable

kept him in a tavern, held him in a certain room of his own Bainbridge home, or otherwise. Notes of the trial refer to him as “the prisoner.”

This was not Joseph’s first experience in court. In 1819, Joseph had served as a witness on behalf of his father in a suit against Jeremiah Hurlbut for selling him a bad pair of horses. The day after the trial, wherein the jury had found for Joseph, Hurlbut hired local justice of the peace Frederick Smith (no relation to Joseph) as an attorney and appealed. Hurlbut’s attorney attached to the appeal a plea of trespass on the case—a sort of appended countersuit—causing Joseph Smith, Sr., to be arrested and bound over for the next court of common pleas. Hurlbut’s attorney succeeded in overturning the initial acquittal decision in an interlocutory judgment—a judicial ruling made without a jury.

Now in 1826, Joseph, Jr., was in court not as a witness, but as a defendant. According to notes of Joseph’s 1826 trial, Joseph testified “that he had a certain stone, which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were . . . and had looked for Mr. Stowell several times and informed him where he could find those treasures.” Stowell, himself, testified, relaying that when he had hired Joseph in Palmyra, Joseph “looked through [a seer] stone and described Josiah Stowell’s house and out houses” and that he “had the most implicit faith in [the] prisoner’s skill.” Joseph Smith’s defense was that he really could see in the stones. His father, who attended the trial, reportedly expressed his regret that “this wonderful power which God had so miraculously given him [Joseph Junior] should be used only in search of filthy lucre” (William Purple, “Joseph Smith, the Originator of Mormonism,” *Chenango Union*, 2 May 1877, 3).

To the complainant and his witnesses—as well as to the judge—Joseph was essentially on trial for deception. To Joseph, it was his religious beliefs and practices that were on trial. Because Stowell, the supposed victim, testified in Joseph’s defense the case was apparently dismissed. But the experience of being arrested and tried must have shamed and distressed Joseph. And to a person who so dearly valued social harmony and order, the charge of “disorderly person” must have left him feeling misunderstood and maltreated. His treasure seeking seems to have drawn to a close following the trial.

Joseph remained on the Susquehannah, working farther south on the river as a laborer for Joseph Knight in Colesville, New York. He occasionally traveled downriver to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to court Emma Hale, the daughter of Isaac Hale, on whose land the Spanish mine treasure hunters had boarded. Isaac disapproved of his daughter’s suitor. He considered Joseph “not very well educated” and stated that he “followed a business that I could not approve” (Isaac Hale statement, Harmony, Pennsylvania, 20 March 1834, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* [sic], 203). Joseph’s lack of education and his labor as a

diviner and treasure digger placed him below the company of the relatively well-off Hale family and their educated daughter Emma (On the Hale family and Emma's education, see Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 2-4).

In January of 1827, Joseph and Emma eloped, moving in with the Smiths on their farm in the Palmyra countryside. Joseph probably farmed with his father that summer. On 22 September 1827, exactly four years after seeing his vision of the angel Moroni and uncovering the golden plates, Joseph was permitted to take them. The men who had hunted for treasure with Joseph in earlier years viewed the ancient record as a treasure—more as plates of gold than as an ancient record. Now that precious metal had finally been unearthed, they wanted their share. On the way home with the plates Joseph was attacked and injured but escaped. On one night the treasure hunters tore up the floor of the Smith's cooper shop, thinking to find the plates hidden under the floorboards. On another night they surrounded the Smith home, but the Smith men chased them off.

Joseph decided to take the recently extended offer of his father-in-law Isaac Hale and move to Harmony. On arriving at the Hale home, Isaac requested to see the golden plates. Joseph refused, explaining that the angel had prohibited him from showing them. Hale insisted that he would not allow anything to be kept in his own home that he was not allowed to see. Joseph hid the plates in the woods for the moment. He and Emma soon moved into her brother Jesse's home on the same property.

One Palmyra resident, Martin Harris, believed that Joseph had the plates and wanted to help him translate and publish them. In February 1828, after visiting Joseph in Harmony, Harris took copies of the characters on the plates to prominent classicists Samuel Mitchill and Charles Anthon in New York City. Harris reported that both affirmed the antiquity of the characters. Anthon, however, retracted his statement when Harris told him the location of the plates had been revealed by an angel. Anthon then said he would translate the plates if Harris brought them, to which Harris responded that a part of the plates were sealed and that he could not bring them anyway. According to Harris, Anthon then responded by saying "I cannot read a sealed book." Harris returned to Harmony satisfied with the outcome, which he and Joseph took as the fulfillment of a prophecy in Isaiah 29:

And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people,

even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid (verses 11-12).

Joseph's interpretation of this episode reinforced his anti-professional outlook. The Lord would work wonders through him because he was unlearned and unspoiled by worldly accolades. It was the spiritual gift of seeing in stones, not classical training, that would enable him to translate the ancient record.

In the spring of 1828, Joseph began translating the plates with the spectacles and one or more of his seer stones while Martin Harris served as the scribe. In the summer, after translating one hundred sixteen pages, Harris headed back to Palmyra with the manuscript to show it to his skeptical family. When Harris lost the manuscript, Joseph received a revelation that rebuked them both. Martin could no longer serve as a scribe and Joseph could not translate until he repented. While the revelation shut down the translating for the moment, it also explained the purpose of the eventual finished product. The Lord, speaking of the issue of hardening one's heart against the Book of Mormon, said: "If this generation harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them" (D&C 10:53). All the religious confusion and contention in America could be swept away with a restoration of the Lord's primitive church if only the people would not harden their hearts against the Book of Mormon.

While Joseph waited to resume the translation of the plates in earnest, the nation entered a period of intense political conflict—the election of 1828—the one following the election of John Quincy Adams referred to above. New York's Martin Van Buren—who epitomized the rising new class of professional politicians—invested his future in the candidacy of Andrew Jackson and forged an opposition party to support it. Van Buren, in fact, defended the existence of political parties, traditionally thought to be dangerous. The election of 1828 was more contentious and slanderous than the nation had ever experienced. Jackson men accused Adams of being a gambler and a pimp, a snobby aristocrat, and a corrupt politician. Adams men branded Jackson a bastard and an adulterer or bigamist or both, a vengeful duelist and a military chieftain, an impetuous and dangerous man for the office, a potential tyrant (Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 91-94). Both campaigns invoked the fear that the virtuous republic was in decay. Interest in the campaign grew as the rhetoric grew more rancorous.

Most farming folk of the west identified with Jackson as a champion of the common man. This appeal, however, was far from universal. Many rural and evangelical Americans opposed Jackson for his connections to Freemasonry. The anti-Masonic hullabaloo streaked through the northeast following the mysterious disappearance in 1826 of ex-Mason William Morgan, who was

preparing an expose of the craft's secrets (see the notes on "The Morgan affair" in the section titled "Opposition to and Criticism of Freemasonry" in chapter , *Freemasonry and Mormonism*). Joseph did not write about the political persuasions or attitudes he held during this period of his life. We can only surmise that he despised the conflict in national politics as he did the conflict within American Christianity. Religious conflict had contributed to his rejection of the churches of the day. Political conflict had the potential of turning him away from governmental authority as well.

Following the loss of the one hundred sixteen pages of manuscript, the plates were taken from Joseph but returned in September, 1828. Having lost the financial and clerical support of Martin Harris, Joseph attempted some translating with his wife, Emma, and his brother Samuel while simultaneously attempting to provide for himself and Emma. He had eventually become "reduced in property," as he recalled, and Isaac Hale was ready to evict him. Things suddenly turned around with the arrival of Oliver Cowdery in Harmony in April 1829. Oliver became Joseph's new scribe. Oliver had become converted to the golden plates story while boarding with the Smith family in New York as a local teacher. He traveled to Harmony, Pennsylvania, eager to help. It may have been with Cowdery's recent teacher's pay that Joseph purchased a small 13-acre farm from Isaac Hale the day following Cowdery's arrival. They then set to translating the ancient record, which spanned through April and into May. When the two ran out of provisions, they searched for day labor but could find none. They continued with the help of Joseph Knight, Joseph's former Colesville employer, who provided them with paper, grain and potatoes, and a few other provisions.

In May, after translating a passage regarding the necessity of baptism for salvation, Joseph and Oliver prayed to know how they could be baptized. A heavenly messenger appeared to them in vision, announcing himself as John, the son of the Levitical priest Zacharias and the man who had baptized Jesus. The messenger conferred upon them the Old Testament priesthood of Aaron and the authority to baptize. Upon baptizing each other in the nearby Susquehanna, while still in the water, Joseph and Cowdery were filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied many things, including the restoration of the primitive church. "Our minds being now enlightened," Joseph recounted, "we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us, in a manner which we never could attain to previously" (*HC*, 18).

Sometime after this, Joseph and Oliver experienced another vision in which the apostles Peter, James, and John gave them the New Testament priesthood of the primitive church. Joseph and Oliver kept their new authority secret, however, "owing to a spirit of persecution which had already manifested

itself in the neighborhood.” In particular, they “had been threatened with being mobbed from time to time, and this too by professors of religion.”

To escape their threatening environment, Joseph and Oliver left Harmony, Pennsylvania, in late May and traveled to Fayette, New York. There, they received room and board at the family farm of Oliver’s friend David Whitmer, who agreed to support them until they could finish the translation. Joseph later recounted: “We continued to translate, at intervals, when not necessitated to attend to the numerous enquirers, that now began to visit us; some for the sake of finding the truth, others for the purpose of putting hard questions, and trying to confound us. Among the latter class, were several learned Priests [who] generally came for the purpose of disputation: However the Lord continued to pour out upon us his Holy Spirit, and as often as we had need, he gave us in that moment what to say; so that although unlearned, and inexperienced in religious controversies, yet were we able to confound those learned Rabbis of the day, whilst at the same time, we were enabled to convince the honest in heart” (*HC*, 26).

Joseph and Oliver had received the true priesthood and the Holy Ghost, by which they could confound the false priests and their learning and finish the translation. By the end of June, the work was complete. The new book of scripture, though ancient, was prophetic and had much to say to Joseph’s generation—particularly to the Whites and Native Americans of the American continent.

In the Revolutionary War fought by Joseph’s grandfathers, the British yoke of monarchy had been thrown off of America and a republic had taken its place. The former colonies had united in a confederation, soon formed “a more perfect union” under the federal constitution, and once again stood together against their common enemy in the War of 1812. The period of intense nationalism following the war was accompanied by a strong economic growth, which was fueled by the emerging market economy. The amended state constitutions of the early 1800s had thrown off the yoke of established religion, allowing all churches to compete equally in the religious marketplace. The hope of Joseph Smith’s grandfather Asael Smith, that America would be the stone seen in vision by Daniel, rolling forward to crush all political and religious tyranny, had been largely realized in Joseph’s life. But not in the sense Asael had anticipated. While making way for a nation free from political and religious tyranny, the rolling stone of democracy and disestablishment (withdrawal of state recognition of a particular church) had shattered the hopes of a harmonious republic and instead left social, political, and religious chaos in its wake.

The post-war boom in nationalism and in the national economy failed to square with the Smith family’s failed financial status. The Smiths had lost the title

to the farm in which they had invested so much time and effort. The Erie Canal, which had been dug right through Palmyra, should have carried their crops to market and sustained their household economy. Instead, it symbolized the surging market economy that was passing them by, giving rise to a new class system and increasing urban and rural differences. Joseph's poverty, lack of education, and rural culture subjected him to social discrimination and alienation.

In the great awakening of religion that swept through town, Methodists, Presbyterians, and other denominations were divided among each other, yet united against un-churched religious seekers. Joseph's golden plates and their translation brought on him personal attack and the threat of mobs. In a democratic society, economic and religious issues inevitably translate into the political sphere, which was becoming increasingly divisive. Joseph found himself living in an era of corrupt priests and politicians who had divided the Christian republic into a contentious society of sects and parties. The Book of Mormon and Joseph's subsequent revelations would meditate much on the causes and consequences of social and political turmoil and would develop a concept and plan for a righteous and just society.

**The influences of the Book of Mormon.** Joseph represented the Book of Mormon to the people as what it really was—the scriptural record of an ancient people. Joseph Smith's oral dictation of the text to Oliver Cowdery and other scribes unfolded the saga of the Nephites—a group of Christian Israelites that had once lived somewhere in the Americas. Just before the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon some six centuries prior to Christ's mortal advent, the Lord had led the family of the prophet Lehi from the area of Jerusalem through the desert and across the ocean to a new promised land. After arriving in the Americas, the family of Lehi divided into two groups: those who followed Laman, the oldest but most wicked son—the Lamanites—and those who followed Nephi, a younger but righteous son—the Nephites. Nephi and his righteous posterity kept the record that Joseph Smith claimed to have discovered in a hill nearby his boyhood home. The record of the Nephites chronicled their ongoing wars with the Lamanites and the continual efforts of the Lord's prophets to reform society. Also appended to the Book of Mormon is a brief history of the Jaredites, an earlier group of immigrants that came to the Americas during the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel. The Nephite and Jaredite records reveal God's hand in the history of ancient American civilizations.

Published in 1830, this text of over 500 pages rivals in size the balance of Joseph's other personal writings and dictations. The history of the Nephites is rife with political ideas and implications. The historical analysis and commentary of the ancient American prophets ruminates more on political ideas than the revelations Joseph subsequently dictated while trying to make his vision of

society a reality. Of necessity, Joseph's later revelations often concern themselves with the mundane mechanics of putting the ideas into practice—who to send where on what church business and the like. The Book of Mormon, therefore, is a fundamental document for understanding the early Mormon worldview. Read closely, it presents a complex but distinct message about America as a chosen land of liberty established by divine providence but facing social divisions that threaten its survival. America was “the land which is choice above all other lands” (1 Nephi 13:30; see also 1 Nephi 2:20; 2 Nephi 3:2,1:5, 10:19; Alma 46:17; Ether 2:7,10,12,15, 9:20; 13:2). The Lord therefore required that “all men should serve him who dwell upon the face thereof” (Ether 13:2; see also 2 Nephi 10:19; Ether 2:10, 15). Many in the early republic viewed America as an Edenic land in a natural state, where the influence of the corrupted governments of Europe could be cast off. The Book of Mormon explicitly taught that the Lord had maintained the Americas as such a land.

The Lord promised the Jaredites great blessings for their righteousness, but he also “had sworn in his wrath unto the brother of Jared, that whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fulness of his wrath should come upon them” (Ether 2:8; see also 2:9, 15). There was thus both “the cursing and the blessing of God upon the land” (Alma 45:16; see also Jacob 2:29, 3:3; Enos 1:10; Alma 37:28, 31; Helaman 13:17-36; Mormon 1:17-18; Ether 7:23, 9:28; 11:6; 14:1).

The prophets of the Book of Mormon constantly reminded the people of this dual aspect of the chosen land (1 Nephi 4:14; 2 Nephi 1:7-11, 3:2, 4:4; Enos 1:10; Jarom 1:10; Omni 1:6; Mosiah 2:22; Alma 9:24, 36:30, 37:13, 50:20-22; Ether 9:20). The curse on the land was born out among the Jaredites when they destroyed themselves in civil war. The prophets had warned them that if they did not repent, “the Lord God would execute judgment against them to their utter destruction; And that the Lord God would send or bring forth another people to possess the land” (Ether 11:20-21; see also 13:21). When the Nephites reached a “fulness of iniquity” the Lord completely destroyed them by the hand of the Lamanites (Ether 2:12; Mormon 8:1-8).

In addition to prosperity, the Lord's blessing on the Americas included freedom and political independence. Lehi explained the conditional nature of America's freedom to his children. He prophesied that should their progeny obey the commandments, “it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity” (2 Nephi 1:7-9; see also Alma 46:17).

The Book of Mormon explicitly teaches that these conditions of the land were enduring principles. They would apply in the future as well as they had in

the past. Lehi, in the very act of settling his family in the promised land, prophesied that in a future day his progeny would be largely displaced by a new group of immigrants “brought by the hand of the Lord.” The Lord would bring this new people out of the “gentile” nations. Nephi, Lehi’s son, saw these future inhabitants in vision (1 Nephi 13:12; 2 Nephi 1:5-6). Regardless of their actual blood-line origins, they are referred to in the book as “Gentiles,” and the nation they would found is “the great Gentile nation.”

The blessing and cursing attached to the land extended to the last days and to the great Gentile nation. Thus, while the modern American “Gentiles” would enjoy the blessing of the land while righteous, should they turn to wickedness they would face the same curse suffered by the Jaredites and Nephites before them. Political independence was a part of the blessing of the American continent. “Whatsoever nation shall possess it,” the prophet Moroni wrote, “shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven” so long as they would serve the “God of the land” (Ether 2:12; see also 2 Nephi 1:7). Thus, after their escape from “captivity” in Europe, America would be “a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land” (1 Nephi 13:30; 2 Nephi 10:11). If, however, the American Gentiles turned away from the Lord, they could return to a state of bondage and captivity (1 Nephi 14:6-7).

The Book of Mormon is political history on the grand scale of the rise and fall of civilizations. Both the Jaredite and Nephite histories began with an exodus from wicked civilizations facing an impending doom. Both groups were brought to the Americas to found civilization anew. Upon instructing the Brother of Jared and his family to leave Babel, the Lord promised him he would make them a “great nation” and that there would be “none greater than the nation which I will raise up unto me of thy seed, upon all the face of the earth.” The Lord also promised to make a “nation” in the Americas among the children of Lehi (1 Nephi 14:6-7).

When Lehi died not long after his family’s arrival in the Americas, those sympathetic to the older brother Laman sought to kill Nephi. Warned of the Lord, Nephi took the brass plates (essentially an Old Testament record) and those who would follow him—soon called “Nephites”—to new country. Nephi and his brother Jacob used the brass plates to teach the Nephites the commandments. The Lord also commanded Nephi to begin keeping a record of his own people. With the word of God recorded in their scriptures, the Nephites founded a prosperous civilization. In contrast, the group that stayed with Laman—soon called the Lamanites—neglected the commandments and kept no record of themselves. They had no prophets and therefore no sacred record of their own to keep. Whereas the commandment-and-record-keeping Nephites built a

civilization, the negligent Lamanites became a wild and nomadic people. The Lord cursed them with a dark skin to make them unattractive to the Nephites, who subsequently described the Lamanites as filthy and loathsome, mischievous and subtle, wicked and evil-natured, ferocious and bloodthirsty (2 Nephi 5:15-17, 20-25; Jacob 3:5; Enos 1:20-21; Mosiah 10:12; Alma 17:14).

The first Nephite nation did, however, come to ruin within a few hundred years. Escaping the crumbling society, in about 210 BC, a prophet named Mosiah led a group of righteous Nephites on another exodus. They traveled to a land called Zarahemla, where they encountered the Mulekites—another group of people the Lord had brought from Jerusalem to the promised land. Mulek, of the royal Jerusalem household, had escaped just before the Babylonian conquest. Like the Lamanites, the record-less Mulekites provided a foil to the record-bearing Nephites. While the brass plates kept Mosiah's group of Nephites from having "dwindled in unbelief," the Mulekites "had brought no records with them; and they denied the being of their Creator." The Mulekites received the Nephite exiles and united with them under the leadership of Mosiah "because the Lord had sent the people of Mosiah with the plates of brass which contained the record of the Jews." In terms of political leadership, the immigrants' possession of the Hebrew scriptures trumped even the royal ancestry of the native inhabitants of the land (Omni 1:14-19).

The Nephite and Jaredite histories follow a cyclical pattern of righteousness and wickedness among leaders and the populace reminiscent of ancient Israel's national history as recorded in the books of Kings and Chronicles. While wicked rulers brought the Jaredites to the brink of destruction, righteous rulers established peace, built great cities, and extended the territory of their kingdoms. Under the reign of the righteous King Lib, the Jaredites realized all the blessings of the American continent: "Never could be a people more blessed than were they, and more prospered by the hand of the Lord" (Ether 10:28). Generations later, the Jaredite national history came to a close with the disintegration of the government, whereupon "there began to be a war upon all the face of the land, every man with his band fighting for that which he desired." Without any established order, "all the people upon the face of the land were shedding blood, and there was none to restrain them" (Ether 13:31).

After going through several minor cycles of their own, the Nephite-Mulekite civilization finally collapsed around AD 30. When its chief judge was assassinated, the corrupted government failed and the nation disintegrated into tribes (3 Nephi 6:30-7:14). However, following Christ's resurrection in the old world, he destroyed the wicked cities in the Americas, reestablished civil society among the surviving Nephites and Lamanites, and "did prosper them exceedingly in the land." After two centuries, however, this resuscitated civilization also

began to falter. They soon re-divided into “Nephites” and “Lamanites” who went to war and committed great atrocities against each other. As wicked as the entirely disbelieving Lamanites were, the Nephites were worse. After capturing Lamanite girls, they would rape them, torture them to death, and then “devour their flesh like unto wild beasts” (Moroni 9:9-10). In a letter to his son Moroni, the prophet Mormon asked if God could spare such a people “without civilization” (Moroni 9:11-14).

In documenting the demise of the Nephites and Jaredites and the causes thereof, the national histories recorded in the Book of Mormon provide a voice of warning to future American nations. To the latter-day Gentiles, the nation’s final prophet-historian wrote, “This cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done” (Ether 2:11). The Book of Mormon thus made the lessons of the land available to future nations.

The identification of *Gentiles* and *Israelites* in the Book of Mormon demands a close look. The *Gentiles* are generally the European Christian immigrants in the United States. Obviously, many of these are actually Israelites descendants. The identification of *Israelites* or the *Israelite remnant* is a bit problematic. It would seem that Joseph, in his day, regarded the Native American Indians as Israelites. Further, he felt that the Indians were descendants of Book of Mormon peoples. Most scholars concerned today with Book of Mormon geography have concluded that the Book of Mormon story took place in a limited location in Central America probably not larger than two hundred by seven hundred miles. Also, it is now believed that when Lehi and his party landed in the Western Hemisphere, he found the land already inhabited with many different peoples. Today, most scholars feel that most of the North American Indians are not of Book of Mormon origin. They likely stem from many various sources. Actually, then, the meaning of the term “Israelite remnant” in the Book of Mormon is not clear. It could refer to all North American Indians, though, as mentioned, many of these are likely of non-Israelite origin. It could refer to Western Hemisphere natives in North, Central, and South America. Perhaps it refers exclusively to any remnants of Book of Mormon peoples that may exist in North, Central, or South America. Or, it could refer to any Israelite immigrant into this country.

The Lord would use the new Americans—the Gentiles—as a “scourge” to chasten the Israelite remnant (3 Nephi 20:28; see also 1 Nephi 13:34). “By the hand of the gentiles,” the Lord “laid siege” against the Indians and “raised forts against them” (2 Nephi 26:15). The Indians would be “driven to and fro upon the face of the earth, and be hunted” (Helaman 15:12; see also 1 Nephi 22:7; 3

Nephi 16:8; Mormon 5:20). In this manner, the Lord declared, “I have caused my people who are of the house of Israel to be smitten, and to be afflicted, and to be slain, and to be cast out from among them, and to become hated by them, and to become a hiss and a byword among them” (3 Nephi 16:9; see also 16:8). Under God’s chastening hand, the Indians would be “brought down low in the dust” (2 Nephi 26:15). However, because the Lord had covenanted with Lehi that the land was consecrated to “his seed” forever, he would not allow the American Gentiles to “utterly destroy” the Indians (1 Nephi 13:30-31; see also Helaman 15:12-13).

Nephi beheld in vision that the Gentiles who inherited the Americas prospered in the land and that a book “was carried forth among them.” This was the Bible. An angel explained to Nephi that this book contained the writings of the ancient Jewish prophets and was “a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel.” For this reason, the book was “of great worth unto the Gentiles,” just as the brass plates had been “of great worth” to Lehi and his family (1 Nephi 13:20-23). The Gentiles thus came into the Americas with the Hebrew scriptures just as Lehi and his family had come centuries earlier with the brass plates—and as the children of Israel had come into Canaan with the original Hebrew scriptures inscribed on stone tablets. Like ancient Israel and the Nephite nation, the United States would be built on the foundation of the scriptures—the Bible.

The Book of Mormon shows that Joseph Smith viewed America from within a very literal biblical framework of promised lands and sacred covenants. The possibility of the United States’ downfall, therefore, was just as real to Joseph as its recent rise to power. Joseph viewed the American Revolution and the establishment of the United States as harbingers of the millennium. But Joseph did not really believe in America’s extended future. The Book of Mormon singled out the American Gentiles from other nations, but ultimately classified them with the other gentile nations that rose and fell through the ages. The Book of Mormon also identified a fatal flaw in the foundations of the new American civilization. The United States had been built on an imperfect civic text. Unlike the brass plates, the scriptures that the American Gentiles carried with them had been corrupted. The angel explained to Nephi in his vision that “many plain and precious things” had been removed from the Bible; the Gentiles had the gospel but not a “fullness of the gospel.” The removal of these plain teachings from their scriptures put the Gentiles in an “awful state of blindness” in which many would “stumble exceedingly”—even to the point that the devil overpowered them (1 Nephi 13:29-35). The fullness of the gospel would be revealed by the discovery and translation of the Book of Mormon. The American Israelites, along with a

few of the American Gentiles, would find the Book of Mormon to be “of great worth” (1 Nephi 22:8; 2 Nephi 25:8, 28:2; see also 2 Nephi 3:7, 33:3; Mormon 8:14).

This is the point at which Joseph’s eschatology would veer sharply away from that of his countrymen. The latter-day appearance of the Book of Mormon, an ancient Israelite record, signaled the imminent restoration of an Israelite nation in the Americas. Protestant rhetoric of Joseph’s day included Jeremiah-like warnings (“jeremiads”) to Israel to repent or be destroyed. The purpose of the conventional American jeremiad was to take its audience to the brink of ruin to let them peer over the edge in order to scare them back. It explained current conditions as temporary, not terminal, disease—as loving chastisements meant to put America back on the track of its divine errand. The American jeremiad always concluded with optimism for America’s future (see Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 6-9). The Book of Mormon did not. The Book of Mormon negated its own open-ended warnings with prophecies of certain failure.

Protestants saw America’s immigrants as metaphorical Israel. The Book of Mormon cast the European immigrants—American Gentiles—as the scourge that would chasten American Israelites—assumed by Joseph to be Native American Indians—and prepare them for their return to power. As the American Gentiles rejected the Book of Mormon and the American Israelites accepted it, the United States would begin to fall and the Indians would begin to rise. The Lord would remember and reinstate the covenant he had made with their father Lehi that the land would belong to his seed forever. As the Gentiles had initially gone forth with the Bible conquering the Indians, the Book of Mormon would allow the Israelite remnant (the Native American Indians) to eventually realize their status as a covenant people.

Those Gentiles who would accept the Book of Mormon and the fullness of the Gospel would join the Indians and be “numbered among the house of Israel.” The Book of Mormon would become the founding text for a new American civilization that would rise but never fall. Joseph believed the very existence of the Book of Mormon implied the demise of the United States. The land of America was blessed but it was also cursed. While a land of freedom and prosperity for the righteous, America was simultaneously a land of bondage and destruction for those people that turned away from the Lord. The Book of Mormon then was much more than a religious book. It testified that Christ was the author of political freedom as well as eternal salvation. It warned America that it would lose the blessings of freedom if it did not repent.

The desire for peace and harmony in society pervades the Book of Mormon—as does a deep concern over any form of social strife. The Book of Mormon prophets couched much of their social commentary in the dual

framework of peace and contention. They addressed religious, economic, and political developments in Nephite history in terms of this framework. Peace and contention, in fact, frame the entire Nephite saga. The Book of Mormon opens with a narrative involving contention in the family of Lehi over religious devotion and righteousness. In the Americas, the family divided into two nations whose wars occupy much of their subsequent history. Though the Book of Mormon is primarily a work of scripture, like the Bible, the Nephites also described it as a record of “their wars, and their contentions, and the reigns of their kings” (Jacob 3:13). In the end, Nephite contention over religious belief, economic and social status, and political affiliation would culminate in civil wars, foreign wars, and destruction.

True religion in the Book of Mormon meant to establish social harmony and unity. Nephi taught those who followed him the commandments that “men should not murder; that they should not lie; that they should not steal; that they should not take the name of the Lord their God in vain; that they should not envy; that they should not have malice; that they should not contend one with another” (2 Nephi 26:32-33). Nephi also proclaimed God’s willingness and desire to accept and save all of humankind, “black and white, bond and free, male and female.” Divisions and enmities based on race, class, or gender could and should melt away within the church. When the elder Alma founded the church, he commanded the members “that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another” (2 Nephi 26:32, 33, Mosiah 18:17, 21).

This harmony included doctrinal unity. For example, when the church faced “a few contentions concerning the points of doctrine, which had been laid down by the prophets,” it resulted in “much strife.” But the current Nephite prophets “who knew concerning the true points of doctrine, having many revelations daily . . . did put an end to their strife in that same year” (Helaman 11:22-23). The best solution for differences of scriptural interpretation was not a tolerant religious pluralism, but rather restored unity through new scripture (see also 3 Nephi 1:24-25). The resurrected Christ also resolved doctrinal disputes when he appeared in the Americas (see 3 Nephi 11:8-22, especially 22). After teaching the proper mode of baptism, he declared, “there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been. . . . Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away” (3 Nephi 11:28-30; see also 18:34). The religious unity established by Christ lasted for two centuries. The religious peace ended when the people built “many

churches in the land.” The people had come to follow “many priests and false prophets to build up many churches, and to do all manner of iniquity” (4 Nephi 1:27, 34).

Nephi prophesied a similar situation in the last days, when the removal of many “plain and precious parts” from the Bible would constitute a “stumbling block” for the Gentiles—causing doctrinal confusion and disagreement. In his vision, Nephi foresaw “there are many churches built up which cause envyings, and strifes, and malice” because their members “contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another” (2 Nephi 26:20-21, 28:4). However, whereas the corruption of the revelations (the Bible) led to religious disputation, new revelation would resolve the controversy. The translated Book of Mormon would join with the Bible “unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace” (2 Nephi 3:12).

Ideal harmony in the church was not only religious but economic. Church law mandated that “there should be an equality among all men; That they should let no pride nor haughtiness disturb their peace; that every man should esteem his neighbor as himself, laboring with their own hands for their support” (Mosiah 27:4-5). Supporting one’s own self included ministers as well, who “did impart the word of God, one with another, without money and without price” (Alma 1:20). In the Nephite church, “the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal” (Mosiah 27:3-4; Alma 1: 20, 26; see also Alma 5:49, 6:5,16:14,16; Helaman 3:34; 4 Nephi 1:41). The Book of Mormon prophets held that inequalities of wealth would necessarily result in contention between different socioeconomic classes (see, for example, Jacob 2:13). The Book of Mormon also criticized the wealthy for further enriching themselves through their privileged access to education and professional occupations (3 Nephi 6:10-12; also 14).

The Book of Mormon prophets criticized economic and social division as much or more than they criticized religious division. The elder Alma, when he founded the church, commanded that the people of the church should impart of their substance, every one according to that which he had; if he have more abundantly he should impart more abundantly; and of him that had but little, but little should be required; and to him that had not should be given. And thus they should impart of their substance of their own free will and good desires toward God, and to those priests that stood in need, yea, and to every needy, naked soul (Mosiah 18:27-28; see also Alma 1:27, 30, 5:55).

While differing markedly in spirit from the rampant individualism of Jacksonian America, this was no Marxist call for class revolution. When the younger Alma preached to the poor who had been cast out of the Zoramite churches, he admonished them that they “not revile against those who do cast

you out because of your exceeding poverty, lest ye become sinners like unto them.” Class conflict would only deepen the antagonism in society.

Although the Book of Mormon generally criticized riches, it envisioned the possibility of great wealth spread evenly through society. The solution was to concern oneself with people instead of possessions (Jacob 2:17-19; see also 2 Nephi 9:28-29). When Jesus Christ visited the Americas following his resurrection, he established a social and economic utopia: “there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things in common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift” (4 Nephi 1:2-3; see also 3 Nephi 26:19). After two centuries, however, pride eventually found its way back into the hearts of the people: “And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them. And they began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain” (4 Nephi 1:26).

The Book of Mormon occasionally associates the quest for wealth and popularity with the quest for political power. Satan tempted men “to seek for power, and authority, and riches, and the vain things of the world” (3 Nephi 6:15). In the Book of Mormon, the professional class of lawyers fed off of social disputes not only through private work for hire but through official appointments in the judicial system (Alma 10:14; 24; see also Jacob 7:2; Mosiah 11:7; Alma 1:3, 30:47,46:7,10; Helaman 1:7, 2:5, 13:28, 3 Nephi 1:29, 7:12; Ether 8:2). Through judicial appointments, the lawyers had entered into a relationship with the judges that threatened to corrupt the government and the nation (the judges and lawyers in Ammonihah repeatedly appear together; see Alma 14:2, 5,14:18, 23-25; see also Alma 10:27).

An attempt to reestablish a monarchy in the early years of the reign of the judges further illustrates the connection between class division and political division. The movement divided the nation into two parties: the “king-men” and the “freemen.” The monarchist party (king-men) was led by men of “high birth” who “professed the blood of nobility.” These men “sought to be kings; and they were supported by those who sought power and authority over the people” (Alma 51:5-6, 8, 21). Another party of monarchists rose shortly before the appearance of the resurrected Christ. This elite society was composed of chief judges, chief priests, and lawyers—with their “friends and kindreds.” They plotted to assassinate the chief judge and replace him with a king (3 Nephi 6:20-7:6). In these narratives, where class differences eventually lead to professions of nobility and attempts to establish a monarchal form of government, the Book of Mormon makes a dramatic connection between class and politics.

As with religious division and social strife, the Book of Mormon condemns political contention. The rare contest for political appointment consistently appears in negative hues, while the transition of power from a chief judge to his son generally appears as a peaceful episode (Alma 50:39; Helaman 3:37, 6:17-19; 3 Nephi 1:2, 6:19; compare Mosiah 29:42; Alma 5:3, 62:43). The orderly hierarchy of the supreme chief judge, the other chief judges, and the lower judges contributed to political harmony within the Nephite government—which exhibited nothing in the way of separation of powers or a theory of checks and balances. The chief judge was actually both “chief judge and governor”—judiciary and executive officer (see, for example, Alma 2:16, 30:29, 50:39; Helaman 1:5,13; 3 Nephi 1:1). The Book of Mormon does not partake in the American paranoia with concentrated power. Power seemed to exist independent of virtue and vice. The wicked sought for power through various means—flattery, patronage, bribery, intrigue, fraud, and assassination—and then used that power to support their iniquity. The virtuous accepted power reluctantly when it was thrust upon them and then used it on behalf of the public good. In all the book’s narratives of righteous and wicked kings, power never corrupts. No Saul or David can be found in its pages. The balance of concern in the Book of Mormon rests not on the danger of power and the need to check it, but on the social necessity of concentrated power in order to keep the peace and protect the innocent. The chief judge even used the Nephite armies to enforce domestic tranquility (see Alma 50:39, 51:22; 3 Nephi 6:6).

Under the reign of the judges, the main danger of having so much political power concentrated in one individual was the destabilizing threat of assassination. When a conspiracy led by Jacob murdered the chief judge, it led to a political collapse: “The people were divided one against another; and they did separate one from another into tribes” (3 Nephi 7:1-2; also 7). In the natural disasters that preceded the appearance of the resurrected Christ, Jacob’s city was among several destroyed. A voice from heaven singled out the city from among the rest as “above all the wickedness of the whole earth. . . . for it was they that did destroy the peace of my people and the government of the land” (3 Nephi 9:9; see also 7:6). Destroying the government and the social order and peace it maintained constituted the greatest offense toward God and merited his greatest condemnation.

Several narratives in the Book of Mormon trace the escalation of social contention to the point of violence and even civil war. For example, about twenty years before the sign of Christ’s birth, “there began to be contentions insomuch that they were divided against themselves and began to slay one another with the sword” (Helaman 10:18; compare 4:1). Then the “contentions did increase, insomuch that there were wars throughout all the land among all the people of

Nephi” (Helaman 11:1; early in the reign of the judges a monarchist movement caused a brief civil war; Alma 2:5-6). The national history of the Jaredites chronicles numerous instances of civil war (Ether 15). Civil war within the Nephite nation posed an exceptionally acute danger to that nation during times of war against the Lamanite kingdom (Alma 60:16; see also 51:9,16; 48:20; 53:9; 60:24).

Shortly after the publication of the Book of Mormon, Daniel Webster would explicate the threat disunion and civil war posed to American independence in his famous debate with Robert Hayne. Webster maintained that a country’s liberty and that country’s union were inseparable. He despaired over “the chances of preserving liberty, when the bonds that unite us together shall be broken asunder” (Belz, ed., *The Webster-Hayne Debate on the Nature of the Union*, 143-44; Webster had earlier attributed this doctrine that “the Union of the States is essential to the prosperity and safety of the States” to the “framers of the constitution themselves”). The Book of Mormon accentuated this idea by portraying the Nephite wars with the Lamanites as extensions of their own civil wars. Lehi, the father of both nations, had given it as his dying admonition that his children “be determined in one mind and in one heart, united in all things” (2 Nephi 1:21).

When Jesus Christ visited the Americas following his resurrection, he effected the complete resolution of the original contention among the children of Lehi: “There was no contention among all the people, in all the land. . . . neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.” This unity lasted for two centuries before “there was a great division among the people” (4 Nephi 1:13-17, 35). Those who turned away from the gospel and separated themselves from the church eventually made a political separation as well. The two groups adopted the old national nomenclature of “Nephites” and “Lamanites.” When the countries went to war, “there was blood and carnage spread throughout all the face of the land, both on the part of the Nephites and also on the part of the Lamanites; and it was one complete revolution throughout all the face of the land” (Mormon 2:8). The prophet Mormon recorded that “every heart was hardened, so that they delighted in the shedding of blood continually. . . . there never had been so great wickedness among all the children of Lehi, nor even among all the house of Israel.” He wrote to his son Moroni that the Nephites had “lost their love, one towards another; and they thirst after blood and revenge continually.” The Nephite-Lamanite war had become a war of extermination. Facing the likelihood of a Nephite defeat, Mormon wrote, “If they perish it will be like unto the Jaredites, because of the wilfulness of their hearts, seeking for

blood and revenge” (Mormon 4:11-12; Moroni 9:5, 23). The bloodthirsty Nephites waged war to the bitter end. The book closes with their annihilation.

Through numerous incidents and episodes, the epic of the Nephites established the interconnectedness of religion, class, and politics. The narratives tethered political conflict to broader patterns of social division and strife. The Book of Mormon traced the history of the Nephites to the point of a nation suffering from religious dissent and persecution, social stratification and oppression, political divisions and conflicts, and civil and foreign wars. But the book also held forth the possibility of a society that is both free and peaceful. After the appearance of Christ, the people lived in love and harmony with one religion, one class, and one nation. Two centuries later, they had again divided into separate churches, unequal classes, and enemy nations. This time, the Book of Mormon followed the trajectory of escalating contention to its ultimate extremity: national extinction. In the last days, the record of these ancient peoples would serve as the foundational text for a new society united in its religious belief, economic effort, and social order.

Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon affirmed that America was a special land of liberty blessed by the Lord. It affirmed the Lord’s hand in America’s deliverance from the bondage of European monarchy. But it also warned that the nation was being internally divided by religious controversy, social stratification, and political parties. The Book of Mormon also spoke to the rise of violence in Jacksonian America and the threat of civil war. This contention and violence loomed as the unrighteousness that would deprive them of the blessings of freedom. The Book of Mormon, therefore, indicted the American Gentiles as a once humble people who when prospered had become proud, envious, and contentious. Once blessed of the Lord, they would soon be cursed.

The ongoing history of chosen people in the chosen land would continue with the return to power of the Israelite “remnant” (in Joseph’s view at that time, the Native American Indians). This brings to the fore the fundamental questions regarding the nature of “Israelite” government (as opposed to “Gentile” government) in the Americas. The Book of Mormon describes the structure of godly government and the role of that government in preserving freedom and keeping peace. The Book of Mormon not only prophesies of a future American Israel, but outlined the shape of Israelite government in the Americas. The Nephite record includes numerous teachings on the structure and role of government and its relationship to true religion and to the true church.

The transition from the reign of kings to the reign of judges constitutes the pivotal political development in the Book of Mormon. Book of Mormon political configurations followed an Old Testament paradigm. After delivering the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, Moses received the religious and civil law of

God for Israel and instituted a system of judges to govern the affairs of the people. Moses initially judged all disputes by himself, but his father-in-law, Jethro, convinced him to train and appoint lesser judges. Moses became something of a chief judge, reserving the most difficult cases for himself (Exodus 18:13-26). After the conquest of Canaan, the Israelites lived under the reign of the judges for several generations (See Judges). But in the days of the prophet Samuel, the Israelites requested that he appoint a king to rule over them (1 Samuel 8:20). Samuel warned them that kings would claim their best fields and vineyards, tax their herds and flocks, and impress their sons and daughters as soldiers and servants. However, with God's permission and direction to follow "the voice of the people," Samuel appointed Saul the first king of Israel and later established the royal house of David (1 Samuel 8:7; see also 1 Samuel 8-2 Samuel 8). Not only did the kings of Israel burden their people, as Samuel had warned, but many of them turned away from the Lord and inflicted their corruption upon the kingdom. The cycle of righteous and wicked kings in the Old Testament finally ended in the conquest of Israel by foreign powers.

Departing from Israel after centuries of rule by kings, the Nephites and Lamanites naturally established their own monarchies—their own kings. However, the remnant of Israel in America would eventually restore the primitive pattern of Israelite government. The Nephite transition from kings to judges must be understood against this biblical backdrop.

Like the Old World Israelites under Samuel, the New World Israelites wanted a king. This system worked well for a time due to the diligence and righteousness of the kings. In Nephi's words, "they would that I should be their king I, Nephi, was desirous that they should have no king; nevertheless, I did for them according to that which was in my power" (2 Nephi 5:17). Unlike the demanding Israelite kings, Nephi "labored in all his days for their welfare" (Jacob 1:10; see also 2 Nephi 6:2). In the second Nephite kingdom in the new land of Zarahemla, Mosiah was succeeded by his son Benjamin, who was succeeded by his son Mosiah (Omni 1:23; Mosiah 2:30-31, 6:3-6). As had Nephi, these first monarchs of the new Nephite kingdom spent their reigns in the service of their people (Mosiah 2:10-28, 6:7, 29:13). Like Nephi, Benjamin also served as a protector to his people and himself wielded the sword of Laban in defense of his people (Words of Mormon 1:13). Like Moses, Benjamin's son Mosiah established as law the commandments he received from the Lord (Alma 1:1; also Mosiah 2:31; Alma 1:14, 27:9; Helaman 4:22). Mosiah also reasserted among the combined group of Nephites and Mulekites "the laws which have been given you by our fathers, which are correct, and which were given them by the hand of the Lord" (Mosiah 29:25).

This was apparently a modified version of the Law of Moses as it had been lived by the Israelite ancestors of the Nephites and Mulekites. When Lehi's family first arrived in the promised land, he explained, "I desire that ye should remember to observe the statutes and the judgments of the Lord; behold, this hath been the anxiety of my soul from the beginning" (2 Nephi 1:6). This passage echoes the phrasing in Deuteronomy referring to the Law of Moses that the Israelites were supposed to live by in their original promised land: "These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the Lord God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it" (Deuteronomy 12:1; see also 16:12; 3 Nephi 25:4). Deuteronomy also refers to the Mosaic law as God's "commandments and his statutes" (Deuteronomy 27:10). After Lehi's death, his oldest children turned to wickedness and threatened those who followed the teachings of their younger brother Nephi. However, when Nephi led his disciples to a new land, they "did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses" (2 Nephi 5:10). These evidently became law in the Nephite kingdom. The Law of Moses—and its American adaptation—was not only religious but political. Nephi took the brass plates, which contained the Law of Moses, so that his "nation" would not dwindle in unbelief (1 Nephi 4:13, 5:10-16; 2 Nephi 5:5-12).

At the end of his reign, Mosiah, the son of Benjamin, reintroduced the ancient Israelite government of judges instituted by Moses. Mosiah enjoined his people to "appoint wise men to be judges, that will judge this people according to the commandments of God. Now it is better that a man should be judged of God than of man, for the judgments of God are always just, but the judgments of man are not always just." Whereas kings had the authority to establish and rescind law, judges could only rule on established law. If that law were the commandments of God, the judges would rule accordingly. Citing the example of his father, Benjamin, Mosiah held that "if it were possible that you could have just men to be your kings, who would establish the laws of God, and judge this people according to his commandments, yea . . . if this could always be the case then it would be expedient that ye should always have kings to rule over you." Yet there was no guarantee on this. Mosiah explained that "an iniquitous king . . . tearth up the law of those who have reigned in righteousness before him; and he trampleth under his feet the commandments of God; And he enacteth laws, and sendeth them forth among his people, yea, laws after the manner of his own wickedness" (Mosiah 29:11-13, 21-23). In contrast, the new regime of judges would govern according to the commandments of the Lord—as they had after the Law of Moses was established (Mosiah 29:25, 39, 41). Ideally, kings were righteous men—even prophets—and monarchy was a form of theocracy. Because of dependence on God's law, a stable system of judges was even more

theocratic. The transition from monarchy to judges therefore was a shift in the direction of greater theocracy.

The transition from kings to judges was a shift not only toward theocracy but toward democracy. Whereas monarchs inherited the throne by birthright, judges were appointed “by the voice of the people” (Mosiah 29:25; see also Mosiah 29:39; Helaman 1:5,13; 2:2). And whereas an evil king would use his power to retain his position, an unrighteous judge could be removed through orderly channels upon complaint. Mosiah taught his people, “ye cannot dethrone an iniquitous king save it be through much contention, and the shedding of much blood. For behold, he has his friends in iniquity, and he keepeth his guards about him . . . and whosoever doth rebel against him he will send his armies against them to war, and if he can he will destroy them” (Mosiah 29:21-23). In contrast, any judge who abused or neglected his authority could be judged by a higher judge, and the chief judge could be judged by a group of lower judges “according to the voice of the people” (Mosiah 29:28-29; 3 Nephi 6:25). The law of Mosiah also established a procedure by which the voice of the people could fundamentally alter the law (Alma 2:3-7, 4:16, 51:7; Helaman 5:2; 3 Nephi 6:4). As Mosiah explained, “it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right” (Mosiah 29:26).

The virtue of the majority was “common” but not guaranteed. The majority of the people were only less likely to choose wrong than a minority of the people or an absolute minority of one—a king. The possibility of an unvirtuous majority existed as a conscious reality, and as Mosiah warned, “if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you; yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction” (Mosiah 29:27; see also Alma 10:19). Democracy, the rule of the people, was good only if the people were good. If the people turned to wickedness, they were better off ruled by a righteous king.

In addition to propounding a particular form of government, the Book of Mormon identifies a threatening form of counter-government in the various “secret combinations” that plagued both the Nephite judges and the Jaredite kings (Ether 7-14). These secret bands sought to usurp the power of government office through intrigue and assassination (see, for example, Helaman 2:8, 6:17-19, 7:21; Ether 8:16, 23, 9:5-6, 14:7-10). Secret combinations only flourished when the larger society willingly tolerated them. The system of judges initiated by King Mosiah served in part to place the burden of responsibility for good government upon the people, and this included a wary vigilance to keep corruption from seeping into power. Although it was a secret combination of high judges and others who assassinated the chief judge and

destroyed the Nephite government, the general populace was at fault: “All this iniquity had come upon the people because they did yield themselves unto the power of Satan” (3 Nephi 7:5. Compare Ether 9:6). The success of secret combinations, therefore, implicated the general citizenry.

The Book of Mormon, in fact, documents the failure of democracy. By the birth of Jesus Christ, the Nephites had appointed several wicked judges and “had altered and trampled under their feet the laws of Mosiah, or that which the Lord commanded him to give unto the people; and they saw that their laws had become corrupted, and that they had become a wicked people” (Helaman 4:22; 8:1). The good government laws established by a king had been ruined by the people: “For as their laws and their governments were established by the voice of the people, and they who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good, therefore they were ripening for destruction, for the laws had become corrupted” (Helaman 5:2; see also 8:1). These passages complicate a simplistic democratic reading of the Book of Mormon (See Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 115-20). Joseph knew that a democratic system could become corrupt and fail.

As a work of both history and prophecy, the Book of Mormon applied its political analysis to the last days. Nephi, conveying his vision of the American Gentiles, wrote, “There are many churches” and “there are also secret combinations” (2 Nephi 26:20-22). The American Gentiles had been inspired and empowered by God and delivered from the captivity of Europe, but their providentially established government faced the threat of Satan-inspired churches and political conspiracies. The Book of Mormon’s concern with government corruption through secret agreements and political spoils paralleled the concern of many Americans during the presidential politics of the 1820s. In the alleged “corrupt bargain” of 1824, John Quincy Adams secretly offered Henry Clay the spoils of succession for his support in the House election. While many saw Jackson as the people’s choice, others believed he obtained the presidency through the support of the secret brotherhood of Freemasons. Jackson’s critics held that his rhetoric of healthy rotation in government offices only masked his award of government posts to political supporters as spoils of conquest. The Book of Mormon stridently asserted that the toleration of this kind of corruption in government implicated the general populace.

Like Nephi, the prophet Moroni also foretold secret combinations among the Gentiles in the latter days. Moroni explained that those who organized these secret combinations sought to “overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries,” and that “whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed” (Ether 8:22, 25). As the last prophet to write in the Book of Mormon,

Moroni explained that the Jaredite and Nephite records constituted an explicitly political warning to the American Gentiles of the latter days:

Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain—and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be (Ether 8:23).

The American Gentiles of the last days, like the Jaredites and the Nephites of the American past, faced the threat of national annihilation.

The close relationship of church and state among the Nephites included the concept of a covenant society and the corollary concept of exodus when the covenant had been forsaken. The Book of Mormon begins with a story of exodus and of establishing a new nation in a new land. Lehi led his family into the wilderness where, joined by the family of Ishmael, they became a people apart. Lehi removed his family not from a heathen nation, but from Jerusalem—the political and religious center of the promised land to which Moses had led God's people. In its opening pages, the Book of Mormon makes the point that a nation even God's chosen nation—can become so evil that the best course for the righteous is to disengage from society and physically remove themselves from it. Called by the Lord, the prophet Lehi had cried repentance in Jerusalem—desperately engaging in a final attempt to reform the nation. But when the Jews rejected his message and threatened his life, the Lord instructed him to leave the nation and then led him across the sea to the Americas (1 Nephi 1:4). This pattern would be repeated in the Americas. While the Book of Mormon encouraged vigorous attempts to engage and reform society—in the form of prophetic warning—it also foresaw the moment of disengagement and withdrawal, self-imposed exile, and the creation of a new covenant society in a new precious land.

After lying hidden for centuries, the Book of Mormon heralded the dawn of a new era for the covenant people of Israel (3 Nephi 16:4-5, 21:1-9). When he appeared in the Americas following his resurrection, Jesus Christ explained that although he had fulfilled the Law of Moses he had not fulfilled his covenants with the House of Israel (3 Nephi 15:8). The Gentile era was coming to its “fulness” and the covenants of the Lord with Israel would be rejuvenated (3 Nephi 16:4). The covenant promises to the American Israelites included the land (2 Nephi 1:5; 10:19). The Book of Mormon delivered an explicit message to the Gentiles of the last days that “the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of

Israel, concerning their restoration to the lands of their inheritance, is already beginning to be fulfilled” (3 Nephi 29:1). The resurrected Christ declared he would effect this territorial restoration in the last days as it was his father’s “great and eternal purpose” (Mormon 5:14. See also 3 Nephi 16:16, 20:14). The Book of Mormon would come to the Gentiles before the Indians in order to give them a chance to repent. If they accepted the book and repented, they would “come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance” (3 Nephi 21:22. See also 1 Nephi 14:1-2; 2 Nephi 10:18; 3 Nephi 16: 6-7, 13, 21:6, 30:2; Ether 13:10). On the other hand, if they rejected the book, the resurrected Christ foretold, they would be “cut off from among my people who are of the covenant”—which included being cut off from the land (3 Nephi 21:11).

Those Gentiles who did accept the Book of Mormon would take it and the pure gospel found therein to Indians (3 Nephi 16:11-12). The Book of Mormon would also help the Indians accept Christianity and the Bible (2 Nephi 3:11). Ironically, these American Gentiles would thus play a role in the demise of Gentile sovereignty in America. Similarly, freedom of religion in America would paradoxically play its role in the coming Indian revolution: The Gentiles would be established “as a free people” so that missionaries could bring the Book of Mormon to Israel and “the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which he hath covenanted with his people” (3 Nephi 21:4). The Book of Mormon clearly stated that its primary audience was the Israelite remnant and that it aimed to empower them with the knowledge of their covenant status and claim upon the land (see, for example, 3 Nephi 21:7; Mormon 5:12; 7:1; 8-10).

The Book of Mormon also foretold that in the last days the Lord would raise up a prophet named Joseph—apparently Joseph Smith. This prophet would be “like unto Moses” and help restore the House of Israel (2 Nephi 3:6-25; 3 Nephi 21:10-11). This latter-day prophet would evidently lead the converted Gentiles to join with the Israelites among whom they would be numbered. There they would assist them in building a city—the “New Jerusalem” prophesied in the Book of Revelation (3 Nephi 5:23; 20:22; 21:23-24; also Ether 13:4-8; compare Revelation 3:12; 21:2).

The Book of Mormon seems to map the city in the *interior* of the continent. From this *central* location, the Gentiles would assist the Indians “that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem” (3 Nephi 21:24; see also 5:25-26; 16:4-5; 21:28-29). Then with the city built, the “power of heaven” would “come down among them” (3 Nephi 21:25). In the New Jerusalem, the Indians would “no more be confounded, until the end come when the earth shall pass away” (Ether 13:4-8; see also 3 Nephi 16:12; 20:12-14; 3 Nephi 21:26).

From the central gathering point of the New Jerusalem, the Indians would begin to reclaim their land. They would “break forth on the right hand and on the left” (3 Nephi 22:3). The New Jerusalem would stand as the capital city of a nation for the American Israelites, just as Old Jerusalem would stand as the capital of a restored nation for the Jews. Zion was the successor nation to the Jaredites, the Nephites, and the Gentiles in the Americas (1 Nephi 4:13; 17:37; 22:7; Alma 9:20; 37:25; Ether 1:43; 2:9, 12; Moroni 8:27; see also 2 Nephi 10:3). The Book of Mormon further defined Zion and Jerusalem as nations by placing them in a complementary relationship with the gentile nations from which Israel would be gathered home (2 Nephi 15:26). As Indians and other Israelites gathered to Zion, her territory would expand. To project Zion’s manifest destiny, the Book of Mormon employs Isaiah’s tent metaphor for the expansion of Israel: “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes” (3 Nephi 22:2—compare Isaiah 54:2). In the closing lines of the Book of Mormon, the prophet Moroni admonished Zion, “Strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders,” that “the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled” (Moroni 10:31). The covenants that the Father had made would be fulfilled when America belonged to the Indians (See 3 Nephi 20:22).

In order for the Indians to have a “place for their inheritance,” the land had to be emptied of Gentiles (2 Nephi 1:8). The Book of Mormon declared that the: remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries, and all their enemies shall be cut off (3 Nephi 21:12-13. See also 3 Nephi 16:15, 20:15-19; Mormon 5:24).

The Lord would use the remnant to bring down the Gentile strongholds, empty their cities, and “execute vengeance and fury upon them” (3 Nephi 21:15, 21). The Indians would “inherit the Gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited” (3 Nephi 22:3; see also Jacob 5:65-75; 3 Nephi 20:19; 21:15). However, the Lord would not allow the Indians to destroy those Gentiles who had accepted the fullness of the gospel in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 16:14). This suggests that whereas these Gentiles had brought the Book of Mormon to the Indians and had helped them build the New Jerusalem, their nursing role had ended there. Israel was now the agent of its own independence and territorial reclamation.

While prophesying the restoration of Israelite sovereignty, the Book of Mormon also identified the proper model of Israelite government. Whereas Joseph sought to restore the order and teachings of the New Testament church, the Book of Mormon also contemplated the restoration of Old Testament government. Through Moses, the Lord had established his law and the judges. This suggested that the covenant restoration effected by Joseph, the Moses-like prophet of the last days, would include political restoration. The Nephite history propounded a unique vision of freedom, rights, and democracy, as well as revealed law, concentrated political authority, and state-established religion. The Book of Mormon, including its model for the government of Israel in America, would serve as the foundational civic text for the latter-day Zion.

**Joseph's projected eschatological timetable.** Joseph's initial concept of the timetable of events prior to the Lord's second coming included the following:

1. First, the Book of Mormon would be translated and published. The book would resolve, for those who accepted its teachings, the differences of belief among those European Americans of various national and religious origins. It would establish, for the Lord's earthly kingdom a clear and unified system of doctrine. The printing and binding of the book was finally completed and it came available on March 26, 1830.

2. The Church would then be organized on April 6, 1830. The Church would provide the vehicle (the missionaries) by which the Book of Mormon would be made available and distributed to the world. The acceptance or rejection of the book would be a key element in the future salvation of those exposed to it.

3. Finally by natural political processes the Kingdom of Zion would arise and provide the saints a new nation. The Savior would then return to earth to rule over the new nation either personally or through his prophet. This would allow the saints to live unfettered by the corruption of existing governments including that of the United States of America. The efforts of gathering together all of the converts to the Church was the beginnings of the establishment of the kingdom or nation of Zion.

The Book of Mormon actually failed to provide for the prophet Joseph and the saints a comprehensive scriptural model for the new Zion to be established, flourish, and persist. The book began with the sacking of Jerusalem. It charted the rise but also the ruin of the Nephite and Jaredite nations. For any ancient civilization to serve as a perfect model to emulate, it would have had to have overcome any external enemy and internal weakness. Yet no such government is found in the Book of Mormon, nor is such a government found in all the history of this earth, save for one only.

In working on his inspired revision of the King James Bible, Joseph, while “translating” the book of Genesis, received by revelation the book of Moses. This book contained information on Enoch and his Zion society. Enoch’s Zion—a civilization that rose and never fell—offered an ideal model for Joseph Smith’s Zion. It provided the model for the Zion Joseph Smith meant to build. It was a model that Joseph felt could be followed.

The prophet Enoch was allowed a vision of the future history of the world. In his vision, Enoch saw not only the flood, but the life and atonement of Jesus Christ in the meridian of time and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in the last days. The Lord explained that the Book of Mormon would serve to “gather out mine own elect from the four quarters of the earth unto a place which I shall prepare—an holy city—that my people may gird up their loins and be looking forth for the time of my coming. For there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem.” The Lord further explained, “Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there” (Moses 7:61-64, in Jackson, ed., *The Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation Manuscripts*, 168-69). Enoch’s Zion would return to earth with the Lord and join the latter-day Zion. His city therefore was much more than a model for the latter-day Zion. Their destinies actually intertwined. Enoch had seen the rise of Joseph’s Zion in the last days. Joseph now foresaw the return of Enoch’s Zion at the end of the world. With the Lord, the “King of Zion,” Enoch and Joseph would reclaim the world for God’s people. This was the ultimate territorial restoration. The meek would truly inherit the earth.

Persecution would soon scuttle this earliest Mormon eschatological timetable. Early convert Joseph Knight recalled: “Through that season there were many baptized in many places and the Church grew and multiplied. But soon after the Church began to grow the people began to be angry” (Jessee, “Joseph Knight’s Recollection of Early Mormon History,” 37-38).

On the night of Saturday, 26 June 1830, a group of men from Colesville, Broome County, New York, tore out the dam that Joseph Smith and others had built that day on Knight’s property for a Sunday baptismal service. When Joseph and his friends rebuilt the dam on Monday, a mob of about fifty arrived and began to harass them and threaten violence. Soon a constable arrived and arrested Joseph on the charge of disorderly person for “pretending to discover where lost or stolen goods may be found.” This was an attempt to resurrect the charges from the 1826 trial of using a seer stone to find buried treasure (see the section titled “Joseph Jr.’s Transition from Treasure Seeker to Prophet” in chapter , *The Role of Divination (“Magic”) in Joseph Smith’s Early Life*). Abram Benton, whom Knight later identified as a leader of the mob, wrote in an evangelical newspaper that he caused the arrest of Joseph “in order to check the

progress of the delusion, and open the eyes and understandings of those who blindly followed him” (Jessee, “Joseph Knight’s Recollection of Early Mormon History,” 34. See also A[bram] W. B[enton], letter to the editors, in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:94-99). Joseph recounted that the constable soon informed him that the he, the constable, was sent to take Joseph as part of an ambush. After having met Joseph, the constable changed his mind and determined to ensure the safety of Joseph. The mob followed the two all the way to the village of South Bainbridge in neighboring Chenango County. The constable lodged Joseph and himself in a room in a tavern and slept “with his feet against the door, and a loaded musket by his side” (HC, 44. See also Jessee, “Joseph Knight’s Recollection of Early Mormon History,” 38).

In the meantime, Joseph Knight hired local attorney James Davidson to defend Joseph. When Davidson saw the crowd that had gathered to attend the trial, he talked Knight into adding John Reed, a locally esteemed attorney, to Joseph’s legal counsel. The trial lasted throughout the day. As Davidson and Reed deftly handled the testimony brought against Joseph, the prosecution began maneuvering for time so they could press similar charges back in Colesville. When the trial ended in Joseph’s acquittal, the Broome constable was there ready to take him. Joseph was marched about fifteen miles to the site of his next trial. He was again lodged in a tavern for the night and given some bread crusts and water, his first meal since being arrested the evening of the previous day. The constable treated him meanly and physically restrained Joseph through the night, suspecting that his prisoner meant to escape.

On the morning of July 1, 1830, Joseph was charged with “breach of the peace” for “looking through a certain stone to find hid treasures & etc” (Joel K. Noble, trial minutes, 30 June 1830, in “Mormonism,” *Zion’s Herald*, 9 September 1835). This time the trial lasted all day and all night. Justice of the Peace Joel K. Noble remembered that he and two other justices heard over forty witnesses take the stand. Though the witnesses vilified Joseph, Davidson and Reed again secured his acquittal as the statute of limitations had run out. The justices did, however, severely reprimand Joseph before discharging him. Reed later gave his understanding that the justices did this in order to appease the agitated crowd. This may have been for their own personal safety or even Joseph’s. In either case, the public castigation must have caused Joseph further humiliation. After seeing all he had been through, the constable took pity on him and warned him that the mob had plans to administer their own punishment if the court did not. He told Joseph how to exit the building unawares while Reed, his attorney, set up a distraction, Joseph escaped and was soon back home in Harmony, Pennsylvania, with his wife Emma.

Joseph later recounted that the initial harassment, the ambush scheme, the legal machinations, and the plot to administer vigilante justice had been instigated by “certain sectarian priests of the neighborhood, who began to consider their craft in danger” (*HC*, 42-48. See also Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 117-18; Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 510-19). Reed also viewed the episode as a result of the local churches “uniting their efforts” against Joseph and his quickly growing flock.

Joseph was not the only target of the Colesville mob’s hatred or harassment. After Joseph’s acquittal in South Bainbridge, the mob paid a visit to the Knight farm, knocking over their wagons, sinking chains in the water, and otherwise vandalizing the property. Preaching the Book of Mormon and the fullness of the gospel consistently provoked antagonism toward Mormon missionaries and those who joined them. The book became a self-fulfilling prophecy, engendering persecution that reinforced its millennial vision. The persecution of the church’s converts began to shape their identity as a people apart.

Within a few weeks of the trials, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery made another visit to the Colesville converts to minister to them. Shortly after their arrival, however, the local mob reassembled. Joseph and Oliver fled back down the Susquehanna to Harmony. Avoiding the road, they traveled all night through mud and water (*HC*, 47; Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 117-18). Colesville had become like Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah and Lehi, when prophets faced the threat of prison or murder. In a letter to the converts there, Joseph wrote that it was only their presence and prayers that kept the Lord from already having “thundered down his wrath upon the inhabitants of that place.” Nevertheless, he stated, “the cold hand of death, will soon pass through your neighborhood, and sweep away some of your most bitter enemies.” Joseph wrote that not only would the Lord exercise “his wrath upon the inhabitants of that place (Colesville),” but that he would let it fall on the country at large. There would soon be “great destructions upon the face of this land” (John Whitmer and Joseph Smith, 20 Aug. 1830, in Newel Knight, “Autobiography,” 128-136, Joseph Smith Papers Project Files).

While less threatened in Harmony than in Colesville, Joseph felt uncertain of his safety there as well. Earlier, when translating the Book of Mormon, he and Oliver Cowdery “had been threatened with being mobbed from time to time, and this too by professors of religion” (*HC*, 18). By September of 1830, Joseph apparently came to suspect a conspiracy to poison him. When Colesville converts paid a visit, he went to procure wine for communion but soon returned claiming that he was stopped by an angel who had commanded the church to make their own wine instead of purchasing it from “enemies” (D&C 27). Joseph

had initially moved onto his father-in-law's property in Harmony, Pennsylvania, to escape the group of men in Manchester, New York, who had "clubbed together" with treasure seeker Willard Chase. Believing that Joseph had indeed discovered plates of gold, these men had attacked Joseph, ransacked the family's property, and hatched other plots in their continual efforts to steal the gold (*Lucy's Book*, 380-93). It was in nearby Palmyra, New York, that the initial batch of Book of Mormon translation had been stolen. A revelation informed Joseph that the manuscript had been stolen by Satan-inspired enemies with a "cunning plan" to expose him when he produced a new translation that didn't match what they had altered. This secret combination sought to "destroy" him (Smith, revelation, May 1829, in Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations*, 38-41).

Palmyra newspaper editor Abner Cole's purloining of the Book of Mormon proofs added to the Mormons' apprehensions. Whether the plates, the manuscript translation, or even the typeset text were under threat of theft, the Book of Mormon seemed to invite the work of secret combinations and robbers. Within months of publishing the book and organizing the Church of Christ, Joseph encountered further secret combinations. He faced mobs in Colesville and the threat of mobs and poisoning in Harmony. Everywhere Joseph went he provoked enemies to combine and plot against him.

**The solidifying of Joseph's political concept of Zion.** While Joseph was indeed patriotic and convinced of America's special election, he believed the country had fallen from grace. Joseph generally viewed the nation as a contention-ridden society doomed to destruction. He believed the golden age of the early republic had given way to irredeemable corruption. In his assessment, the American government and freedom were falling to conspiracies of power, while the peace and harmony of the republic was giving way to contention and strife between religious denominations, socioeconomic classes, and political parties. The hopes and dreams of the new republic were going and would continue to go unfulfilled. In revelations subsequent to his first vision, Joseph learned that the contention in American society would escalate into violence, war, and destruction. Joseph also learned and proclaimed that a new nation, called Zion, would arise. Further revelations established Zion's laws and government. The Book of Mormon, published in 1830, warned the nation to repent or be destroyed. Joseph held out little hope that the nation would repent. He came to envision the American nation's purpose as providing a peaceful, orderly, and free setting for the coming forth of the Kingdom of God. Joseph came to believe that the course being taken by the United States of America eliminated it from consideration. A new nation had to be established.

## **The Revealed Components of the New Zion Nation**

Between 1831 and 1833, Joseph Smith's Zion project focused on implementing the political restorationism and social ideology of the Book of Mormon and Enoch's City of Zion. A revelation received January 2, 1831 asserted the independence of the Church from the current political power occupying America (D&C 38). A flurry of revelations received over the next few months defined the basic particulars of early Mormon nationalism. Revelations dictated in February 1831 reestablished the law of God and the Israelite model of government by judges. Revelations on June 7 and July 20, 1831, staked out a political territory in the western borderlands (D&C 52; 57). These and other revelations prophesied the eventual attainment of Mormon sovereignty.

The revelation Joseph Smith dictated on the eve of the New York exodus in January 1831 plainly stated, "The kingdom is yours and the enemy shall not overcome" (D&C 38:9). And, the Lord explained: "In time ye shall have no king nor ruler, for I will be your King and watch over you. Wherefore, hear my voice and follow me, and you shall be a free people" (D&C 38:21-22). In this context, "free people" meant a people free from bondage to foreign or domestic powers. The revelation spoke to the political independence of the Church. Just as the American Gentiles had become free of their "mother Gentiles" in Britain, the Lord's people would become free of the United States—and its laws. As the Lord further explained, "Ye shall have no laws but my laws, when I come, for I am your Lawgiver, and what can stay my hand" (D&C 38:22).

Embarking to the West, toward the future land of Zion, Joseph believed that God was once again setting up his kingdom on the earth. As the United States had sunk into corruption, Joseph now called on the same higher power to which the signers of the Declaration of Independence had appealed. Unlike Jefferson, Hancock, and the other signers, however, Joseph did not make a public announcement. The Church was still far too small and powerless to make a declaration of independence. For the present, political independence remained a prophecy.

The establishment of the new nation, however, was not a vague dream of uncertain timeline. It was as near as their immediate destination. The revelation promised them: "Go to the Ohio: and there I will give unto you my law" (D&C 38:32). After the Israelites had escaped Egypt, but before arriving in their promised land of Canaan, the Lord had given them his law at Mt. Sinai while they traveled through the wilderness. Joseph and his followers would receive the law in Ohio, an intermediate stop between "the enemy" in the eastern states and their own promised land in Missouri. The middle ground of the Ohio would also serve as a borderlands outpost from which Mormon missionaries would make forays into the eastern states and even to the nations and kingdoms of Europe. A later

revelation prophesied: “By the weak things of the earth, the Lord should thresh the nations” and gather converts to Zion, which he would make into “a strong nation” (D&C 133:58-59). Joseph’s revelations also affirmed the prophecies of the Book of Mormon and of Enoch that this Zion would rise and never fall. Joseph wrote that it would eventually “triumph above all the kingdoms of this world” and join with Enoch’s Zion for a thousand years of peace (Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, 27 November 1832, in Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 284-91).

On February 4, 1831, the day Joseph arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, he dictated a revelation commanding that the leading priesthood officers assemble to receive God’s law (D&C 41). Five days later, on February 9th, Joseph met with a group of twelve Elders and revealed the Law to them in a question and answer format (D&C 42). The Law had several basic components. First, it incorporated the articles and covenants formulated in the church’s first conference (D&C 20). Next, the Law rehearsed the social commandments of the decalogue. In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Abinadi had presented decalogue commandments as God’s “law,” adding proscriptions against envy, malice, and contention. Joseph’s revelation of God’s law similarly augmented the decalogue commandments with further social commandments.

Foremost among these added measures was a plan for economic leveling. The revelation commanded the adult males to “consecrate” all of their property to the Church with an unbreakable covenant. The Church would then appoint to each man a portion of land, sufficient to provide for his family, over which he would serve as a “steward.” Those who participated in this program often received their own consecration back as a stewardship. However, if they donated significantly more real property than necessary for family sustenance, the excess was withheld to be redistributed among the poor. Through this effort, every man would “receive according as he stands in need.” Surplus money and goods were to be funneled through a central “storehouse” and redistributed among the poor (D&C 42:30-36). This “overplus” was “to be administered according to the law.” The rest of the funds were to be used to purchase further land or saved for the church plan of “building up the New Jerusalem.” During a time when American culture was celebrating individualism and entrepreneurship, Joseph instructed his followers to consecrate their properties for the good of the whole.

The society envisioned in Joseph’s revelation of God’s law was naturally defined by adherence to that law: “He that receiveth my law and doeth it the same is my disciple; And he that saith he receiveth it and doeth it not, the same is not my disciple” (D&C 41:5).

In addition to institutionalizing economic interdependencies within the Zion society, God's law instructed the "disciples," as revelations now referred to the early Mormons, to become economically independent of outside forces. To the question, "How far it is the will of the Lord that we should have dealings with the world & how we should conduct our dealings with them?" the revealed answer came: "Thou shalt not contract any debts with them" (Smith, revelation, February 9, 1831, in Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations*, 107-15). In a later revelation, the voice of the Lord explained that he gave the Church such financial direction that they might "stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world" (D&C 78:14). The economic independence mandated in the Law was thus a part of the project of attaining political independence.

Over the course of the following weeks, Joseph dictated further revelations announcing themselves as additions to God's law. In a much later revelation, the Lord would declare that his "statutes" and "judgments" must be kept in the land of Zion for it to be a holy land (D&C 119:6). This echoed the language in the Book of Mormon establishing God's law as the law of the land, which in turn drew on the account of God giving his law to Moses prior to the Israelite invasion of Canaan: "These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the Lord God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it" (Deuteronomy 12:1). Zion's future sovereignty was implicit in the Law. Though not yet in their promised land in the far west, the revelation declared, these laws you have been given are "sufficient to establish you, both here and in the New Jerusalem" (D&C 42:67). Although the law of God was meant for the land of God, they would begin living it at the Ohio way station.

The administration of a new law required a new legal system. In addition to restoring God's law, Joseph Smith therefore restored God's government. Like Moses in the Old Testament and Mosiah in the Book of Mormon, Joseph followed the establishment of God's law with the establishment of government by judges. Isaiah had prophesied such a political restoration as a precursor to Zion's rebirth: "And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness" (Isaiah 1:26-27). Following Isaiah's formulation, Joseph appointed both judges and counselors. Edward Partridge, a former disciple of Sidney Rigdon, was appointed the first bishop in the Church. John Corrill and Isaac Morley were appointed as counselors to Partridge. Morley had led the communitarian "family" under Sydney Rigdon's direction prior to their conversions. Joseph equated the Old Testament office of judge with that of the New Testament office of bishop, and more often referred to the office by the latter title. The revelations, however, speak of the "bishop or judge" and "the

judge of my people,” as well as “the Judge & his councillors.” They state explicitly that the Mormon bishop was “a judge in Israel, like as it was in ancient days” (D&C 58:17). Joseph erected the government of Zion using the stories of Israel’s primitive government and of Mosiah’s establishment of judges in America. The court of the Mormon judge constituted an independent legal system to which the faithful resorted when at all possible—“and that not before the world” (D&C 42:89).

The divinely mandated duty of the bishop-judge was “to sit in judgment upon transgressors upon testimony as it shall be laid before him according to the laws by the assistance of his counsellors whom he hath chosen or will choose among the elders of the church” (D&C 107:72). The bishop was warned against taking on legislative powers: “Let no man think that he is ruler, but let God rule him that judgeth, according to the counsel of his own will” (D&C 58:20). As in ancient Israel and among the Nephites, the bishop-judge ruled “according to the laws of the kingdom which are given by the prophets of God” (D&C 58:18). As the Old Testament judges ruled on the law received through the prophet Moses, and as the Book of Mormon judges ruled on the American version of the law revealed to and established by Mosiah, the latter-day bishop rendered judgment based on the law revealed through Joseph Smith.

The Mormon government of judges thus established a relationship between religious and political power similar to the church-state relations in the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon. The judge also governed the economic aspect of God’s law. The disciples met with the bishop annually to “render an account of their stewardship,” which included the consecration of surplus money and goods (D&C 72:5). This settlement was itself an aspect of the bishop’s judicial role. With the consecrated goods he received, the bishop then acted in an executive role as he redistributed them “according to the law.” Bishop Partridge was also commissioned to oversee the future migration to the West, collect money to purchase property in the promised land, and to then “divide the lands of the heritage of God unto his children” (D&C 58:17).

However, until the time came to resume their journey, the saints had to maintain an existence in Kirtland, Ohio. Joseph dictated a revelation in May 1831 in which the Lord stated, “I consecrate unto them this land for a little season until I the Lord shall provide for them otherwise and command them to go hence and the hour and the day is not given unto them wherefore let them act upon this land as for years and this shall turn unto them for their good” (D&C 51:16).

Joseph Smith’s Mormon nationalism extended beyond a prophecy of independence, an independent law, and an independent legal system. The plan for Mormon independence included the *sine qua non* of real sovereignty—territorial domain. Joseph’s concept of territory developed unevenly but rapidly.

The persecution of the early church in New York and Pennsylvania confirmed in Joseph's mind that the time had come for the fulfillment of the Book of Mormon's geopolitical prophecies of a New Jerusalem in the continental interior. First came the revelations to gather to "the Ohio" while awaiting further word from the Lord. The Ohio existed as an in-between place, a vast borderland between western Zion and the corrupted eastern states. In the context of the continent's physical and cultural geography, Ohio was indeed situated between the East and the West.

The major gathering revelation commanded Joseph Smith's followers to emigrate "from among the wicked" that they might "escape the power of the enemy, and be gathered unto me a righteous people" (D&C 38:31, 42). For the moment, the Ohio was a suitable place for gathering. Though not the New Jerusalem, it was in a different geographical zone than New York.

Whereas Ohio was considered to be in the borderland between the east and Zion, apparently another version of early Mormon geography was preached early on. It placed Ohio on the Zion frontier. A resident of Waterloo, New York, who heard Sydney Rigdon preach there reported his claim that Kirtland, Ohio, was "just within the east bounds of this new land of promise, which extends from thence to the Pacific Ocean, embracing a territory of 1500 miles in extent, from north to south" (Waterloo correspondent to the editor, 26 January 1830 [1831], in *The Reflector*, 1 February 1831, 95). Rigdon expressed a similar geography at about the same time in a letter John Whitmer delivered to the Church in Ohio: "You are living on the land of promise, and that there is the place of gathering, and from that place to the Pacific Ocean" (Undated Rigdon letter reproduced in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 110-111). According to E. D. Howe, the wary editor of a newspaper in Painesville, Ohio, Whitmer conveyed instructions that the Ohio Mormons stop selling land. Apparently some had already sold their property in anticipation of moving to the New Jerusalem nearer Indian country. However, as Kirtland lay within the massive land of promise that New Jerusalem anchored as a capital, they were rather to purchase additional land as possible ("Mormonism," *Painesville Telegraph*, January 18, 1831, 3).

This early conception of Zion's geography was also held by Joseph Smith. The day Joseph arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, he designated the first Mormon judge. Within the week he had revealed God's law. Two weeks later he wrote to New York disciple Martin Harris encouraging him to immigrate to "this our inheritance" (Smith to Martin Harris, 22 February 1831, Joseph Smith Collection). Joseph's use of the term "inheritance" and "land of your inheritance" in this period employed the biblical language of the Israelite conquest of Canaan. America, like Canaan, was a promised land but one with prior occupants.

On the eastern frontier of this inland empire, “the Ohio” would serve as a missionary outpost. The revelation to gather there had commanded, “go to the Ohio: and there I will give unto my law, and there you shall be endowed with power from on high, and from thence, whomsoever I will shall go forth among all nations . . . and no power shall stay my hand” (D&C 38:32-33). These “nations” were the European “nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles” mentioned in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 13:3). From Kirtland, Ohio, the Mormon missionaries would proselyte throughout the eastern states and eventually cross the Atlantic to Britain and then the European continent.

The Lord had promised the saints an “endowment of power” in Ohio and farther west. This promise carried territorial implications and invoked an immediate historical precedent: the Enoch narrative that Joseph had just dictated to Sydney Rigdon in Moses 6:26-50 and Moses 7 (Richard Bushman points out that the Zion revelations look back more to Enoch’s city than to the New Testament church. *Joseph Smith*, 594, note 48). In calling Enoch to preach and prophesy, the Lord had empowered him with his spirit such that “fear came on all them that heard him” (Moses 6:39). Later, Enoch infused the entire city of Zion and its surrounding territory with this godly power. “And all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch and so great was the power of the language which God had given him. . . . And so great was the fear of the enemies of the people of God that they fled and stood afar off” (Moses 7:13-14). In the revelation regarding the “endowment of power” to be received in the Ohio, the Lord announced himself as “the same which hath taken the Zion of Enoch into mine own bosom” (D&C 38:4). The revelation thereby implied that the endowment or empowerment promised in the Ohio would eventually crystallize into political empowerment for Zion. A month after arriving in Ohio, Joseph dictated a revelation that prophesied, “It shall be said among the wicked let us not go up to battle against Zion . . . they shall stand afar off and tremble and all nations shall be afraid because of the terror of the Lord and the power of his might” (D&C 45:70, 74-75). As Kirtland began to grow, Joseph and Sydney Rigdon would write, “When the enemies look at her, they wag their heads and march along. We anticipate the day when the enemies will have fled away and be far from us” (Joseph Smith and others to “Brethren in Zion,” 25 June 1833, Joseph Smith Collection. Sydney Rigdon, who penned the letter, stated that he wrote on behalf of the church presidency). Zion’s sovereignty—its independent government and its territorial domain—was the ultimate implication of God’s command to go to Ohio in order to receive his law and his power.

The real focus on Zion was at its center in western Missouri and not on its eastern border at Kirtland. Among the Indians living near this center, the Lord promised to provide the saints with “greater riches . . . a land flowing with milk

and honey” (D&C 38:18-20). The anticipation of joining the Indians was reflected in an outbreak of spiritual manifestations among the Ohio converts. Speaking in tongues was interpreted by some as preaching in Indian languages. The disciples eagerly awaited news from Oliver Cowdery and the other missionaries to the Indians. It was, as Joseph Smith’s history recounted, “the most important subject which then engrossed the attention of the saints” (This comment appears amidst the historical information for May 1831. “History of Joseph Smith,” *Times and Seasons*, 15 February 1844, 432).

In fact, the missionaries had reached the western Missouri border in January 1831. Here, Oliver Cowdery and his companions apparently became apprised of the proselyting efforts already underway among the Indians by the Baptists and Methodists. The Mormon missionaries first approached a settlement of Delaware Indians. The English name of their chief was William Anderson. He and his tribe warmed slowly to the Mormon elders and their message of the Book of Mormon. Eventually the whole tribe began to feel a spirit of inquiry and excitement about the Book of Mormon. The prospects for success among the Indians appeared bright initially, but they quickly dimmed. Opposition arose primarily from government Indian agents. Sectarian missionaries, and even some of the border settlers also opposed the Mormon missionaries’ efforts to preach among the Indians.

The missionaries were apparently unaware of the federal laws forbidding white residence on Indian land without a special permit. They were ordered off Indian lands by the Indian agent. But the United States government in the East felt so far away. Also the revelation commissioning Oliver Cowdery to prepare the way for Mormon settlement among the Indians had spoken in terms of the anticipated sovereignty of New Jerusalem, not of the United States. Commissioned by God, as they believed themselves to be, the missionaries discounted the agent’s authority and ignored his order. The next time the agent confronted the missionaries, he gave them twenty-four hours to remove themselves before he sent soldiers from Ft. Leavenworth to incarcerate them in the fort’s guard house. The missionaries then crossed back over into Missouri, where they preached and converted a few white settlers.

In the meantime, Oliver Cowdery wrote to General William Clark, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, requesting a permit “to have free intercourse unto the several tribes in establishing schools for the instruction of their children and also teaching them the Christian religion” (Oliver Cowdery to Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 14 February 1831, in Romig, “The Lamanite Mission,” 29). Of course Oliver did not mention that the primary text in his Christian curriculum would be the Book of Mormon, with its prophecies of Indian revolution. Oliver also sent word to Joseph Smith. In a letter he explained the

government policy and their ejection from Indian land but relayed his expectation of resolving the problem. He had sent Parley Pratt to St. Louis to obtain the needed permits. As for the Delaware Indians, Oliver gave Joseph an exuberant report: "The principle chief says he believes every word of the Book [of Mormon] & there are many more in the nation who believe & we understand there are many among the Shawnees who also believe & we trust that when the Lord shall open our way we shall have a glorious times." Cowdery expressed his belief that God was "in very deed about to redeem his ancient covenant people" (Cowdery to Smith, 8 April 1831, in Joseph Smith, Letterbook 1,10-12, Joseph Smith Collection). Unfortunately, perhaps due to General Clark's absence from St. Louis, Pratt failed to secure the permits. What the fledgling Church would have looked like demographically had it joined with the Delaware became a moot point. Parley traveled on from St. Louis to Kirtland, bearing the news of frustrated plans. He wrote that when he rode into the Mormon community in March 1831, hundreds of saints crowded around to hear the outcome of the Indian mission. He did not record their reaction to his report.

Joseph Smith eventually reconciled himself to the prevailing circumstances and settled on Missouri as the locus of Mormon immigration. In June 1831, two months after Parley Pratt's arrival in Kirtland, Joseph dictated a revelation in which the Lord identified Missouri as "the land which I will consecrate unto my people, which are a remnant of Jacob"—the Native Americans—"and them who are heirs according to the covenant"—the European American members of the Church (D&C 52:2). Like Ohio, Missouri was the saints' "inheritance." But at Zion's center rather than its periphery it was all the more so.

The next revelation instructed the faithful saints from Colesville, New York—whose Ohio arrangements for settlement had fallen through—to "journey into the regions westward, unto the land of Missouri, unto the borders of the Lamanites" (D&C 54:8). They would settle as close to the Indians as possible. Subsequent revelations followed this one in referring to Missouri as "the land of Missouri." Like revelation regarding "the Ohio," Joseph's Missouri revelations opted for identification by physical geography rather than acknowledging the sovereignty of the state. "The Ohio" and the "the land of Missouri" together defined the interior territory that belonged to Zion. And the Missouri was the gateway to Indian country, the far west, and the fading of American power.

In late June, Joseph traveled to Missouri to establish the land of Zion at its center. After meeting up with Oliver Cowdery and surveying the area, Joseph dictated a revelation on July 20, 1831, in which the Lord stated that "the land of Missouri" was "the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints." The Missouri revelation designated the saints' new "land

of promise and the place for the city of Zion” (D&C 57). Joseph intended to build a temple and a city—the New Jerusalem—on a hill (Mount Zion) as the new world counterpart of old world Jerusalem.

When warned out of Indian territory by the local agent, Cowdery and his companions regrouped just inside the Missouri border at the town of Independence, the seat of Jackson County. The town had been built on a bluff between the mouths of two rivers. The county courthouse stood on the highest point of the bluff. Joseph’s revelation of July 20th naming “the land of Missouri” as the “place for the city Zion” also specified that “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” (D&C 57:3). The revelation thereby located New Jerusalem and its temple in reference to the highest point in the area. On August 3rd, Joseph laid a cornerstone for this temple just west of the town line on a small hill on the crest of the same bluff on which Independence had been built. Though less imposing than the hill on which old Jerusalem sits, this was for him the Mount Zion of the Americas.

Now the saints knew where to build Zion’s capital. Joseph commissioned Sydney Rigdon to write an official description of the land. Sydney described the land of Zion as a land “situated in the center of the continent on which we dwell . . . its climate suited [to] persons from every quarter of this continent” (Rigdon, description of Zion, 31 August 1831, as copied in Whitmer, *From Historian to Dissident*, 90). Joseph returned to Kirtland, leaving behind about three hundred saints to begin purchasing lands and settling them.

Joseph Smith’s mental map Zion’s capital found its way onto paper in June 1833. Centered on the land dedicated for the temple, as well as a bishop’s “storehouse,” Joseph’s plat of the city lays out one square mile of residences. The city was not American in design. Instead of surrounding a courthouse, it surrounded a temple. Instead of having a jailhouse for incarcerating debtors and criminals there was a storehouse for redistributing goods. Instructions accompanying the map describe a municipality of 15,000 to 20,000 citizens. This was an immense city for the West and large for the country as a whole. America had less than two dozen cities over 10,000 at the time. Yet Zion was the center place for the gathering of Israel in the last days.

Joseph never meant for the Church of Christ to be one congregation among others in the village. Like ancient Israel, it was destined to be a people apart in a land. As laid out in the “land of Zion” revelation, all of this would begin with the saints’ purchasing the land designated for the temple site. The revelation further instructed them to purchase “every tract lying westward even unto the line running directly between Jew and Gentile”—the border between Indian territory and the state of Missouri—”and also every tract bordering by the

prairies”—Missouri land along the border (D&C 57:4-5). After giving the revelation, Joseph helped locate the saints from Colesville, New York, within three miles of the border. All of the Mormon settlements in Jackson County lay west of Independence within five miles of the border. The “prairie” tracts lay within one mile and included tracts adjoining Indian territory. This strategic plan for property purchase meant to create a funnel of contiguous Mormon-owned land connecting Indian territory to the designated site of the New Jerusalem temple. If the saints could not work among the Indians, the swath of Mormon property could open a pathway for the Indians to work on New Jerusalem. The Mormon land bridge could convey the American Israelites from their designated reservations in Indian Territory to the New Jerusalem in Missouri. By this means, the saints could salvage the plan.

Joseph Smith’s Missouri revelation went on to instruct the saints to buy up the “whole region of country” as soon as possible (D&C 58:52). After that, they were to purchase land “in all the regions round about” (D&C 57:6). An 1833 revelation would clarify that the saints had been commanded to purchase “Jackson county and the counties round about, and leave the residue [of the Missouri counties] in mine hand” (D&C 101:71). The saints could not afford to purchase the entire state; the Lord would find another way to place Missouri under its proper sovereignty. Joseph’s early revelations therefore spoke not only of the “City of Zion,” but the “land of Zion.” This latter label was apparently the “land of Missouri” that was the land of their inheritance—the entire state would belong to Zion. Another revelation referred to this land as “holy land” (D&C 84:59).

In 1832 an article in the church’s Missouri newspaper declared all the land between the Mississippi River and Rocky Mountains to be the land of Zion, which “maybe called the centre of America.” As massive as this claim was, it was more modest than Sidney Rigdon’s 1831 claim of a promised land stretching from “the Ohio” to the Pacific Ocean. In fact, the smaller territory roughly represented the actual boundaries of Indian country. The article stated that whereas the land of Jerusalem belonged to the tribe of Judah, the land of Zion belonged to the tribe of Joseph (“The Far West,” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, October 1832, 37). To the state’s earlier settlers, Missouri was the western frontier of the United States. For the Mormon settlers, it was the eastern frontier of the land of Joseph.

Joseph Smith’s visit to Missouri further developed his geographical view of the Mormon community in Ohio. In the autumn of 1831, back in the missionary outpost of Kirtland, Joseph delivered a revelation that clarified Kirtland’s position in reference to Jackson County. Although the central gathering spot had now been established in Independence, the revelation stated, “I, the Lord, will to retain a strong hold in the land of Kirtland, for the space of five years, in the

which I will not overthrow the wicked, that thereby I may save some. And after that day, I, the Lord, will not hold any guilty that shall go with an open heart up to the land of Zion; for I, the Lord, require the hearts of the children of men” (D&C 64:21-22).

Joseph continued to labor over Zion’s cartography through the summer of 1833. A June 1833 revelation commanded the saints in Kirtland to build a temple of their own “in the which house I design to endow those whom I have chosen with power from on high” (D&C 95:8). When Joseph drew up the plat for the City of Zion in Missouri, he included two dozen temples in its central blocks, as well as an entire block for storehouses. At this time there were about eight hundred saints in Missouri and about one hundred and fifty in Kirtland. The map of early Mormon territory was now essentially complete. Cities and stakes of Zion would be built around temples. Zion’s outlying stakes would surround her cities in Missouri in the land of Zion. The Mormon cities of Zion in Missouri would be centered in Jackson County and the counties around it. The Zion cities in Jackson County would surround the New Jerusalem built around a bank of two dozen temples.

A revelation accompanying the plat of the City of Zion in Independence focused the saints on the immediate task of completing a temple in which to receive God’s glory and power:

And, now, behold, if Zion do these things she shall prosper, and spread herself and become very glorious, very great, and very terrible. And the nations of the earth shall honor her, and shall say: Surely Zion is the city of our God, and surely Zion cannot fall, neither be moved out of her place, for God is there, and the hand of the Lord is there; And he hath sworn by the power of his might to be her salvation and her high tower (D&C 97:18-20).

The divine power received through the temple would ensure Zion’s security. The “land of Zion” revelations of July 20, 1831 and August 1, 1831 (D&C sections 57 and 58) developed not only the concept of territory, but of government. They reinforced the legal authority of the bishop-judge and his counselors. As the voice of the Lord declared, “my laws shall be kept on this land” (D&C 58:19). To accomplish this, each city of Zion in Missouri would have its own municipal judge. The reader will recall that Edward Partridge had been appointed bishop-judge in Independence. Joseph also appointed a bishop-judge for the Kirtland stake of Zion—Newel K. Whitney.

Revelation established an arrangement between the two bishops. Before gathering to Missouri, the saints first “consecrated” all of their assets to Bishop Whitney. Bishop Whitney in turn gave the emigrant head of household a certificate vouching for his faithfulness. These consecrations were used for land

purchases and provisioning in Zion and in the Kirtland stake. Upon gathering to Missouri, saints presented their certificates to Bishop Partridge, who then assigned them lots as stewardships. In this role, Partridge served as “a judge in Israel, like as it was in ancient days, to divide the lands of the heritage of God unto his children” (D&C 58:17).

The Mormon bishops stood in relation to Joseph Smith as the ancient Israelite judges had in relation to Moses. In June 1831, a few months after appointing the first bishop, Joseph ordained several men to the office of high priest. A revelation of November 11, 1831 established presiding officers over each rank in the priesthood. This ecclesiology required the appointment of a presiding high priest. Joseph Smith’s appointment to this office secured his role as the Moses-like leader over the saints. After revealing the law of God for Israel, Moses had initially judged all cases himself. He later appointed the first Israelite judges to ease this burden. Yet Moses remained the supreme judge. As recorded in the Book of Exodus, his appointees “judged the people at all seasons: [but] the hard causes they brought unto Moses” (Exodus 18:26). As “president of the high priesthood,” Joseph would assume this role.

In early 1832 Joseph was officially appointed to this position and received two permanent counselors: Sidney Rigdon and Jesse Gause. Joseph and his counselors together constituted the church’s general “presidency.” A revelation on the role of a counselor to the church president alludes to the biblical account of Israel’s battle with Amalek in Rephidim. The host of Israel had the advantage in this battle while Moses held up the rod of God, but lost ground when Moses’ arms grew weary and hung down. Aaron and Hur, Moses’ lieutenants joined him on either side and held up his hands until Israel prevailed. The duty of Joseph Joseph’s counselors to “lift up the hands which hang down” associated them with Aaron and Hur in relation to Joseph Smith as Moses. In fact, Joseph and his counselors became the supreme court in restored Israel. And, like the bishops, or common judges, they also oversaw church property. Both of Joseph’s counselors had experience in communities living the law of consecration. Sydney Rigdon had mentored the Morley “family” in Kirtland, while Jesse Gause was a former Shaker. Though Joseph and his counselors remained in Ohio for the present, they intended to immigrate to Missouri and preside over Zion from its center.

From time to time, Joseph’s organizational revelations would also associate the role of judgment with a body of twelve men. In the New Testament, Jesus appointed his twelve apostles to govern the church and designated them as the future judges of the House of Israel (Matthew 19:28). In the Book of Mormon account of Christ’s appearance to the Israelites in the Americas, he called twelve disciples to govern the church, and he established

them as judges over the people (3 Nephi 27:23-31). As early as June 1829, Joseph intended to appoint twelve disciples in the restored church. When he dictated “the Law” on February 9, 1831 he did so “in the presence of twelve elders” (see heading of section 42). The revelation for bishops to act as “a judge in Israel, like as it was in ancient days, to divide the lands of the heritage of God unto his children” alluded to Moses’ appointment of twelve men to divide conquered Canaan among the twelve tribes of Israel. The revelation establishing Joseph’s role as supreme church judge empowered him to call twelve high priests as court counselors.

From Kirtland, the church presidency wrote to the Zion bishop instructing him to lay unresolved consecration cases before a council composed of twelve high priests. Joseph would later organize a permanent “high council” of twelve high priests in Kirtland to try church cases appealed from the bishop’s council and to otherwise govern the church under the authority of the church presidency. He explicitly organized this high council on the model of the twelve apostles in the New Testament. He then organized a similar council in Missouri and a traveling high council to govern the church in the outlying branches. Joseph eventually appointed this traveling council, also called the Twelve Apostles, as the ruling church council beneath the church presidency.

The councils of the first presidency, twelve apostles, and the intermediary high councils established a vertical appeal process within the Mormon judicial system. This provided a check on power. However, as under the reign of the judges in the Bible and in the Book of Mormon, there was no horizontal separation of powers. Neither was there a separation between religious and political authority. The Mormon system of judges differed greatly from the American system of government, which was grounded not only in the separation of state powers but in a more fundamental separation of church and state. Joseph Smith envisioned a political order not only independent of but fundamentally incompatible with the United States.

The revelations establishing Zion’s government complemented those establishing God’s law. These concepts of divine law, government, and territory defined the nationalist aspirations of the yet fledgling movement. Joseph depended on the gathering of Israel, combined with the calamities of the last days, to make sovereignty a reality.

### **The Sovereign Destiny of Joseph’s Zion**

The word *sovereign* means having supreme or preeminent rank, power, or authority. Joseph’s view of Zion included her relationships with other nations of the world. More than prophesying Zion’s ability to carve out a sovereign domain on the western frontier of the western United States, the revelations charted her

rise to world power among all world nations. Zion's international relations began with her proselyting program. The revelations received on the eve of the New York exodus mandated the church agenda of sending elders to gather people of "all nations" (D&C 38:32-33). Several subsequent revelations affirmed the global reach of Zion's missionaries. As one prophecy assured, "And she shall be an ensign unto the people, and there shall come unto her out of every nation under heaven" (D&C 64:42). Zion was to exist not merely apart from but in a dynamic geopolitical relationship with the worldly nations. Mormon missionaries journeyed out of Zion to preach the gospel to the nations and converts gathered out of the nations to settle in Zion.

Early on, Joseph had seen the possibilities for wars throughout the world. One revelation had stated: "Ye hear of wars in far countries, and you say that there will soon be great wars in far countries, but ye know not the hearts of men in your own land" (D&C 38:29). A month after arriving in Ohio, Joseph dictated a revelation instructing the saints how to escape this impending violence:

For verily I say unto you, that great things await you; Ye hear of wars in foreign lands; but, behold, I say unto you, they are nigh, even at your doors, and not many years hence ye shall hear of wars in your own lands. Wherefore I, the Lord, have said, gather ye out from the eastern lands, assemble ye yourselves together ye elders of my church; go ye forth into the western countries, call upon the inhabitants to repent, and inasmuch as they do repent, build up churches unto me. And with one heart and with one mind, gather up your riches that ye may purchase an inheritance which shall hereafter be appointed unto you. And it 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, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion (D&C 45:62-67).

Joseph's eschatology thus established another dynamic geopolitical relationship between Zion and the nations: Zion would be a territorial refuge of peace amidst a world at war.

A major factor in Zion's future rise to power was war in the United States. Joseph's most specific war revelation predicted a civil war between the North and the South. A concern over conflict between the northern and southern states had lingered from the time of the stormy debates in Congress over Missouri statehood in 1820 and even earlier. Concern deepened when the federal government proposed tariffs on imported goods in order to protect domestic manufacturers. Specifically, the state of South Carolina was the center of this

controversy. Southerners, and particularly South Carolinians, felt oppressed and disadvantaged by the high protective tariff of 1828, the so-called “Tariff of Abominations.” This tariff imposed heavy duties on foreign manufactured goods imported to any state. The states themselves were required to pay the tariff to the federal government. This favored the industrial North which had its own manufacturing capabilities. At the same time it worked against the interest of the agrarian South which was more dependent on foreign imports. In addition to the economic problems, the South was becoming increasingly wary of the nascent antislavery movement in the North.

In order to protect itself from these threats, South Carolina passed an Ordinance of Nullification on November 24, 1832. This ordinance nullified the new federal tariff and threatened to secede if impeded. This quickly drew a response from President Andrew Jackson. In a December 10<sup>th</sup> proclamation, Jackson fired back with a resounding defense of the perpetual union, an insistence on his constitutional duty to execute federal law, and a declaration of his willingness to use armed force in order to do so.

News of these eastern states events reached the area of Kirtland, Ohio, through the nearby *Painesville Telegraph* later that month. On December 21<sup>st</sup>, the Painesville paper reprinted the South Carolina ordinance and commentary from various eastern papers, as well as providing notice of Jackson’s response: “He tells them plainly that the laws and the Union must be maintained, at all events, and warns them of the consequences of resistance” (*Painesville Telegraph*, December 21, 1832, 2-3). Report of this information probably reached Kirtland, about ten miles southwest of Painesville, within a day or two.

It was apparently in response to this alarming intelligence that Joseph Smith delivered his most dramatic war prophecy on Christmas day of 1832. The prophecy confirmed national fears that South Carolina’s rebellion would affect a regional rift in America: “The southern states shall be divided against the Northern States.” Then, the prophecy continued, “The Southern States will call on other Nation[s] even the Nation of Great Britain, as it is called, and they shall also call upon other Nations in order to defend themselves against other Nations and thus war shall be poured out upon all Nations” (D&C 87:3). Joseph’s prophecy of civil war connected the immediate circumstances of the nullification crisis with his earlier revelations on war and placed all of these events into an eschatological sequence: The rebellion in South Carolina would lead to civil war between the northern and southern states, which would lead to global war. It seems obvious that Joseph regarded this great and coming war as an eschatological event. And he expected it in the life times of the saints then living. He likely felt it would be the downfall of the Great Gentile nation. From our present time frame, we may conclude that the Civil War and the other Great

World Wars that followed were, indeed, eschatological events. But the eschatological time table has turned out to be more gradual or delayed than Joseph anticipated.

Social disharmony was another factor threatening the stability of the United States. The church was split between Ohio in the North and Missouri in the South. Slavery became a major issue. The differences between northern and southern culture became readily apparent in Jackson County when Joseph planted his colony of northerners among the resident southerners.

In the day of Enoch's Zion, God had provided protection for the city by occupying her enemies with war. He had also protected the early Zion by blessing Enoch with the ability to speak God's word with overwhelming power and by infusing the entire city of Enoch with the fearsome majesty of his presence. The March 1831 revelation in which the Lord announced himself as "the god of Enoch and his brethren" promised similar divine protection to the Latter-day Saints if they would build up a Zion in Missouri: "The glory of the Lord shall be there and the terror of the Lord also shall be there insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it" (D&C 45:67). Zion's territory would be established and maintained by the sheer terror of God's glory. Then, the revelation continued, as God endowed his people with his power, "it shall be said among the wicked let us not go up to battle against Zion for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible wherefore we cannot stand" (D&C 45:11, 70, 75). When Joseph returned to Ohio from his first journey to Missouri, he similarly prophesied, "And the day shall come when the nations of the earth shall tremble because of her, and shall fear because of her terrible ones. The Lord hath spoken it" (D&C 64:43).

Echoing the book of Deuteronomy, another revelation prophesied of the day when a pair of Zion's terrifying warriors could set "tens of thousands to flight" (D&C 133:58). As the nations came to fear her and recede from her, a flourishing Zion could fill the resulting territorial vacuum without the violence and bloodshed of conquest. Over time, Joseph came to identify the temple as the place of God's presence, his power, and the empowerment of his people. In August 1833, a revelation promised the Missouri saints that if they would build the New Jerusalem temple, Zion would "prosper and spread herself and become very glorious very great and very terrible, and the nations of the earth shall honor her, and shall say surely Zion is the City of our God, and surely Zion cannot fall neither be removed, out of her place" (Smith, revelation, August 2, 1833, in Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations*, 241-43). With the power of God, peaceful Zion would preserve and even extend its territory without a single act of aggression.

As the plague of international conflict spread, Zion would serve as a neutral territory and safe harbor for any wishing to escape the destructions of war. Joseph prophesied “And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety. And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another” (D&C 45:68-69). Those willing to live by the sword would die by the sword. As a subsequent revelation affirmed, “the wicked shall slay the wicked” (D&C 63:33). And while the violent would destroy each other from the face of the earth, the peaceful would immigrate to Zion. This vision of Zion as a refuge of peace in a world at war not only embodied Joseph Smith’s love for harmony and his aversion to contention, but established a dynamic relationship between the two. The violence of war would drive people to the peace of Zion. Even the unconverted, if peaceful, would join in the Mormon gathering. Joseph saw the future Mormon nation as a country for all peaceful men. A cosmopolitan and racially inclusive Zion would receive refugees from “every nation under heaven” (D&C 64:42). The theocracy of Zion offered its Gentile refugees/immigrants peace, not a share in government. That belonged to Israel and those who joined its covenants.

Zion’s role in world history was seen as a part of a larger pattern of eschatological workings. The Jews, for example, would be saved from war in a Zion in Jerusalem—not by joining the Mormons in Missouri. After the destruction of the United States and all other nations, Zion would be left standing as the sole sovereign in the Americas. It would be the site of refuge for all non-Jewish Israel—not just the Indians but also the lost ten tribes and other “remnants” of scattered Israel. Presumably the Jews in old Jerusalem would be left standing as the sole sovereigns in the eastern hemisphere.

Daniel, John, and other prophets predicted not only the millennium of peace but precursor events that would make it possible. The Lord would make peace for the peaceful by sweeping the violent from off the earth with the broom of destruction. Joseph’s Zion prophecies took up those of the Bible and then worked on the eschatological details of war and peace with regard to his plan to make a space for his people on the American frontier.

On the way toward the harmonious millennium, Joseph Smith faced not only the near future of latter-day calamities, but the realities of the present. Like ancient Israel’s Canaan, the land of Missouri was already occupied. His Missouri revelation acknowledged this predicament, calling it “the land of your inheritance, which is now the land of your enemies” (D&C 52:42). The immediate moment called for practical action on a small scale. Still, Joseph’s grand vision of Zion’s destiny would frame his early efforts to create political power for his people.

## **Achieving Mormon Power**

As he took the first steps toward the peaceful Millennium, Joseph encountered real obstacles. He planned to assert theocracy in Ohio and Missouri and obtain real property/territory in Missouri. But these plans brought him head on against the sovereignty of the two states and of the federal government that united them.

He obtained additional revelations that marked the course to real power. But it wasn't going to be easy. In addition to further revelation, additional thinking, planning, and real work would be required. The Ohio territory had come under America's sovereign domain almost half a century earlier. Ohio had been a state for almost three decades. It already had dozens of counties and thousands of Gentile residents. This was a glaring reality against which Mormon theocracy had to compromise itself. The plan was that the saints were to establish a *de facto* church government (existing but outside legal authority) within the *de jure* (according to law) system of state and federal law. In time, the gathering would create a demographic majority of God's people in Kirtland Township (and Geauga County) and Independence (and Jackson County). The saints could then dominate the local offices and channels of government and create a political space for the church to live God's law. This power was to increase "until all things may be done according to my law" (D&C 44:6).

This plan to create a supreme authority within a supreme authority acknowledged the reality of Gentile sovereignty while at the same time underscoring Joseph's goal of Mormon independence. Joseph probably expected to be freed of such compromising when the Mormons joined the Indians in the far west.

The missionaries Joseph had sent to the Lamanites evidently anticipated little or no conflict with Gentile law while they were laboring in Indian country. But they quickly came face to face with the authority of the federal government and its army. Indian policy ruled out unauthorized proselytizing. The Mormons were forced to acknowledge and work within, the legal system of the Gentile sovereigns. Oliver Cowdery persisted in his efforts to reach the Indians by applying for a teaching permit. Ironically, Oliver planned to awaken Indians to their Israelite identity and territorial inheritance from within the federal government's program for Americanizing the Indian. Of necessity, the Mormons labored with ulterior motives. If denied permission to work among the Indians in American territory, Oliver had considered moving further west to the Rocky Mountains. But that proved to be just too far away and did not fulfill the requirement that Zion be built in the center of the country.

When the Mormon's were denied access to the Indians, Joseph fell back on the plan of creating political space for themselves within the democratic structure of state government in both Ohio and Missouri. Mormon gathering and land sharing in Ohio had already engaged the saints in the mechanisms of state law.

One Ohio convert who had consecrated his property and shared it with New York immigrants soon became disaffected and demanded the removal of the New Yorkers. It was according to the divinely revealed law that he had given his land to the church. Under Ohio law, however, he still held sole title. While the initial revelation appointing the bishop outlined his duty to "to see to all things as it shall be appointed unto him, in my laws" (D&C 41:10), new revelation instructed the church bishop to obtain deeds for all consecrated land, that "all things shall be made sure according to the Laws of the land" (D&C 51:6). The expanding canon of divine law had to accommodate itself to and thereby recognize the laws of the land. Joseph later gave instructions on using the proper legal forms for securing monetary gifts and provided detailed instructions on filling them out properly—"otherwise the power will be of non effect" (Joseph Smith and others to "Brethren in Zion," 25 June 1833, *Joseph Smith Collection*. See also "The Elders Stationed in Zion to the Church Abroad, in Love, Greeting," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, July 1833, 110). These measures were necessary for the Church to control its money and real property. Joseph Smith knew the Mormons would settle Missouri land only by purchasing it through the established legal channels. For the time being, they would have to pursue their destined territorial sovereignty by working within the secular law.

Although Joseph had originally anticipated living by God's law in their western land of inheritance, on arriving in Missouri he quickly reconciled the law of God and the law of man. In the revelation locating the site for the temple, the center for the projected city, the Lord commanded, "Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God, hath no need to break the laws of the land: Wherefore be subject to the powers that be, until He reigns whose right it is to reign, and subdues all enemies under his feet" (D&C 58:21-22). By living the social commandments of God's law, the saints would naturally tend to steer clear of trouble with local justice.

Though warned out of Indian country, the saints did not give up on their mission to "Israel." The Mormon settlements in Jackson County strategically placed them within communication range of the Shawnee and Delaware. Just as Oliver Cowdery had attempted to access the territory through an Indian school arrangement, Joseph Smith worked to find legal avenues for reaching the remnant. One revelation encouraged intermarriage. As the disaffected Ezra Booth explained, "by this means the Elders, who comply with the thing so

pleasing to the Lord, and for which the Lord has promised to bless those who do it abundantly, gain a residence in the Indian territory, independent of the [federal Indian] agent” (Ezra Booth to Ira Eddy, 6 December 1831, in “Mormonism—Nos. VIII,” *Ohio Star*, December 8, 1831, 1).

The land revelation also instructed the saints to try to reach the Indians by obtaining a federal trading permit. Kirtland merchant Sidney Gilbert was commanded to open a store in Missouri not only to serve as the Mormon “storehouse” but to “obtain a license (Behold here is wisdom and whoso readeth let him understand) that he may send goods also unto the Lamanites even by whom I will as clerks employed in his service and thus the gospel may be preached unto them” (D&C 57:9). Ezra Booth wrote that the store would carry “goods suited to the Indian trade” (Ezra Booth to Ira Eddy, 6 December 1831, in “Mormonism—Nos. VIII,” *Ohio Star*, December 8, 1831, 1).

For the time being, Zion’s sovereignty existed only through these various plans for stealth operations. And even these plans fell flat. None of the elders entered Indian marriages. No permits were secured for Indian trade. The saints would ultimately claim the Israelite territory of Zion by seeing themselves as blood Israel that had been scattered among the nations.

The church’s efforts to become financially independent in Missouri came to naught. By the summer of 1833, the Church was deeply in debt, behind on payments, and facing the threat of lawsuits (Joseph Smith and others to “Brethren in Zion,” 25 June 1833, *Joseph Smith Collection*).

Though the saints’ practical reality fell far short of the anticipated ideal, they did begin taking real strides toward creating an independent society insofar as they were able. The very dynamics of the gathering contributed to Mormon nationalism. Unlike ordinary frontier communities, the saints living in areas designated for Mormon immigration had a strong sense of community from the very beginning—from before they even arrived. Elders working out of the missionary station in Kirtland would preach the gospel, baptize the converted, organize them into “branches,” and instruct them to settle their debts and affairs in order to emigrate to Zion. The elders’ revealed directive was to “push the people together from the ends of the earth” (D&C 58:45).

The Mormon missionaries encouraged their converts, who lived away from Missouri, to keep in contact with church headquarters by subscribing to the church newspaper, *The Evening and the Morning Star*. Through its publication of Joseph’s revelations and various articles, the *Star* bolstered the faith of new converts, indoctrinated them in the Mormon worldview, and cultivated their identity as God’s chosen people. It also encouraged immigration to Zion. The *Star* was an integral part of the gathering program. In fact, the establishment of

the Mormon press in Independence had been mandated by God a part of Joseph's "land of Zion" revelation of July 20, 1831 (D&C 57:11-12).

More than forging identity and creating community, *The Evening and the Morning Star* helped to shape the nationalism of that community—whether scattered or gathered. The *Star* published Joseph's revelations proclaiming Mormon independence and the law of God. It published revelations and articles that defined the concept of Zion and demarcated its territory. It brought the saints there to build it. The Mormon press attempted to establish an independent land of Zion.

Immigration naturally deepened Mormon identity and allegiance. The program of focused settlement necessarily invented community. It also defined others as enemies and justified consolidated settlement in terms of mutual protection reinforced the resulting community's identity. Bringing the saints together under these circumstances created a situation that demanded social engineering. Joseph's revelations would direct and manage the course of this cultural construction. By bringing a people into a place, the gathering had an inherent potential for nation building.

The economic plan for consecration and stewardship (the "United Order") also built community solidarity. In fact, those who gathered ideally entered the economic order of the Church pursuant to their emigration. The initial group of New York saints arrived in the Kirtland area not only as a religiously cohesive group of immigrants but as an economic bloc. The gathering revelation of January 2, 1831 called for the appointment of men to "govern the affairs of the property of this church"—helping emigrants settle their affairs—and to look after "the poor and the needy" among them so that no one would be left behind (D&C 38:35-36).

While the law of consecration and stewardship tied the saints together, it also cut economic ties to the wider community. Instead of developing accounts and obligations with the local merchants, the saints would ideally deal only with their bishop. Instead of enmeshing themselves in the broader economic fabric, they would rend it. Just as the Mormons used their own store, they used their own court. Whenever possible, instead of taking grievances and public concerns to local officials, they took them to the Mormon judge. Extant minutes for both Missouri and Ohio testify to the wide scope of the early Mormon court system. Instead of joining the political life of the wider community, they withdrew from it. Joseph's revelation of God's law had instructed the saints to deal with outsiders as little as possible.

The United Order was not the only aspect of Joseph's program for social reform. Another of these group preparations was education. In early 1833, following instructions revealed to Joseph, the saints in Ohio and Missouri

organized a rudimentary seminary for the instruction of elders and high priests, which they called the “School of the Prophets.” That summer, the Kirtland saints also commenced building a temple that would serve not only as a “house of God,” but as a “house of Learning” in which to convene the school (Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, 11 January 1833, in Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 292-93; Joseph Smith and others to “Brethren in Zion,” 25 June 1833, *Joseph Smith Collection*). Initially the Kirtland brethren held their school in a private residence or local schoolhouse.

The primary purpose of this instruction, a revelation declared, was for the elders to be “perfected in your ministry to go forth among the gentiles” (D&C 88:84). The small army of lay Mormon preachers had nothing in the way of the formal training ministers of other denominations had. Painesville critic Eber D. Howe wrote that the church leaders in Kirtland were “sending abroad everything that could walk, no matter how ignorant” (*Mormonism Unveiled*, 130). The early Mormon educational program thus helped the missionaries prepare for their labors abroad by instructing them in church doctrine, English grammar, and various other subjects. Joseph wanted instructors for the school who could teach the elders “to silence gainsayers” (Joseph Smith and others to “Brethren in Zion,” June 25, 1833, *Joseph Smith Collection*. Sidney Rigdon, who penned this letter, stated that he wrote it on behalf of the church presidency). This would hasten the day, as the proselytizing revelations put it, “when the weak should confound the wise . . . and by the weak things of the earth, the Lord should thresh the nations by the power of his Spirit” (D&C 35:13). The Lord told his missionaries, “Ye are not sent forth to be taught, but to teach the children of men the things which I have put into your hands by the power of my Spirit: and ye are to be taught from on high.” Educational preparation would combine with the divine “endowment” to enable the elders to preach with power, as had Enoch.

In early 1833, Joseph Smith also presented a revealed code of health. Like other advocates of temperance and health reform, Joseph’s revelation discouraged the use of alcohol and tobacco and encouraged the consumption of grains. The health revelation also warned against “hot drinks,” interpreted as coffee and tea, and advocated eating fruit in its season. Joseph would deliver God’s word on any aspect of life, whether within or without the conventional sphere of religion. As the Lord explained in an earlier revelation, “all things unto me are spiritual, and not at an time have I given unto you a law which was temporal” (D&C 29:34-35). The revelations on religious doctrine and moral behavior, law and adjudication, migration and settlement, consecration and stewardship, education and health, and other facets of life gave rise to a comprehensive Mormon culture. As the gathering continued, the body of the saints grew and new social developments required new revelations, which

increasingly differentiated Mormon culture from the surrounding American culture.

The efforts to build Zion in Missouri changed over time as new obstacles required altered plans, as new strategies failed or faltered, and as unintended consequences took their course. They were shut out of the federally protected Indian lands. Their various schemes for connecting with the Indians went nowhere. The saints did increase their western land holdings in Jackson County but never were able to form a land bridge from Independence to Indian country. They established a store but never obtained a trading permit. The challenge of settlement quickly demanded their full attention. Yet the very dynamics of the Mormon gathering generated community and solidarity. And as Joseph temporarily conceded Mormon sovereignty to the political realities of the present, he maintained a stance of emergent nationhood.

For reasons of self protection, the saints found it expedient to keep their aspirations of Mormon nationalism to themselves. In a March 1831 revelation, the Lord admonished his people in this regard:

And now I say unto you, keep these things from going abroad unto the world until it is expedient in me, that ye may accomplish this work in the eyes of the people, and in the eyes of your enemies, that they may not know your works until ye have accomplished the thing which I have commanded you; That when they shall know it, that they may consider these things. For when the Lord shall appear he shall be terrible unto them, that fear may seize upon them, and they shall stand afar off and tremble. And all nations shall be afraid because of the terror of the Lord, and the power of his might. Even so. Amen (D&C 45:72-75).

Yet however successfully the saints guarded their tongues, the political implications of their ever-increasing numbers in Jackson County were obvious. By the summer of 1833, two years after Sidney Rigdon dedicated the land of Zion, the saints constituted about a third of the county population. According to a Missourian living in western Jackson, “the Mormons had been quiet upon the subject of politics, but it was easily perceived that as matters were progressing, at no distant day they would carry with them an influence which would control all county business” (Isaac McCoy, statement, 28 November 1833, in “The Disurbances in Jackson County,” *Missouri Republican*, December 20, 1833, 2-3).

### **The Balance of Freedom and Harmony in Zion**

Joseph had grown up in an America brimming with contention. American churches were proliferating and competing for congregants and competing also for their tithes and offerings. National politics had become contentious. America

was a land of increasing freedoms—those of religious choice, economic opportunity, and democratic participation. And this freedom was tearing apart the old peaceful social order. Joseph perceived an America giving way to contention and violence. Joseph had sought for the ideals of union, order, and peace but hadn't found them. He had lost his allegiance. Using the example of the New Testament account of the primitive church, its counterpart in the Book of Mormon, and the story of the original Zion of Enoch, Joseph attempted to build a new society where harmony and love would prevail, where religion would unite men instead of dividing them, where economic classes and political parties would cease to exist.

Just prior to his death, Joseph's grandfather Asael had come to regard America as the stone of Daniel's vision which would roll forth and destroy all evil. But Asael's America was not to be. Zion, not America, would be the stone of Daniel's vision.

Joseph also held to the American ideal of freedom. But America's freedom was destroying its harmony. The Book of Mormon had expounded doctrines of freedom as well as peace. It was possible for both to exist. Joseph had to rebalance the two. He had to work out a compromise between the two principles.

The promise of Zion's peace lay in the gathering. Starting a new church in itself only added to the religiously fractured landscape. It was the migratory gathering of the converts—the bringing of a people together in a place—that created social harmony. For Joseph Smith there was no substitute for the one true church. And he attempted to restore not only the primitive church of the New Testament, but the Israelite church-state of the Old Testament.

In many ways, the saints cultivated and expressed their religious unity like other churches. They observed a Sunday Sabbath and met together for congregational worship. Baptized members in good standing shared the Lord's Supper together. But like the Shakers and other communitarian Utopians, they yearned for a deeper level of unity.

A unity among the adult male membership of the Church resulted from democratizing the priesthood. In an era when many American Protestants associated priesthood with "Popery" and the symbols of anti-Catholicism, Joseph eliminated the dividing line between the religious classes of clergy and laity by ordaining any man in good standing to priesthood office. The priesthood gave men access to periodic Mormon conferences, where they participated in an egalitarian pattern of preaching and praying in turns. This universal manhood ordination functioned as more than an equalizer. The male members of church experienced unity through the brotherhood of the priesthood.

The democratic procedure of common consent provided elements of spiritual freedom and church harmony. Spiritual harmony was also directly tied to economic harmony. An early revelation offered this commandment and instruction: "In your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit, shall be withheld" (D&C 70:14). From his upbringing, Joseph Smith was familiar with the social sting of upper-class scorn. Narratives in the Book of Mormon showed that differences in wealth led to social division and enmity. Zion's inhabitants would find harmony in a classless society. As another revelation put it, "let every man deal honestly and be alike among this people and receive alike that ye may be one even as I have commanded you" (D&C 51:9). Equal in wealth, the saints would be united in heart and spirit and thus worthy of the Lord's blessings.

The revelations expressed the ideal of social and economic unity as more than equalized wealth. It was also a matter of the heart, of the love that prevailed in the fellowship of Christ, and of compassion for the downtrodden. While still in New York, a revelation had outlined the church mission to "look to the poor and the needy, and administer to their relief, that they shall not suffer" (D&C 38:35). The divinely revealed law received on Joseph's arrival in Ohio and other revelations instructed the saints to always remember "the sick and the afflicted" (D&C 52:40). Church members were to help care for the families of missionaries preaching abroad. The bishop/judges with oversight of the storehouse and its provisions, were prohibited from resting easy in Zion. They were charged to "travel round about and among all the churches searching after the poor to administer to their wants" (D&C 84:112). All of these expressions corresponded with a commandment in the divinely revealed law: "thou shalt live together in love" (D&C 42:45).

Zion citizenship usually began with Bishop Partridge assigning the immigrant's basic provisions back to him as a stewardship. Partridge usually parceled out the church's Missouri properties in twenty-acre inheritances to be farmed. But Zion was for the laborer as well as the farmer. Joseph's "land of Zion" revelation instructed, "inasmuch as there is land obtained, let there be workmen sent forth, of all kinds, unto this land, to labor for the saints of God" (D&C 58:54). The saints needed to raise homes quickly, followed by improvements, with the hope of soon building the city with its homes, its storehouses and schoolhouses, and its temples to the Lord. Joseph platted the city of Zion with a square-mile grid of one-acre lots. As the written explanations surrounding the plat explicitly stated, "It makes all the lots in the city of one size" (Plat of city of Zion, June 24, 1833, Church History Library). This measure would function so as to level the Zion society, as land was the traditional marker of socioeconomic standing. By the early 1830s, most states had eliminated

property qualifications for voting, but not all had. Cultural and political power still lay in the land. In giving all men an equal lot, the New Jerusalem plat was clearly a work of social engineering as well as city planning. Even the bishop's lot was no larger than that of the common laborer. The only distinctive lots in the Zion plat were those devoted for the temples and storehouses. The storehouses at the center of the equally apportioned real estate would serve to further equalize property by redistributing provisions. Of course, Joseph wasn't the only reformer interested in city planning. Ralph Waldo Emerson would write to Carlyle that there was "not a reading man" in Boston "but has a draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket" (Ralph Waldo Emerson to Thomas Carlyle, 1840, in Guarneri, *The Utopian Alternative*, 13).

Joseph's revelations also attempted to shape an egalitarian society by circumventing the class dynamics of professionalism. Instead of running to lawyers, the saints took their legal complaints to the Mormon courts. Rather than dealing with worldly merchants, the saints were to provision and be provisioned at the church storehouse. Rather than calling on doctors, church members were to be healed through faith, prayer, and a blessing from the elders. Those without the faith to be healed were to be nourished with herbs and mild food. Frederick G. Williams, Joseph's counselor in the general church presidency, was the first of several "Thomsonian" doctors in the Church. The church's priestly and botanic healers replaced doctors of the conventional profession.

According to the caustic Painesville publisher Eber D. Howe, "Nearly all of their male converts, however ignorant and worthless, were forthwith transformed into 'elders,' and sent forth to proclaim, with all their wild enthusiasm, the wonders and mysteries of Mormonism" (*Mormonism Unveiled*, 115). The early Mormon elders not only preached the gospel without the formal training of the seminary, they also traveled without purse or scrip. The Mormon democracy of elders rejected the professionalism of the trained and paid clergy.

For all their condemnation of "the proud and the learned," Joseph's revelations were really a criticism of social class and of scholastic elitism not of education in and of itself. The Book of Mormon clarified that "to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God" (2 Nephi 9:29). Joseph later promoted education in the church's School of the Prophets. In addition to appointing a teacher, the elders in the church school held to the Lord's instruction that through education "all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege" (D&C 88:122). As with economic measures, the egalitarian educational system of the Mormon seminary was not meant simply to equalize but to unify.

The saints were also to avoid class distinctions by wearing plain clothing. The Book of Mormon had recorded that the demise of the Zion-like peace of the primitive church in the Americas had begun with distinctions in clothing: "There began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world. And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them" (4 Nephi 1:25). Moroni, the last Nephite prophet, saw that social distinction based on clothing would pervade society in the last days when the book would come forth:

Behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing. And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities (Mormon 8:36).

In the gathering revelation dictated on the eve of the New York exodus, the Lord stated that he had made both the rich and the poor and was "no respecter of persons" (D&C 38:16). According to this divine perspective, he likewise commanded that "every man esteem his brother as himself." The revelation then illustrated this principle with a parable:

For what man among you, having twelve sons, and is no respecter to them, and they serve him obediently, and he saith unto the one, be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here; and to the other, be thou clothed in rags and sit thou there, and looketh upon his sons and saith I am just. Behold, this I have given unto you a parable, and it is even as I am, I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one, ye are not mine (D&C 38:26).

The church was to clothe itself in plain and decent homespun. In another revelation, the Lord declared that he had created the animals and plants of the earth "for the use of man, for food, and for raiment, and that he might have in abundance, but it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another" (D&C 49:19-20). Oneness, however, could be pushed to extremes. Shortly after moving to Ohio, Joseph Smith had taken up residence on the farm of Isaac Morley, leader of the communitarian (communistic) group mentored by Sidney Rigdon. Morley's "family" followed an extreme reading of Acts 2:44, which recorded that the primitive church "were together, and had all things common." Some of the Family had earlier belonged to the Owenite community in Kendall, Ohio. Robert Owen, while falling far short of his plans for social engineering, had been inspired and influenced by the communitarianism of the Harmonists and the Shakers. The latter group also organized into "families."

Like an actual family, Morley's group was living together on one property—but without the regulated order like that found among the Shakers. And, as early church historian John Whitmer recounted, that they considered from reading the scripture that what belonged to a brother belonged to any of the brethren, therefore they would take each others clothes and other property and use it without leave. This brought about confusion and disappointments (Whitmer, *From Historian to Dissident*, 27). It was all consecration and no stewardship.

Joseph dictated the law of God a few days after moving in with the Morley group. It instructed that, while the church members should live in close proximity, “every family shall have place that they may live by themselves” (D&C 48:6; 51:3). In Missouri, Bishop Edward Partridge parceled out church land on a family-by-family basis, with deed-like documents given to every head of household. The family patriarch met with the bishop on an annual basis with an inventory of his stewardship. Together, they would determine what was needed to maintain the individual stewardship and what was surplus that could be consecrated to the wider community. For the rest of the year, the family managed their real estate, improvements, and material property on their own initiative and enterprise. This was the economic freedom of Zion.

The annual accounting between the Zion bishop and steward developed from the instruction in the divinely revealed law that the bishop and the elders “counsel together” over economic matters and follow “the direction of the spirit.” The work of the bishop was to counsel, not to command. In the summer of 1833, the church presidency wrote Bishop Partridge in Missouri with further instruction on the duties of his office. They admonished him to respect the steward's own judgment on what was needed and what was surplus. While Bishop Partridge had the responsibility of serving as the judge in Zion, it was also the case that “every man must be his own judge.” The steward was responsible to make a reasonably fair assessment of his needs, and the bishop was not to quibble over particulars. Mainly there was to be agreement: The matter of consecration must be done by the mutual consent of both parties. To give the bishop power to say how much every man shall have and he be obliged to comply with the Bishop's judgment, is giving to the Bishop more power than a king has and upon the other hand, to let every man say how much he needs and the bishop obliged to comply with his judgment, is to throw Zion into confusion and make a slave of the bishop. Neither of these extremes fit the polity of Zion. Rather than a king commanding a subject or a slave serving his master, the annual settlement between bishop and steward was ideally that of a judge counseling with a citizen.

Priesthood belonged not only to the Israelites but to men of any race who would join their covenant and be numbered with them. Along with the hundreds of European Americans who had joined the church, there were a small number of

African American converts. These too received the priesthood and voting power in the conference system. Women were excluded from the Mormon priesthood and its conferences whether Israelite or not.

As with economic leveling, the universal manhood suffrage (right to vote) of the Mormon priesthood was meant not only to equalize but to unify. The system worked as a compromise. Joseph Smith combined the theology of revelation with the ecclesiology of appointment. While church conferences made some assignments through the democratic process of convened assembly, motion, nomination, and voting, the most important church officeholders were appointed by revelation. The resolution of divine appointment and democratic election began when converts accepted the legitimacy of such revelations and voted accordingly.

As when the children of Israel followed Moses out of Egypt toward Canaan, the Church of Christ willingly followed Joseph out of the East toward their Zion in the West. Joseph saw this as a combination of theocratic appointment and democratic consent in the primitive church as well. He would later teach that Peter, the chief apostle, “was appointed to this office by the voice of the Savior and acknowledged in it by the voice of the Church” (Kirtland High Council, minutes, 17 February 1834, in Collier and Harwell, eds., *Kirtland Council Minute Book*, 23-29). This “theodemocracy,” to borrow a term from Joseph’s later teachings, brought political freedom and harmony into decision making.

Joseph derived his political power from the consent of the governed. The practice of appointment beginning with God and his prophet flowed downward through the structure of the church (see D&C 63:59 and chapter 14, volume 1, of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine, The Power of God*).

Joseph’s system of theocratic appointment and democratic consent even had a parallel in his theology of man. An 1833 revelation declared that “Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence” (D&C 93:29-30). While pronouncing this shocking doctrine that man’s mind was co-eternal with God and an agent unto itself, the revelation went on to describe man’s progression in terms of accepting and receiving the light and truth of God’s superior intelligence. In contrast to the theory that happiness was pursued through the independent exercise of man’s own reason, man actually found happiness by accepting God’s direction (See Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 209-10).

Though the saints consented to the church’s government and its doctrine of appointment, critics of the Church looked on the policy as decidedly undemocratic (Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty*, 68-71). Voting and election was

the bedrock of authentic representative democracy, but the saints' submissive consent seemed to undermine the validity of the Mormon version of voting. Nevertheless, the saints accepted and believed in the divine origins of their own governmental system.

On August 2, 1831, two weeks after Joseph Smith's "land of Zion" revelation (D&C 57), he and Sydney Rigdon met with the saints to bring their new nation into being. Sydney arose and asked the saints, "Do you pledge yourselves to keep the laws of God on this land, which you have never have kept in your own land?" When the saints voiced their ayes, Sydney pronounced the land "consecrated and dedicated to the Lord for a possession and inheritance for the saints, in the name of Jesus Christ having authority from him. And for all the faithful Servants of the Lord to the remotest ages of time Amen" (Whitmer, *From Historian to Dissident*, 86). With both divine authority and the consent of the governed, Rigdon established Zion for its pioneer citizenry and for the faithful to follow.

### **Challenges of the Zion Project**

From the beginning, Joseph Smith's project of creating a unified community through selective immigration faced challenges. Not all of the saints who followed the founding cohort were faithful. The Mormons had difficulty screening their joiners. As appointed church historian John Corrill would later recount, "the church got crazy to go up to Zion . . . the poor crowded up in numbers, without having any places provided" (Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 18-19). Many moved to Zion who had not consecrated any property—and thus had not obtained a "recommend" which authorized them to move to Missouri. Most of these also arrived in Missouri without any resources. They arrived in Jackson County eager to receive their "inheritance" from the bishop with no evidence that they had invested in the cooperative plan. This quickly exhausted the funds available for purchasing new lands to house the immigrants. In letters to Missouri, Joseph complained about those who had made the move without authorization. He described them as acting "contrary to the will and commandment of God." He considered them to be "iniquitous persons and rebellious," and he withdrew from them the "right hand of fellowship" (Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, July 31, 1832, in Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 269-76; Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, November 27, 1832, in Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 284-91). By taking the liberty of moving to Missouri independent of the church's regulations they had violated Zion's order. In this case, freedom had overrun harmony.

Even those who entered Zion's borders with documentation—a proper “recommend”—did not always live up to the obligations required of its citizens. In the revelation designating Missouri as the “land of Zion,” the Lord made it clear that the citizens of Zion were to obey the law of the Lord (D&C 58:19-23). Like those who immigrated prematurely, those who broke the law were also considered rebellious. Also, as indicated by Joseph's letters and revelations, many saints in Missouri lost their faith or were questioning Joseph's leadership (see, for example, Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, July 31, 1832, in Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 269-76; Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, January 11, 1833, in Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 292-93). The strict religious and economic order of Zion had resolved freedom and harmony through the willing consent of her citizens. But when obedience and compliance failed and consent was withdrawn, the resolution fell completely apart, replacing what had been the freedom of the individual with oppression and replacing what had been the harmony of the community with discord. Zion's inhabitants were supposed to be of one heart and one mind. How could Zion be the refuge of peace if it was filled with mutiny? In a revelation received within a few months of Zion's establishment, the Lord promised to rectify this situation: “Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days. And the rebellious shall be cut off out of the land of Zion, and shall be sent away, and shall not inherit the land” (D&C 64:34-35).

The glorious concept of bringing God's people together in a place apart thus included a dark corollary: the expulsion of dissenters. The Book of Mormon wrestled with the same problem. Lehi had led his family out of the corrupted city of Jerusalem in order to start a righteous nation anew. But then dissent broke out in his immediate family. His son Nephi and later Mosiah I followed the pattern of reestablishing the holy society through emigration. Yet apostasy inevitably crept back in, causing great distress to the righteous. In addition to emigration, the Book of Mormon offered further solutions to the problem of maintaining a godly society. While the majority of the Nephite nation remained righteous, it was the dissenters who emigrated. They usually left voluntarily—though they often returned with a vengeance and with enemy Lamanites in tow. Other dissenters stayed, and their rebelliousness was painfully tolerated. But never for too long. More often than not their dissent eventually crossed over into robbery, murder, or treason—thereby justly meriting deportation or death. Either punishment removed them from the society. But tolerating dissent ran the risk of corrupting the majority of the society. One instance of this occurred contemporary to the mortal ministry of Jesus in Palestine. Rather than commanding another exodus of the righteous, the Lord destroyed the wicked

with natural calamities like those that would attend his glorious return in the end of days. When apostasy led to the complete corruption of Nephite society, as it had with the Jaredites before them, the Lord used war to completely destroy them (Mormon 6).

The solution adopted among the Mormon faithful in Jackson County was to defer final justice until the imminent expected coming of the Lord. This policy followed the toleration program outlined in the Book of Mormon. When members of the Nephite church dissented or fell into transgression, their names were merely “blotted out” of the church records. In a revelation to Joseph, the Lord instructed that a record be kept recording the names “of all those who consecrate properties, and receive inheritances legally from the bishop; And also . . . of the apostates who apostatize after receiving their inheritances. It is contrary to the will and commandment of God that those who receive not their inheritance by consecration . . . should have their names enrolled with the people of God” (D&C 85:1-2). At the coming of the Lord, this book would serve a function similar to the Lamb’s book of life featured in the apocalypse of John (Revelation 3:5,13:8,17:8, 20:12-15, 21:27, 22:19; also Philippians 4:3). Though unable to reclaim their original consecrations, Zion’s apostates were allowed—for the present—to reside on the land the church had apportioned them. A revelation reiterated the assurance that when the Lord came in glory the “fatness of the earth” would be given to the saints forever. But the apostates are warned:

But wo unto them that are deceivers and hypocrites, for, thus saith the Lord, I will bring them to judgment. Behold, verily I say unto you, there are hypocrites among you, who have deceived some, which has given the adversary power; but behold such shall be reclaimed; But the hypocrites shall be detected and shall be cut off, either in life or in death, even as I will; and wo unto them who are cut off from my church, for the same are overcome of the world (D&C 50:6-9).

The reclassification of these apostate saints as Gentiles, as opposed to Israel, lumped them in with the prior inhabitants of the land. Just as Israel’s promised land of Canaan was filled with Canaanites, the “land of Missouri” was filled with Missourians (Gentiles).

Revelation had declared the immediate environs of Independence as the “center place” (D&C 57) and had instructed the saints to begin their occupation of Missouri by buying up the land in Jackson and the surrounding counties. Independence itself and Jackson County generally were still dominated by Gentiles—not to mention the surrounding counties and the rest of the state. Hence, most of Zion’s residents were out of harmony with the saints, and would have considered the assertion of her sovereignty—had they known about it—an

imposition on their freedom. How would Zion deal with its prior inhabitants? Ancient Israel, under Moses' appointed successor, Joshua, had followed God's direction to utterly destroy them (see, for example, Numbers 21:2-3; Deuteronomy 2:34, 3:6, 4:26, 7:2, 12:2,13:15, 20:17; Joshua 2:10, 6:21, 8:26,10:1, 28, 35-40,11:11-12, 20-21). However, in the summer of 1833, when the Mormon population was approaching a demographic equilibrium in Jackson, the church newspaper clarified that "the circumstances of the saints in gathering to the land of Zion in these last days, are very different from those of the children of Israel. . . . to suppose that we can come up here and take possession of this land by the shedding of blood, would be setting at nought the law of the glorious gospel, and also the word of our great Redeemer" ("The Elders Stationed in Zion to the Churches Abroad, in Love, Greeting," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, July 1833, 110). The saints would follow Christ's instructions to the Church instead of Jehovah's to the camp of Israel. Even during his arrest—the pivotal moment between his freedom of movement and preaching and his incarceration and crucifixion—Jesus had said to Peter, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52). So it was with the saints. If they pursued territorial conquest through violence, they would reap their own destruction. According to a revelation Joseph dictated just after establishing the Missouri settlements, "Wherefore, the land of Zion shall not be obtained but by purchase or by blood, otherwise there is none inheritance for you" (D&C 63:29). They would only succeed by buying out all of the Gentiles.

The Lord stated, "I will not overthrow the wicked that thereby I may save some" (D&C 64:21). The earliest Mormon foothold in Jackson came with the conversions of a handful of the county's residents. The plan was an orderly lawful takeover. Both freedom and harmony would prevail in Zion.

In addition to illegal immigrants, rebellious apostates, and native inhabitants, one other social group compromised Zion's holiness. It was the body of saints themselves. Just over a year into Zion's settlement, a revelation declared that the disbelief and disobedience of her inhabitants had reached the point that the society as a whole was culpable:

Vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all. And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written—That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured

out upon the children of Zion. For shall the children of the kingdom pollute my holy land? Verily, I say unto you, Nay (D&C 84:55-59).

Just as the children of Israel had been conquered and removed from their promised land, modern Zion could be removed or destroyed. In an early 1833 letter to Missouri, Joseph admonished the saints to heed God's warning "lest Zion fall." Some of the Zion leaders had responded to Joseph's admonitions with resentment. Joseph wrote that the spirit of rebellion was "wasting the strength of Zion like a pestilence, and if it is not detected and driven from you it will ripen Zion for the threatened Judgments of God" (letter from Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, 11 January 1833, in Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 292-93). For the Mormons, tolerating the presence of dissenters ran the risk of allowing their corrupting influence to spread, which could lead to an unworthiness to possess the land of promise. Losing the prospect of territorial domain meant losing the dream of political independence—of being a "free people" as the Church was promised in the New York exodus revelation.

By summer of 1833, the body of saints had grown substantially in Jackson County. Two years earlier, in the summer of 1831, Joseph had established Zion in Missouri with a small colony of about sixty saints. By spring of 1832, there were over 400, and by autumn of 1833, approximately 1200—constituting about one third of the county. Within the next year or so, the saints would have been in a position to control the outcome of county elections. The time was approaching when they would, as an early revelation put it, "obtain power to organize yourselves, according to the laws of man; That your enemies may not have power over you . . . That you may be enabled to keep my laws" (D&C 44:4). The early settlers of the county understood this perfectly, partly as a result of the boasting in which some saints indulged. Writing on Joseph's behalf, Oliver Cowdery would later place blame on such men—"those whose mouths are continually open, and whose tongues cannot be stayed from tatling!" He castigated them as an offense to God and a danger to the peace of Zion (Oliver Cowdery to William W. Phelps and others, with Joseph Smith postscript, 10 August 1833, in Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 304-6). The overzealous as well as the underzealous thus placed Zion in jeopardy at this moment when the balance of power approached its tipping point.

By the summer of 1833, the earlier settlers of Jackson County had developed a deep antipathy and intolerance toward the saints. Joseph understood from his revelations that his Zion project would be menaced by enemies. But the prophet had no stomach for violence and bloodshed. He had counted on keeping enemies at bay with godly power. Now, just when they needed divine protection most, their disobedience and disorder was bringing down God's wrath on themselves instead of their enemies.

## **Failure of the Zion Project**

Violent conflict between the saints and the Gentiles in the “land of Missouri” may have been inevitable. The Mormon newcomers and the earlier settlers of Jackson County had always been wary of one another. The first few months of Mormon settlement passed peacefully, but in the spring of 1832, ruffians broke the windows of some Mormon homes and threatened to drive the Mormons from the county. A meeting was held to discuss driving the Mormons out, though it ended in disagreement and confusion (William W. Phelps, “To His Excellency, Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri,” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, December 1833, 114-15; John Whitmer, *From Historian to Dissident*, 102). Subsequent incidents may have occurred in response to the spring and fall surges in Mormon immigration. Shots were fired into Mormon homes in the fall of 1832. About the middle of July 1833, more windows were shattered. The Zion brethren apparently sent word of this third episode to Joseph Smith in Kirtland. With the saints’ swelling numbers, the conflict in Jackson would soon come to a head.

In July 1833, the expulsion movement that had faltered the previous year received the backing of the county’s most prominent residents. By the end of the year, the saints would lose their “center place.” A group of organizers met and created a document that compiled grievances and declared the intent of forcing the Mormons out. The circular announced a countywide meeting to be held in Independence on July 20, 1833—two years to the day from Joseph Smith’s revelation declaring Missouri the land of Zion and Independence the place for the New Jerusalem (D&C 57). The four or five hundred men who responded to the circulating announcement rehearsed their complaints and drafted a set of specific demands to present to the Mormon leadership. This document and the earlier circular outline the major points of conflict between the two societies living within the physical confines of Jackson County. The early settlers attacked the Mormons on religious, economic, and political fronts.

The preamble to the resolutions complained primarily of the Mormon belief in and exercise of spiritual gifts. The early settlers were offended by their neighbors’ claims to see visions, prophesy, heal, speak in tongues, and “all the wonder working miracles wrought by the inspired apostles and prophets of old.” In the circular, the county leaders wrote:

They openly blaspheme the most high God, and cast contempt on his holy religion, by pretending to receive revelations direct from heaven, by pretending to speak unknown tongues; by direct inspiration, and by diverse pretences derogatory of God and religion.

Even Alexander Campbell, America's preeminent restorationist, had rejected the restoration of gifts as a manifestation of true and living faith. To the early settlers of Jackson, Mormons exercised spiritual gifts "to the utter subversion of human reason" (William W. Phelps, "To His Excellency, Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, December 1833, 114-15).

While there were a few local religious societies—some Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians—Jackson County was not especially religious. Despite several hundred residents and several years of settlement, no meetinghouse had yet been erected. Nevertheless, the Mormons offended what religious beliefs county residents did hold and were labeled either "fanatics" or "knaves"—"for one or the other they undoubtedly are" (William W. Phelps, "To His Excellency, Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, December 1833, 114-15). After lodging these complaints, however, the circular waved them aside as ultimately irrelevant. The resolutions followed suit:

Of their pretended revelations from heaven—their personal intercourse with God and His angels—the maladies they pretend to heal by the laying on of hands—and contemptible gibberish with which they habitually profane the Sabbath, and which they dignify with the appellation of unknown tongues, we have nothing to say; vengeance belongs to God alone ("Mormonism," *Western Monitor*, 2 August 1833, in *History of the Church* 1:395-99).

The Jackson Gentiles insisted that the Mormon religion, however obnoxious and blasphemous, was not the ultimate grounds for removal. To the contrary, they claimed, "If they had been respectable citizens in society, and thus deluded they would have been entitled to our pity rather than to our contempt and hatred" (William W. Phelps, "To His Excellency, Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, December 1833, 114-15).

But the Mormons were not respectable citizens in the eyes of the earlier settlers. As the circular explained, "From their appearance, from their manners, and from their conduct, since their coming among us, we have every reason to fear, that with but very few exceptions, they were of the very dregs of that society from which they came, lazy, idle and vicious." As evidence for this, Jackson's leading citizens noted that the Mormons had arrived in the county with very little property. It is unclear whether those who composed the circular understood the Mormon program of pre-immigration consecration. They saw the immigrants as men with nothing to lose. Some of the leaders, in their opinion, deserved to be in jail. According to Jackson resident Isaac McCoy, only a few of the saints had the education "sufficient for the transaction of the ordinary business of the country,"

while the majority were “illiterate, uninformed and superstitious.” “Some,” McCoy wrote, “appeared to have been gathered from among the shiftless and ignorant. . . who live, as the saying is, from hand to mouth, and whose condition in life, could hardly be made worse” (Isaac McCoy, statement, 28 November 1833, in *Daily Missouri Republican*, 20 December 1833, 2-3). The circular complained that each successive wave of immigrants exhibited “a gradual falling off in the character of the people, until they have now nearly reached the low condition of the black population” (“The Mormons, or New-Jerusalem in Jackson County Missouri,” *Jeffersonian Republican*, 17 August 1833, 2). This was a severe criticism given that all the African Americans in Jackson were enslaved. When the citizens met to draft their resolutions, they stated that the Mormons were “characterized by the profoundest ignorance, the grossest superstition, and the most abject poverty” (“Mormonism,” *Western Monitor*, 2 August 1833, in *History of the Church* 1:395-99). Josiah Gregg, a Santa Fe trader who periodically resided in Jackson County, later wrote that “the old settlers could not think of bringing up their families in the midst of such a corrupt state of society as the Mormons were establishing” (Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies* 1:315).

The manifest hatred of the Mormons, however, probably had more to do with their real estate plans than with their poverty. According to disaffected Mormon Ezra Booth, when the Church was buying up land in 1831, “It was conjectured by the inhabitants of Jackson County, that the Mormonites, as a body are wealthy, and many of them entertain fears, that next December, when the list of the land is exposed for sale, they will out-bid others, and establish themselves as the most powerful body in the County” (“Mormonism—No. V,” *Ohio Star*, 10 November 1831, 2).

While the church never raised the money to outbid others on Jackson’s most choice tracts, they managed to acquire over 24,000 acres by the summer of 1833. Isaac McCoy wrote that as word of the Mormon presence in Jackson spread, “emigration to this county, of others than Mormons, decreased” (Isaac McCoy, statement, 28 November 1833, in *Daily Missouri Republican*, 20 December 1833, 2-3). The more Jackson became known as a Mormon county, the more local land speculators like McCoy stood to lose.

This context makes clear why Jackson’s old guard objected to the territorial aims of the Mormons. According to Josiah Gregg, the saints became more vocal about their plans as their numbers grew, until they were “so emboldened by impunity, as openly to boast of their determination to be the sole proprietors of the ‘Land of Zion’” (Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies* 1:315). A rumor, circulated in mid-July 1833, complained of how the Mormons would “declare openly that their God hath given them this county of land, and that sooner or later they must and will have the possession of our lands for an

inheritance" (William W. Phelps, "To His Excellency, Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, December 1833, 114-15). Some early settlers in Missouri complained: "We are daily told . . . that we, (the Gentiles), of this county are to be cut off, and our lands appropriated by them [the Mormons] for inheritances" ("Mormonism," *Western Monitor*, 2 August 1833, in *History of the Church* 1:395-99). Isaac McCoy similarly reported that the saints had "repeated, perhaps, hundreds of times, that this country was theirs, the Almighty had given it to them, and that they would assuredly have entire possession of it in a few years." Jackson's early settlers understandably feared this mentality, and rumors abounded on how the saints meant to accomplish this territorial consolidation (Isaac McCoy, statement, 28 November 1833, in *Daily Missouri Republican*, 20 December 1833, 2-3. see also Jennings, "The City in the Garden," 102-3; Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, 40).

For a time, it appeared that this arrogance of impending conquest might become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Isaac McCoy wrote that the Mormons "were introducing a state of society which would evidently become intolerable to others and would rid the county of all who did not belong to their party." McCoy wrote that the Mormons "gloried" in this (Isaac McCoy, statement, 28 November 1833, in *Daily Missouri Republican*, 20 December 1833, 2-3). This was indeed the sort of peaceful conquest Joseph Smith had in mind. John Corrill, a Mormon, wrote that "the old citizens became more and more dissatisfied, and from time to time offered to sell their farms and possessions, but the Mormons, though desirous, were too poor to purchase them" (Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 19). Under these circumstances, as Isaac McCoy put it, "the Mormons alone would be purchasers of their property, and consequently at their own prices, as they often boasted would be the case. Matters had not yet reached this state of things but were rapidly approaching it" (Isaac McCoy, statement, 28 November 1833, in *Daily Missouri Republican*, 20 December 1833, 2-3).

In the eyes of the early settlers, the contest over property extended beyond real estate to bond servants. The Mormons had been discovered, the circular claimed, "tampering with our slaves, and endeavoring to sow dissensions and raise seditions amongst them." This alleged slave tampering, more than the poverty of the saints, revealed "their characters in their true colors" and disqualified them from citizenship (William W. Phelps, "To His Excellency, Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, December 1833, 114-15). It is unknown whether or to what extent the Mormon leadership in Missouri shared Joseph's prophecy that slaves would rise up against their masters. When confronted with the allegation of slave tampering, the church leaders had promised to discipline any Mormon doing anything of the

kind. The county's principle men, however, found their suspicions confirmed when *The Evening and the Morning Star*, the Mormon newspaper in Independence, published the Missouri statutes regarding free blacks along with words of caution: "Slaves are real estate in this and other states, and wisdom would dictate great care among the branches of the Church of Christ, on this subject. So long as we have no special rule in the church, as to people of color, let prudence guide" ("Free People of Color," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, July 1833, 109). Whatever sensitivity to the issue the article meant to display did not satisfy Jackson's early settlers.

White Missourians had long manifested an exceptional intolerance for the presence of free blacks. An indignant attitude on the issue had been burned into the soul of Missouri at the moment of its birth—when their attempt to constitutionally exclude free blacks from the state set off a scorching debate in the national congress. James Aull, a Missouri merchant with stores in Jackson and nearby counties, wrote in 1835 that he had spoken with many slave owners in the area and found them interested in the idea of a local initiative for gradual emancipation. Not one of them, however, "would consent to let them remain amongst us after they are free" (Jennings, "Zion is Fled," 133-34). The prospect of free black Mormons moving into Jackson County was more than the early settlers could bear. The county's eminent citizens made their sentiments clear on this point in their call for a public meeting. In their assessment, the *Star's* "Free People of Color" article revealed the Mormon character "in still more odious colors." It was nothing less than a deliberate attempt, as they viewed it, "to inflict on our society an injury that they know would be to us entirely insupportable, and one of the surest means of driving us from the county; for it would require none of the supernatural gifts that they pretend to, to see that the introduction of such a cast amongst us, would corrupt our blacks and instigate them to bloodsheds" (William W. Phelps, "To His Excellency, Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, December 1833, 114-15). In the citizens' meeting of 20 July, the Jackson Gentiles agreed that the article was a plot "to drive us to emigrate" ("Mormonism," *Western Monitor*, 2 August 1833, in *History of the Church* 1:395-99.).

William Phelps, the editor of the *Star*, quickly issued an extra claiming that the Church had published the article in order to discourage, not invite, black immigration. A spokesman for the early settlers declaimed this damage control as an insult to their intelligence, alleging that at the time of the article's publication there was an "expectation among the brethren" that a "considerable number" of black Mormons in Illinois awaited instructions to immigrate. In Mormon policy, the early settlers saw "all the necessary directions and cautions, to enable the free blacks, on their arrival there, to claim and exercise the rights of

citizenship” (“The Mormons, or New-Jerusalem in Jackson County Missouri,” *Jeffersonian Republican*, 17 August 1833, 2). The *Star* regularly printed articles touching on the doctrine of the gathering, as well as letters from missionaries and church branches reporting on immigration plans. Several of Joseph Smith’s revelations, some printed in the *Star*, had projected that Zion’s citizens would be gathered from “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (D&C 77:8). The Gentiles took the article as an open invitation for “free brethren of color” to “come up like the rest, to the land of Zion.” This, the early settlers deemed completely unacceptable. They could never abide “the stench, both physical and moral, that their introduction would set afloat in our social atmosphere, and the vexation that would attend the civil rule of these fanatics.” The early settlers saw the Mormons constructing a citizenry that was entirely incompatible with their own (“Mormonism,” *Western Monitor*, 2 August 1833, in *History of the Church* 1:395-99).

It was under these circumstances that the leading men of Jackson determined to take action. Rather than leaving the county, they would push out the Mormons. Wanting to cast their contention with the Mormons as a fundamentally political problem, a circular announced a state of emergency: “An important crisis is at hand, as regards our civil society.” It was therefore, they believed, “a duty we owe ourselves to our wives and children, to the cause of public morals, to remove them from among us.” The early settlers preferred that their enemies leave voluntarily. Following the pattern of Indian removal, Missourians had executed in the previous decade, they proposed to offer the Mormons a “timely warning” and compensation for lands lost. Claiming the high ground of the county’s rightful citizenry, they called for a meeting at the courthouse. Imitating the Declaration of Independence, they closed their call to action by pledging their “lives, fortunes, and sacred honors” (William W. Phelps, “To His Excellency, Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri,” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, December 1833, 114-15). The gathering of vigilantes who answered the call made their own “solemn declaration” in which they described themselves as an assembly of “gentlemen” who represented “every part of the county.” They enumerated their grievances and announced their determination to preserve the county’s “good society” and “public morals” (“Mormonism,” *Western Monitor*, 2 August 1833, in *History of the Church* 1:395-99). In the production of documents and in their subsequent actions, the early settlers covered their backs with all the usual legalistic rituals. Black immigration was only the most recent and obnoxious development in the larger scheme of immigration that would soon give the Mormons a democratic majority. Resenting Mormon prophecies of territorial dominion, the reporter for the vigilante meeting wrote, “It requires no gift of prophecy to tell that the day is not far distant when

the civil government of the county will be in their hands; when the sheriff, the justices, and the county judges will be Mormons” (“Mormonism,” *Western Monitor*, 2 August 1833, in *History of the Church* 1:395-99). Parley Pratt wrote that “political demagogues” had become “jealous of our growing influence and numbers” and “were afraid we should rule the county” (Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 78. See also Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 19). A committee appointed by the public meeting expressed its fears of what would follow when the Mormons took the reins of government:

The lives and property of other citizens would be insecure, under the administration of men who are so ignorant and superstitious as to believe that they have been the subjects of miraculous and supernatural cures; hold converse with God and his angels, and possess and exercise the gift of divination, and of unknown tongues, and are, withal, so poor as to be unable to procure bread and meat (“The Mormons, or New-Jerusalem in Jackson County Missouri,” *Jeffersonian Republican*, 17 August 1833, 2).

The religious fanaticism and severe poverty of the Mormons made them “unfit to rule.” In a democracy, where citizens could not only vote for officers but run for office themselves, this meant the Mormons were unfit to be citizens. Like Indians or free blacks, they did not belong. They needed to be removed.

In their accounts of the episode, the early settlers commonly refer to themselves as “the citizens”—and this to the exclusion of the county’s Mormon residents. Yet this was fair in the sense that the Mormons had given their allegiance to Zion—not to Jackson, Missouri, or America. The saints viewed themselves as citizens of Zion and their Gentile neighbors as non-citizen residents. Joseph Smith’s revelation that the “land of Missouri” was the “land of Zion” instructed the saints to buy up the “whole region of country” as soon as possible and then “the regions round about” (D&C 58:52). An 1833 revelation clarified that the saints had been commanded to purchase “Jackson county and the counties round about” (D&C 101:71). The saints meant to buy out the Gentiles and have the place for themselves. The early settlers and the Mormons thus constituted incongruous citizenries.

Parley Pratt’s complaint about “political demagogues” opens a window on both the old guard leading the county and its citizenry. A demagogue is a person, particularly a political leader who gains power by arousing peoples’ emotions and prejudices. Among the hundreds of signatures added to the “citizen” circular were those of the county judge and two justices of the peace, the constable and the jailor, the county clerk and his deputy, and the colonel of the county’s regiment of state militia with his lieutenant and a captain—as well as

the postmaster and local Indian agent Richard Cummins. But for the most part, as the Zion printer William Phelps recounted it, the rest of the vigilantes were men “of little or no reading; and being thus ignorant, were the more easily persuaded to believe, that their privileges and rights as citizens were about to be unlawfully taken from them.” These were those who were plied by the demagogues, who “when once roused to acts of violence, were constantly heated by the insinuations of a few” (William W. Phelps, “To His Excellency, Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri,” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, December 1833, 114-15).

At the far western reaches of the organized states, the majority of Jackson County residents were rough-hewn frontier folk. Most had emigrated from the hill country of Kentucky and Tennessee. Some were undoubtedly squatters who feared Mormon property plans. Whether they were old guard, ordinary residents, or even relatively recent squatters, they all claimed the right of prior habitation. With a united voice, they expressed their desire that the Mormons “leave us in peace, as they found us” (*Ibid.*).

Other elements in the county contributed to its susceptibility to vigilantism. At the eastern terminus of the Santa Fe Trail, Jackson was the occasional residence of traders like Josiah Gregg, whose father Harman Gregg signed the declaration warning out the Mormons. In his memoirs, Josiah Gregg celebrated “the wild, unsettled and independent life of the Prairie trader.” The trail life of the trader, Gregg wrote:

makes perfect freedom from nearly every kind of social dependence an absolute necessity of his being. He is in daily, nay, hourly exposure of his life and property, and in the habit of relying upon his own arm and his own gun both for protection and support. Is he wronged? No court or jury is called to adjudicate upon his disputes or his abuses, save his own conscience; and no powers are invoked to redress them, save those with which the God of Nature has endowed him. He knows no government—no laws, save those of his own creation and adoption. He lives in no society which he must look up to or propitiate [conciliate, appease].

Gregg wrote that traders and other men like him preferred this “untrammelled condition—this sovereign independence,” over the compromised autonomy of settled community, “where both his physical and moral freedom are invaded at every turn, by the complicated machinery of social institutions” (Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies* 1:156-57). In addition to men like Gregg who were laws unto themselves, Jackson County harbored an outlaw element that used the western border to its advantage. The saints, who had settled at the western boundary to be near the Indians, complained of these “desperadoes” who could

murder or steal and then “escape, in a few minutes, beyond the reach of process” (William W. Phelps, “To His Excellency, Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri,” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, December 1833, 114-15).

Jackson’s anti-Mormon vigilantes, while including those who held the reins of political power, did recognize themselves as an extra-legal body. Not all of the circular signatories whom the Mormons singled out as vigilante leaders were government officials. The doctor, the lawyer, and the merchants who affixed their signatures to the circular represented Jackson’s socioeconomic establishment. While enjoying substantial support from county leaders and the citizenry generally, the vigilante leaders nevertheless acknowledged they were leaving Missouri law behind. As they stated in their circular, “The arm of the civil law does not afford us a guarantee, or at least a sufficient one against the evils which are now inflicted upon us.” It was therefore “expedient,” they claimed, “to form ourselves into a company for the better and easier accomplishment of our purpose, a purpose which we deem it almost superfluous to say, is justified as well by the law of nature, as by the law of self preservation” (*Ibid.*). While operating outside of Missouri law, this “company” received such widespread support among Jackson’s governing officials and citizenry that it constituted a de facto county government.

When the vigilantes assembled, they reiterated the position that the problem of the Mormon invasion was “one that no one could have foreseen, and therefore unprovided for by the laws.” They therefore organized themselves as a natural “organ” of the county (“Mormonism,” *Western Monitor*, 2 August 1833, in *History of the Church* 1:395-99). Josiah Gregg, the self-sovereign trader of the prairie, while sympathetic to the early settlers may also have been able to view this conflict from an outside perspective. “It was evident,” he wrote, “that one of the two parties would in the course of time have to abandon the country” (Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies* 1:315). In the last analysis, there were neither citizens of the county of Jackson nor saints of land of Zion, but two parties competing for the same country.

In a sense, both the Mormons and the vigilantes had left the laws of the land behind. Both parties appealed to higher law. The Mormons, on the one hand, had all along wanted to live by the law of God revealed through their prophet. They followed Missouri law as an expedient in order to steer clear of trouble while building their numbers. When large enough to seize the reins of government, they could create a space for themselves to live by God’s law. Jackson’s vigilante leaders, on the other hand, justified their plan to rid the county of Mormons with “the law of self preservation”—the first law of nature cited by vigilantes throughout the nation. In imitating the Declaration of Independence, the circular embodied the appeal to higher law with form as well

as content. Of course, the appeal to natural law was indirectly an appeal to nature's God. But the residents of western Missouri, like Americans throughout the nation, saw the will of nature's God expressed in the will of the people generally—*vox populi, vox dei*. While the Mormons found God's will in the revelations of the prophet Joseph Smith, Jackson's early settlers equated God's will with their own. The Mormons and the early settlers constituted different citizenries with different governments. They appealed to different higher laws based on different concepts of sovereignty in pursuit of the same sovereign domain.

The July 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of over 400 vigilantes began its work by producing a set of resolutions. The Mormons were required to leave. Those who pledged to go of their own accord would be given reasonable time to settle their affairs. Church leaders would be held responsible for putting a stop to the flow of new immigration. Since another resolution demanded that the Mormons immediately close down the office of the *Star*, the vigilantes would send copies of their resolutions to major eastern newspapers, "that the Mormon brethren may know at a distance that the gates of Zion are closed against them." In addition to closing the printing shop, the Mormons were to also close "all other stores and shops belonging to the sect"—including the storehouse. With macabre humor typical of vigilante actions, the committee appointed to draft the resolutions recommended that "those who fail to comply with these requisitions, be referred to those of their brethren who have the gifts of divination, and of unknown tongues, to inform them of the lot that awaits them" ("Mormonism," *Western Monitor*, 2 August 1833, in *History of the Church* 1:395-99. The assembly then sent delegates to present the resolutions to the Mormon government and awaited news of their reception.

The Mormon leaders were shocked by the demands of the vigilantes. When they asked for time to consider the demands, the vigilante delegates were done negotiating. They returned to the town square to report the Mormon rejection of the terms and pursue the next course of action. The assembled crowd soon moved to the publishing house, where they wrecked the press and began tearing down the building. Isaac McCoy reported that there had been talk of doing this earlier, but the Mormons had seemed unconcerned:

About this time threats were occasionally made to throw down houses, &c; their printing-office, and their store house in Independence were considered most in danger, but the Mormons were not much intimidated; their store they said was the Lord's Store House, and therefore it could not be injured, and if any one should extend his hand to injure the house in which their Revelations, &c. was printed, his hand would immediately wither.

However, McCoy related, when the assembly moved to the printing office they “razed it to its foundation, to the apparent astonishment of many of them who were looking on at a distance” (Isaac McCoy, statement, 28 November 1833 in *Daily Missouri Republican*, 20 December 1833, 2-3). The revelations regarding the latter-day Zion, and the Zion of Enoch on which it was modeled, described a land of refuge, a place of safety, a sacred space that God protected from enemies. Although the saints had not yet built the City of Zion and its temple, they apparently expected that God would protect the buildings they had erected so far.

After demolishing the Mormon ministry of information (the printing office), the vigilantes attacked the locus of Zion’s economic power: the storehouse. This time, the Mormons did not stand by in astonishment. Sidney Gilbert, who managed the store, stepped forward and agreed that he would close up the operation within three days. Accepting Gilbert’s pledge, the crowd moved on to the home of Bishop Edward Partridge, whom they seized and marched back to the town square. After being forced to undress himself, he was tarred and feathered. A good feathering required a well-heated and thin tar—which easily clung to the skin and to which feathers dumped from a sack or from a ripped pillow or mattress easily stuck. Excruciating when applied, the tar was also painfully removed. But the main point of the tar was getting feathers on flesh. Tarring and feathering was less an act of violence than of humiliation and dehumanization. By making a chicken of the bishop, the vigilantes meant to rob him of his power. The feathering of the Zion judge was primarily a political attack, like the featherings of British officials in revolutionary Massachusetts. When the vigilantes were finished with Partridge, they “adjourned” their meeting for three days.

July 23<sup>rd</sup> was a joyful occasion back in Kirtland, Ohio. Having finished the groundwork for their temple, Joseph and a small band of church brethren met to ceremonially lay its cornerstones. Independence, Missouri, presented another scene entirely. About 500 men gathered from around the county, “many of them armed with rifles, dirks, pistols, clubs and whips,” as Phelps recounted. When the group began rounding up Mormons and threatening to whip them, the church leaders “offered themselves a ransom for the church, willing to be scourged or die, if that would appease their anger toward the church.” The vigilantes assured them, however, “that every man, woman, and child would be whipped or scourged until they were driven out of the county, as the mob declared that they or the Mormons must leave the county, or they or the Mormons must die” (“To His Excellency, Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri,” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, December 1833, 114-15). Whipping and expulsion were the most common punishments inflicted by early American vigilantes through the

1840s. It was also the Missouri remedy for free blacks without a certificate of citizenship—as prescribed in state statute. The vigilantes also threatened to “let their Negroes loose to go through our [the Mormons] plantations and lay open our fields for the destruction of our crops.” So the tables had been turned: Rather than allowing the Mormons to introduce the corrupting influence of free blacks among their bonded field labor, the masters of Jackson County would use their slaves to destroy the Mormon fields. The Jackson slavocracy thus reasserted its mastery over the land and its human inhabitants. The Mormon leaders saw no choice but to work out a removal agreement. Both parties signed a memorandum of understanding that half of the Mormons and their principle leaders would leave the county by the end of the year, with the remainder out by April of 1834.

The Mormons were not to re-institute a newspaper, but Phelps would be remunerated for the destruction of the publishing house upon his departure (“The Mormons, or New-Jerusalem in Jackson County Missouri,” *Jeffersonian Republican*, 17 August 1833, 2).

While these events unfolded, intelligence of the initial mid-July vandalism slowly made its way to Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio. Correspondence between the Missouri and Ohio brethren usually took about two weeks to arrive, so Joseph apparently received word of these events sometime in early August. A revelation dictated on August 2<sup>nd</sup> concerned the ordinary affairs for Zion: It gave instructions on the School of the Prophets and reiterated an 1832 commandment that the Missouri saints build a temple. However, it repeated the promise of securing Zion’s safety through the glory of God’s presence. When the saints completed the temple, the Lord declared, “My presence shall be there, for I will come into it.” Then the nations of the earth would fear and honor her, acknowledging that “Zion cannot fall neither be removed, out of her place, for God is there . . . and he hath sworn by the power of his might, to be her salvation and her high tower” (D&C 97).

Four days later, Joseph dictated another revelation that directly addressed the issue of offenses toward God’s people (D&C 98). The Jackson County saints had suffered three incidents of property damage—in the spring and fall of 1832 and now in the summer of 1833. In a dramatic change from previous Zion revelations, a new middle ground was opened up between the law of God and the law of the land:

And now, verily I say unto you concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them. And that law of the land which is constitutional, supporting that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind, and is justifiable

before me. Therefore, I, the Lord, justify you, and your brethren of my church, in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land; And as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this, cometh of evil (D&C 98:4-7).

This was the first acknowledgment of the United States Constitution in Joseph's revelations. In addition to justifying Gentile laws that protected freedom, the revelation seemed to encourage the saints to appeal to Gentile officials for protection under such laws. The revelation also acknowledged, however, that governing officials did not always uphold the rights of others:

I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed; and the law also maketh you free. Nevertheless, when the wicked rule, the people mourn. Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these cometh of evil (D&C 98:8-10).

Formerly disengaged from outside politics and politicians, the saints were now to support those Gentile officials who were willing to uphold those laws consistent with the principles of freedom articulated in the United States Constitution. But this was not the revelation's only solution for the Missouri saints' troubles. The revelation also outlined the divine law of vengeance. When offenses came, a true Christian disciple was to bear them patiently and to forgive the enemy. If, however, an enemy committed three offenses and also escaped Gentile justice, the disciple was to warn the enemy to cease and desist in the name of Lord. If that enemy attacked again, the Lord declared, "Thine enemy is in thine hands; and if thou rewardest him according to his works thou art justified; if he has sought thy life, and thy life is endangered by him, thine enemy is in thine hands and thou art justified" (D&C 98:31). Then Lord then proceeded to give his "law of war" or "law of vengeance":

Behold, this is the law I gave unto my servant Nephi, and thy fathers, Joseph, and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, and all mine ancient prophets and apostles. And again, this is the law that I gave unto mine ancients, that they should not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, save I, the Lord, commanded them. And if any nation, tongue, or people should proclaim war against them, they should first lift a standard of peace unto that people, nation, or tongue; And if that people did not accept the offering of peace, neither the second nor the third time, they should bring these testimonies before the Lord; Then I, the Lord, would give unto them a commandment, and justify them in going out to battle against that nation, tongue, or people. And I, the

Lord, would fight their battles, and their children's battles, and their children's children's, until they had avenged themselves on all their enemies, to the third and fourth generation (D&C 98:32-37).

The saints therefore were to "renounce war and proclaim peace." If, however, a fourth offense came upon them, the Lord would issue a commandment to engage in battle and avenge themselves.

On August 9, Oliver Cowdery arrived from Missouri bearing news of the brethren's agreement to terms of removal. The next day, Cowdery wrote back to Missouri with instructions, as he put it, "that may be relied upon"—apparently based on counsel from Joseph Smith. The letter informed them that recent events "would not have come upon Zion had it not been for rebellion." The saints themselves, and not only the Gentiles, were to blame for their troubles. In addition to rebellion, there was the problem of those who talked openly about Zion's sovereign destiny, and worse, those who were "telling that which was not true, and putting false coloring to the things of God." As Zion could "never have peace while such remain in her," Oliver instructed the brethren to purge them from the ranks. "It was necessary that these things should come upon us," Cowdery explained. "Not only justice demands it, but there was no other way to cleanse the church." Cowdery sent the recent revelations regarding the temple and the law of vengeance with the letter, instructing the Zion leadership to "read them carefully, and keep them from false brethren and tattlers." While considering the need to sell some of their land, Cowdery instructed the Jackson saints to "hold on to the sacred places." This certainly included the site for the temple and perhaps the storehouse and printing house. They were to locate a place for temporary exile should it be needed, but they were not to move before the agreed-upon deadlines. Instead, they were to pray for the Lord's deliverance, "for this is his will that you should, and fear not for his arm will be revealed, and it will fall upon the wicked and they cannot escape." Joseph Smith added a postscript admonishing the Zion brethren to "be of good cheer for our redemption draweth near. Oh, God save my Brethren in Zion" (Oliver Cowdery to William W. Phelps and others, with Joseph Smith postscript, 10 August 1833, in Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 304-6).

A week later, Joseph himself wrote to the Zion leadership in Missouri. As in so many letters and journal entries, Joseph's prose turned to prayer. He asked, "O Lord what more dost thou require at their hands before thou wilt come and save them." Joseph wrote that he knew God would deliver Zion, but also that "God is pleased to keep it hid from mine eyes the means how exactly the thing will be done" (Joseph Smith to William Phelps and others, 18 August 1833, in Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 307-16).

Meanwhile, Joseph's strategy was for the saints to hold on and await the Lord's deliverance. They were not to sell any of their land to the Missourians. Joseph instructed the saints to petition the federal government for their losses suffered in Missouri. But a deep pessimism underlay this ambassadorial mission. Its real purpose was a condemnatory witness to the suffering of the saints, "that they [the government] may be left with out excuse that a righteous judgment might be upon them."

Joseph plead with the Lord: "O god send forth judgment unto victory" (Joseph Smith to William Phelps and others, 18 August 1833, in Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 307-16). But would God answer this prayer? Joseph's communications over the next four months manifest his anxiety over Zion's survival. In an early September letter to a saint in Jackson County, Joseph wrote that he was "not at all astonished" with the tribulation that had come upon them, given their disobedience. This did not mean that he was indifferent to their suffering. As he wrote, "I feel to cry mightily unto the Lord that all things might work together for good which has happened . . . let thy Judgments be sent forth unto victory and after this great tribulation let thy blessings fall upon thy people." Again, Joseph hoped this trial would purify the saints to receive the promised endowment of power (Joseph Smith to Vienna Jacques, 4 September 1833, in Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 317-20).

In early October, while on a proselyting mission in Upper Canada, Joseph received a revelation that "Zion shall be redeemed, although she is chastened for a little season" (D&C 100:13). But what did this mean? In a November letter to one of the Canadian converts, Joseph commented on the violent behavior of the Jackson vigilantes and admitted, "How far they will be suffered to execute their threats we know not, but we trust in the Lord, and leave the event with him to govern in his own wise providence" (Joseph Smith to Moses Nickerson, 19 November 1833, in Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 325-27).

Back in Jackson, having received Joseph's communications, the Zion leadership spent September and October preparing petitions to send to United States president Andrew Jackson and Missouri governor Daniel Dunklin. According to John Corrill, they circulated the petition to Dunklin "in as prudent a manner as possible; for the mob threatened, that if we petitioned or prosecuted, they would massacre us in roto [in short order]" (John Corrill to Oliver Cowdery, December 1833, in "From Missouri," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, January 1834, 124-26. See also William W. Phelps, "To His Excellency, Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, December 1833, 114-15). The early settlers, however, began to realize something was amiss. Isaac McCoy wrote that the saints "became silent upon the subject of

removal, and as formerly, appeared to be preparing fields with a view of remaining” (Isaac McCoy, statement, 28 November 1833, in *Daily Missouri Republican*, 20 December 1833, 2-3). Governor Dunklin agreed to help the saints but only after they had exhausted the local channels for redress. As Jackson County’s court officers had signed the vigilante circular, he advised the saints to take their case to the local circuit court seated in the neighboring county of Lafayette. To prepare their cases for trial, the Zion leaders retained the services of attorneys across the river in Clay County. They also prepared to defend themselves by importing and distributing guns, powder, and lead.

In late October, when the Jackson vigilantes discovered that the saints were meeting with lawyers and arming themselves—obviously planning to stay in the county—they were outraged. Isaac McCoy added that at about this time, the Mormons “became strongly suspected of secretly tampering with the neighboring Indians, to induce them to aid in the event of open hostility” (Isaac McCoy, statement, 28 November 1833, in *Daily Missouri Republican*, 20 December 1833, 2-3). Soon vandals were again breaking Mormon windows and shouting threats to them. The vigilantes began to reorganize. On October 31<sup>st</sup>, the day after lawyers in Clay County agreed to press a lawsuit on behalf of the Mormons, night riders entered one of the Mormon settlements where they tore the roofs from ten cabins and whipped some of the men. The next night, vandals in Independence smashed doors and windows of Mormon homes and the storehouse. The local Mormons were gathered at their temple site just west of town. Hearing the sounds of property damage as they carried in the night air, they returned to town and chased off the men who were smashing the doors and windows of the store. They also caught one man, Richard McCarty, and took him to Justice of the Peace Samuel Weston, but Weston refused to take any action (John Corrill to Oliver Cowdery, December 1833, in “From Missouri,” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, January 1834, 124-26; Isaac McCoy, statement, 28 November 1833, in *Daily Missouri Republican*, 20 December 1833; Jennings, “The Expulsion of the Mormons from Jackson County, Missouri,” 43-46).

Feeling unsafe in Independence, the saints there agreed on a plan. John Corrill recalled that they decided to bring “our families and effects into one place” (John Corrill to Oliver Cowdery, December 1833, in “From Missouri,” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, January 1834, 124-26). They packed their belongings and moved onto the temple site, where they set up a guard of about thirty men. Vigilantes soon took up positions in the surrounding woods to harass them. One child later recounted all the “yelling and hollering and swearing and shooting” (Quoted in Jennings, “The Expulsion of the Mormons from Jackson County, Missouri,” 46). That night, vigilantes raided another Mormon settlement and started in on the work of unroofing homes. Mormon resistance quickly led to

an exchange of gunfire, with men on both sides injured. The next day, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, word that the Mormons had engaged and wounded some of the county regulators spread like wildfire. The vigilantes spent the day rallying their forces, while the Mormons prepared to defend themselves.

On the following day, regulators rode into the area of Mormon settlements in west Jackson in broad daylight and captured their ferry on the Big Blue. Again, gunfire was exchanged. This time the Mormons killed two men and injured several others. Back in town, several Mormon leaders were arrested on the complaints of Richard McCarty, the captured storehouse vandal, for assault and battery and for false imprisonment. News of the fallen regulators spread swiftly, as did rumors that a Mormon-Indian alliance had been activated and that an army was coming to take Independence. When court proceedings for the arrested Mormon leaders were interrupted by a lynch mob, the Mormons asked to be placed in the jail to be kept safe. As they listened to the heated argument between the court officers and the vigilantes, they decided it wise to evacuate the saints from the county in order to prevent, as Corrill put it, "a general slaughter of our people." The sheriff escorted them from the jail, and they notified the Mormons gathered at the temple site. That night, Missouri Lieutenant Governor Lilburn Boggs, an Independence merchant and speculator, commissioned Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Pitcher to call out the militia to restore order in the county (John Corrill to Oliver Cowdery, December 1833, in "From Missouri," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, January 1834, 124-26; Jennings, "The Expulsion of the Mormons from Jackson County, Missouri," 49-52).

Answering the call to duty, Jackson men began mustering in Independence on the morning of November 5<sup>th</sup>. Josiah Gregg remembered that the "note of alarm was sounded far and near, and armed men, eager for the fray, were rushing in from every quarter" (Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies* 1:317). Isaac McCoy recalled the environment of heightened anticipation in Independence that morning. As the militia of Missouri settlers assembled, they learned that a company of about 150 of the western Jackson Mormons were marching toward Independence. "At that time," McCoy wrote, "there were perhaps not more than fifty guns [among the settlers' militia] in the village." Soon the Mormon force was within a mile of the town. "Had they [the Mormon army] reached Independence an hour sooner," McCoy believed, "it [Independence] must in all human probability, have fallen into their hands; and had they marched straight forward into the village as they approached it, without hesitation, I think they would have succeeded in taking it" (Isaac McCoy, statement, 28 November 1833, as printed in the *Daily Missouri Republican*, 20 December 1833, 2-3). The Mormon army did not march into Independence because they were headed for the temple site just west of town. Unaware that their leaders had agreed to

leave, they had mobilized to join the encampment of Independence-area saints. Corrill recounted that they determined to “maintain the ground or die upon it.” The settlers’ militia reached the Mormon army before they turned off the road toward the temple site and informed them of the removal agreement.

With Lieutenant Governor Boggs mediating, the militia then ensured all the Mormons safe passage out of the county in exchange for their weapons. The Mormons relented and returned to home to prepare for the evacuation. On the following day, November 6, 1833, forces of from fifty to eighty vigilantes rode into the Mormon settlements to finish the job. Breaking in doors, they ransacked homes for hidden weapons. Men were whipped, shot at, and chased into the woods. The now disarmed Mormons were told to be gone before nightfall or be massacred. Frightened and scattered, the saints fled northward to Clay County in small groups, in families, or as individuals—some with nothing more than the clothes on their backs. They collected along the western and eastern banks of the Missouri as they slowly ferried across from Jackson to Clay. Parley Pratt later described the scene as he came upon it: “Hundreds of people were seen in every direction, some in tents and some in the open air around their fires, while the rain descended in torrents. Husbands were inquiring for their wives, wives for their husbands; parents for children, and children for parents” (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 82). In the nearby village of Liberty and in other parts of Clay County, the Mormons refugees were received with kindness and sympathy.

The irony of being driven from Jackson County could not have escaped the Mormons. It was supposed to be their Zion, a place of refuge for the saints of God. From the beginning, the essential meaning of Zion had been to escape the contention and violence of America. Joseph Smith’s dream of a peaceful society had been born in the fractured religious landscape of the early American republic. Upset by competition between churches and confused by their varying interpretations of scripture, Joseph sought guidance from God. While his early visions and revelations provided him with the religion he craved, the persecution he then experienced deepened his assessment of America’s social deterioration. Joseph did not take the road of most Evangelicals. He did not try to reform the nation. The Book of Mormon indicated that America was or would soon be beyond redemption. Neither was Joseph a revolutionary, determined to destroy the machine of government and rebuild on its ruins. The violent pathway to peace was not the mission of the saints. Instead of reform or revolution, his solution was withdrawal. By gathering the good and peaceful from among the wicked and violent, Joseph could build a new society in a new place.

The biblical model of a godly people in a goodly place was Israel in Canaan. The Lord liberated Israel from their bondage in Egypt and led them to a promised land. Joseph Smith’s problem consisted in finding a promised land for

himself and those who accepted his restoration of the gospel. The narrative provided in the Book of Mormon fashioned an eschatology that included a restoration of national Israel in America. Moreover, it was an Israel with which Gentiles could be gathered and included. The book also foretold that the New Jerusalem of biblical prophecy would be built in the new world. Furthermore, the Book of Mormon articulated a theory of peace and harmony on which to base the creation of a new society. The theology of gathering and oneness, when projected onto America's physical terrain, mapped New Jerusalem into the heart of the continent.

Lying west of the organized states, the continental heartland seemed like a land apart—a place for the peaceful to escape America. However, as the church's missionaries had discovered, the United States not only claimed the territory but administered it with an Indian agency and an army. Fleeing the contention they perceived in the American northeast in search of a western land of milk and honey, the saints instead had landed in the rugged frontier of the South. Joseph and his northeastern colonists ended up trying to create an independent nation among the rough-hewn southern settlers of the western Missouri borderlands. In the cluster of Mormon settlements in Jackson County, Joseph believed he had laid the foundations of a superior society destined to replace the United States on the North American continent. For the near future, he depended on the engine of the gathering to give the Mormons a demographic majority in Jackson and then the surrounding counties. As they assumed control of local government through conventional democratic channels, they could increasingly create for themselves the space in which to live by God's law and his law only. Trapped within the United States but committed to peace, this was the necessary geopolitics of Zion.

The dynamics of the gathering had increased the likelihood that the Mormon colonists would come into conflict with Jackson's prior inhabitants. Rapid immigration created instant communities that demanded social engineering. As Zion grew, Joseph addressed its ever-changing circumstances with further revelations. A growing body of commandments that addressed issues ranging from economics and education to dress and diet further developed the tightly knit culture of the saints. The swagger of Zion's overzealous nationalists earned both the fear and loathing of their Gentile neighbors. Zion became not only a focal point for convert-immigrants but a vortex of persecution. Built among the violent settlers of Jackson County, Zion was less a refuge of peace than an invitation for war. When the Mormons became a real political threat, Jackson's vigilante element mobilized for action. Unwilling to surrender the county, they drove the Mormons out. The saints fell victim to the violence they meant to escape.

**Including the American government in the plans for Zion—Hope for Zion’s eventual redemption.** Joseph Smith began receiving the “melancholy intelligence” of the expulsion from Jackson County in late November of 1833. In an early December letter to Bishop Edward Partridge and other Missouri leaders, Joseph wrote that he had long expected “that Zion would suffer sore affliction.” Still it was a tremendous blow to his sense of mission. The center place of Zion in Jackson County had been the subject of so many of his revelations. Jackson was the place to build the New Jerusalem, the future seat of Christ’s millennial government.

The Church had invested most of its financial resources there in land and improvements that were now lost to them. What were the saints to do? Joseph tendered Bishop Partridge some comfort in the promise of an endowment to come after the trial but admitted, “how many will be the days of her purification, tribulation and affliction, the Lord has kept hid from my eyes” (Smith, revelation, August 1831, in Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations*, 145-49). Joseph wrote of his puzzlement that God had allowed such devastation to befall his people and wondered how he would restore them to the land of their inheritance. These things, he admitted, “the Lord will not show me.” He advised Bishop Partridge not to sell any Jackson land and to try “every lawful means to obtain redress of your enemies.” Turning to prayer, he asked that their enemies “be destroyed from off the face of that Land,” that the temple could be built and the saints rewarded therein, “that the borders of Zion be enlarged forever, and let her be established no more to be thrown down” (D&C 103:13).

The answer to Joseph’s questions came in a revelation received a few days later, on December 16, 1833 (D&C 101). The revelation explained that the Lord had allowed the saints to be driven from Zion because they had not lived up to its peaceful purpose: “Behold, I say unto you, there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances. They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble” (D&C 101:6-7). Yet the saints were not entirely forsaken; the pure in heart would return. In fact, it would be a fresh start. Zion would eventually be redeemed. The current trial would purge out those who were not sufficiently devoted to living God’s law in his land. By no means were the saints to seek out a new land. “And, behold, there is none other place appointed than that which I have appointed; neither shall there be any other place appointed than that which I have appointed, for the work of the gathering of my saints” (D&C 101:20). The revelation explained that the saints would need to be gathered safely in holy places for the coming days of calamity and in the day of God’s judgment at the

time of his second coming. In that day, the Lord declared, “The enmity of man and the enmity of beasts, yea, the enmity of all flesh shall cease from before my face” (D&C 101:26). Peace would reign for a thousand years. Until then, the only safety was in Zion. The saints must and would return. But how?

The revelation (D&C 101) addressed the means of Zion’s redemption with two parables. The first parable (verses 43-62) involved a vineyard, its lord, and his servants. The servants, who were “at variance one with another,” became slothful. They were not on the lookout for trouble when it came. Enemies surprised and frightened off the servants and took the vineyard for themselves. In response, the lord of the vineyard commanded his servants to gather “all the strength of mine house which are my warriors” and “redeem my vineyard for it is mine I have bought it with money.” The lord’s warriors were to surprise and scatter the enemies and retake the vineyard. This time the lord’s servants would remain harmonious and vigilant. If the enemies regrouped and attacked, the servants would not only defend the vineyard but avenge the lord. The revelation then explained and applied the parable. The saints were not to sell any land in Jackson. If possible they were to purchase more. They were also to buy land adjacent to the county and gather their forces there. Then they were to return to their properties in a sudden show of force that scattered the enemy. This stratagem, like those of Captain Moroni in the Book of Mormon, would allow them to reoccupy their rightful lands without the violence of pitched battle (intense battle at close quarters). If their enemies regrouped and tried to drive them off again, they would be ready for them. And the Lord would justify them in defending and avenging themselves. This was the battle commandment promised in the recently revealed law of vengeance (D&C 98:32-37). The revelation cast church members as God’s warriors, but its strategy was based on their ownership of the land—an ownership defined by their federal patents and Missouri property law. Their commission to battle was thus justified both in terms of divine revelation and Gentile law.

The second parable adapted Jesus’ parable of the unjust judge (verses 81-85), in which a widow pled her case before a judge who “feared not God, neither regarded man.” The widow continually wearied the judge with her complaints until he finally avenged her of the wrongs she had suffered—not out of a sense of justice but to relieve himself of her pestering. The saints were to weary the government in a similar manner. “It is my will,” the Lord commanded, “that they should continue to importune for redress and redemption by the hand of those who are placed as rulers and are in authority over you according to the Law and constitution of the people.”

This was a most important step in Joseph’s changing political thought. It both affirmed and completed the turn away from Zion isolationism toward

engagement with American government. It was now the Lord's express will that they take their claims to Gentile officials. The saints had taken their case to the Lord, and he had sent them to the government. Mormonism was compelled to engage with America on its own political terms.

The Lord taught the saints one sense in which sending the saints to the government was appropriate. The Lord himself had watched over the creation of the Constitution. As the Lord explained, "I established the constitution of the land by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose" (D&C 101:80). This revelation on Zion's redemption led to the saints' adopting the Constitution as a sort of scripture. This made it easier for the saints to seek its protection. The revelation expressed the Lord's will that the Constitution "should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh." For the saints, this was a significant break with the past. While the saints had seen the American Revolution and the founding of America as acts of providence, the emergence of Zion had been dependent on America's demise. Now, when Zion's establishment had failed, section 101 expressed God's will that the Constitution be "maintained." However corrupted American government had become, its responsibility to protect the freedoms enshrined in the Constitution was still a divine charge. The relationship between America and Zion had become complicated; the redemption of Zion was now tethered to the maintenance, not the demise, of America. Instead of the saints' praying for vengeance on their enemies as they were previously inclined to do, they were now urged by revelation (D&C 101:81-101) to pray for the American judges, governors, and presidents—that they would hear their complaints, redeem Zion, and escape God's fury. The saints were activated to make a genuine attempt to redeem a compromised Zion from within the American political system. They were urged, however, to still place their ultimate trust in the Lord. For the time being, D&C 101 provided a way for the saints to live in America instead of Zion.

The revelation on Zion's redemption became as important in Joseph's mind as the revelations that had brought Zion into being. It would shape his efforts and his understanding of events through the rest of his life. The saints adopted the Constitution as a sacred text. The rhetoric in the *Star* quickly shifted away from Zion nationalism toward American pluralism. Pluralism is a condition in which minority groups (in this case religious sects) participate fully in the dominant society and yet maintain their cultural differences. Applicable to the saints, they remained a distinct Church yet participated in the American secular government. An article in the January 1834 issue pointed to the Constitution as the embodiment of freedom and rule of law. Under it, the saints asserted an "equal claim" on government protection "with all other citizens" ("The Outrage in Jackson County, Missouri," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, January 1834,

121-23). This and other editorials called for the protection of minority rights over the tyranny of the majority.

In their fear of further persecution and in their appeals to the American government, the saints, for the moment and for the sake of expediency, turned away from their former interest in the oppressed peoples, like the black slaves. So long as they maintained a presence in Missouri, the Mormons went out of their way to distance themselves from the broad cause of anti-slavery. Also the mission to join with the Indians faded even further into the future.

The first step toward redeeming Zion was to seek redress through the local courts. In response to earlier incidents of vandalism, the saints had already attempted to enter complaints with officers of the Jackson County court, many of whom had signed the vigilante circular that urged the expulsion from the county of the Mormons. As the Jackson court refused to take their complaints, the saints took them instead to the local circuit (federal) courts. When the circuit court came to Jackson County in February 1834, several criminal cases connected to the expulsion had been entered on the docket. Mormon witnesses reentered Jackson with an escort of fifty men from the state militia. However, when the party approached Independence, the captain in charge sensed danger and called for a reinforcement of another two hundred men. Robert Wells, the state attorney general, also came to Independence to attend the proceedings and guarantee the integrity of the judicial process. After sensing the hostile climate, however, he dropped the state's Mormon cases. He explained to the saints that it was useless to try them before a jury of Jackson citizens. Mormon civil cases in neighboring Ray County, fared little better.

The saints soon shifted the focus of their attention to government at the state level. Acting on the governor's willingness to provide them with a militia escort to reoccupy their lands—but not to protect them once there—Joseph Smith raised an army known as Zion's Camp. In the summer of 1834, over two hundred Mormon men gathered from Kirtland and the eastern branches to march to Missouri. However, news of the Mormon army reached Missouri before the army itself. Seized with war hysteria, the Jackson citizenry prepared to hold the county or die fighting. Joseph aborted the venture when his army reached Zion's exiles in neighboring Clay County and learned that state support for the reoccupation had evaporated. Several months later, however, the state legislature found a new solution to the "Mormon problem" in the organization of Caldwell County. It was commonly understood that Caldwell had been set aside for Mormon settlement.

New conflict erupted in 1838 when the Mormon settlers filled Caldwell and expanded into neighboring counties. Asserting their rights to settle in neighboring Daviess County with other Missourians, the saints called on Lilburn

Boggs, now governor of Missouri, to protect them from the vigilante activity that had commenced there. Boggs dispatched the state militia, which disbanded and dispersed the Daviess vigilantes. Appealing again to Boggs for protection from vigilantes in Carroll County, the saints were denied help. They had to abandon their Carroll colony. When vigilante activity resumed in Daviess, the saints fought back on their own. In response to this and an engagement on the border between Caldwell and Ray counties, Governor Boggs ordered the state militia to arrest Joseph Smith and drive the Mormons out of Missouri. Clearly the saints had satisfied the Lord's commandment to weary the state executive. From the dungeon of a Missouri jailhouse, Joseph Smith wrote to the saints—who had resettled in Illinois and Iowa—and instructed them to begin counting the costs of the Missouri expulsion in lands lost and militia-requisitioned livestock and personal affects. Using the language of the revelation on Zion's redemption, he informed the saints it was time to focus their efforts on the national level. After escaping from his guards and rejoining the saints, Joseph gathered up all the documentation he could and took it to the nation's capital to present to President Martin Van Buren and the 26th congress. He hoped that the federal government would intervene to restore the saints to their land or remunerate them for their losses. In December 1839, when Joseph arrived in the city, he called on the President at the White House. Upon hearing his case, Van Buren reportedly replied, "What can I do? I can do nothing for you,—if I do anything, I shall come in contact with the whole State of Missouri" (Joseph Smith and Elias Higbee to Hyrum Smith, 5 December 1839, *Joseph Smith Collection*). Van Buren was unwilling to interfere in Missouri's domestic affairs. Joseph viewed this as a campaign issue as well. In another version of the incident, Van Buren was reported to have said, "Your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you . . . If I take up for you I shall lose the vote of Missouri" (*HC*, 480).

While President Van Buren's unwillingness to help the saints almost closed the door on the presidential level of appeal outlined in the redemption revelation, the context of the upcoming election year opened the door wide again. If Van Buren would not help them, perhaps William Henry Harrison and the Whigs would. As the party of moral activism, the Whigs were more likely to interfere in domestic matters. Since their Democratic patronage proved unprofitable, the saints shifted their allegiance to the Whig party and voted for Harrison. Although Van Buren took both Missouri and Illinois, he did not retake the White House. But then neither did Harrison, as he died on his thirty-second day in office of pneumonia. His vice president, John Tyler assumed the role of president but separated himself from the policies of the Whig party.

Unsatisfied with the "pseudo whig democrat reign" of John Tyler, Joseph and the saints waited for the next election. In the meantime, ongoing immigration

made them a demographic force to be reckoned with in Illinois. They became deeply involved in politics at the county and state levels. From the state legislature, they obtained a charter for their city Nauvoo granting broad powers of political autonomy. The new city council quickly passed a law protecting religious freedom for Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Muslims. Joseph soon became the mayor.

As the 1844 election approached, Joseph and other leaders sent letters asking the various candidates what they would do for the Mormon people if elected. Those who responded offered no assurance of help. The purpose of the Mormon inquiry was to throw their votes behind the candidate most likely to hear their appeal. The responses they received ruled out the promise of appeal even before the election. However, the saints had not completely exhausted the injunction to appeal to the national executive. They could run their own candidate. Joseph prepared to run for president himself. Once a disengaged separatist, he had become a petitioner to the government and then a candidate for its highest office. His sights were now set on Washington, not New Jerusalem.

The campaign was another huge step for Joseph and the saints toward participation in American political culture. Joseph converted his entire missionary force into campaign workers and sent his chief lieutenants into the field to manage their efforts. Reaching out to Catholics and other minorities, he tried to build a “coalition of the oppressed” (Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty*, 205). Drawn into public dialogue, Joseph constructed a platform that weighed in on contemporary issues ranging from banking and commerce to the question of Texas annexation. Joseph’s platform centered, however, on civil rights and the federal protection they deserved. Though with the interests of his own people foremost in his mind, he focused his critique on slavery and the American prison system advocating universal emancipation from both. In politics, as in religion, Joseph’s views were far from orthodox. His political philosophy derived not from a deep study of classical theory but from his unique religious worldview and from the experience of oppression. His most relevant political views were developed out of necessity. Joseph Smith knew firsthand the dark side of democracy and the dilemma it posed for American public life.

Beyond serving as a Moses to his own people, Joseph Smith now offered a prophetic critique of the government to the nation at large. Attacking states rights, he explicitly advocated federal protection of the freedoms articulated in the Constitution. Around the same time, the Mormons in Nauvoo grew to constitute a majority of the Hancock County population. Their bloc vote now determined who would attain office. Joseph’s bid for the American presidency, however unlikely, only further incensed those who despised the concentrated religious and

political power he wielded. Conflict with the area's early settlers, very similar to that which had occurred in counties of western Missouri, eventually led to Joseph's murder. A lynch mob gunned him down in June 1844 while he was being held prisoner in the Hancock County jailhouse.

While the campaign for the presidency had significantly engaged the saints in national politics, it had simultaneously caused them to lose faith in appealing to the American political and judicial systems. In fact, it was largely due to Joseph's assassination that the Mormon leadership determined they had fulfilled their obligations in appealing to the government at the national level. Although several months remained before the election, they did not field a new candidate.

As persecution and violence continued to grow, the saints once again disengaged from American politics and set their sights on finding a place apart where they could live independently and peacefully. Again they looked to the far west, but this time beyond the reach of American territorial claims. They hoped to carve out a piece of northern Mexican territory for themselves. After the Mormons left the states, but before they reached the intermountain west, America declared war on its neighbor to the west—Mexico. A year after the Mormons reached their new home by the Great Salt Lake, the treaty ending the war placed them once again within American territory. There they would struggle against the United States for another half century before submitting to its sovereignty.

### **Why Did the Zion Project Fail?**

How could all this have happened? If Joseph was, indeed, the Lord's prophet of the great final restoration, how is it that Zion did not emerge in Joseph's day as a great, divinely-governed nation? Why did Joseph's dream of a peaceful, utopian society not come to fruition? Why was the law of consecration and stewardship not sustainable in Joseph's day and for the years that followed?

On another level, surely the Lord knew that Joseph and the saints would fail in their attempts to found the new nation. Why would the Lord allow the immense suffering and loss of property consequent to their expulsion from Jackson County in 1833 and their expulsion from the entire state in 1838? If the Lord intended to try and to school Joseph and the saints, might there not have been a less traumatic way to accomplish that?

Critics of the Church, of course, claim that the entire concept of Zion was Joseph's own idea and not the Lord's. Further, they would point out that Joseph's failure is evidence that he was not, in fact, a real prophet. Allow me to put forth two possible explanations for the consideration of the reader.

**Joseph was allowed by the Lord to err.** Most members of the Church hold to a rather simplistic, and frankly somewhat naive, construct in their understanding of the Lord's relationship with the prophet Joseph. We tend to believe that from the time of Joseph's first vision experience and Joseph's five annual "seminars" with the prophet Moroni (between 1823 and 1827), that Joseph's every thought and action was the result of direct and clear heavenly dictation. We are inclined to think that Joseph enjoyed the constant blessing of the Lord or his angel sitting on his figurative shoulder and whispering in his ear. We are conditioned to feel that the Lord would preempt any potential error that Joseph, on his own, might be inclined to commit.

It is clear that the prophet Joseph came into the earth as a highly gifted and foreordained prophet destined to do a magnificent work (D&C 135:3). It is also clear that the Lord prepared him for his ministry during his early mortal life. His family's experiences, their economic struggles, and the sociopolitical environment of western New York were all the Lord's tools for shaping the thinking, priorities, and abilities of his prophet. While there were a few instances where Joseph enjoyed "writing-on-the-wall" revelation, mostly the Lord left him on his own and allowed him to use his own judgment. Never bereft of inspiration, nonetheless there was room for Joseph to err.

It seems clear that between 1829 and the Nauvoo period, for example, that Joseph held to the "one people, one hemisphere" concept of the Book of Mormon." That is, he seemed to see the Lehiters disembarking on a relatively pristine and uninhabited land. He appeared to feel that the progeny of the Lehiters and Mulekites, and perhaps any remnants of the Jaredites, became the main founding fathers of the Western Hemisphere. Hence, he looked on the Native American Indians of his day as direct descendants of Book of Mormon peoples. Modern scholarship has leaned us in the direction of the limited geography concept of the Book of Mormon. When the Lehiters disembarked somewhere in Central America, they found many peoples inhabiting the land. There seems to be little question that both Nephites and Lamanites intermarried with the indigenous people. The characters in the Book of Mormon drama remained a relatively small group of people in great land inhabited by many peoples. Also, the people and events of the Book of Mormon story likely lived and occurred in a limited area in Central America. It is certainly far from clear today that the Native Americans descended from Book of Mormon peoples. It is possible that Joseph misjudged these relationship, and the Lord simply tolerated his errors rather than immediately correcting them.

**Failure of the Missouri saints to fulfill their necessary obligations.** It may well be that Joseph's political concept of Zion was entirely sound, but

Joseph's—and the Lord's—timetable was altered by the careless disobedience of the Missouri saints.

In a revelation received on December 16, 1833 (D&C 101) we learn the Lord had allowed the saints to be driven from Zion because they had not lived up to its peaceful purpose: “Behold, I say unto you, there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances. They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble” (D&C 101:6-7).

"I know that Zion, in the own due time of the Lord will be redeemed, but how many will be the days of her purification, tribulation and affliction, the Lord has kept hid from my eyes; and when I enquire concerning this subject the voice of the Lord is, Be still, and know that I am God! . . . Now there are two things of which I am ignorant and the Lord will not show me. . . . and they are these, Why God hath suffered so great calamity to come upon Zion; or what the great moving cause of this great affliction is. . . . And again by what means he will return her back to her inheritance" (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984], 308-9: see also Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 34.

## Ezekiel 37 and the Book of Mormon

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Critics of the Book of Mormon insist there is no biblical backing for the Book of Mormon and that we misinterpret Ezekiel 37:16-17:

Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

Using the following scriptures, the critics' line of logic goes something like this: The scripture at Ezekiel 37:16-17 is used by Mormons to prove their contention that the Bible and the Book of Mormon were foretold in prophecy. They claim that the two sticks about which the prophet Ezekiel speaks represent these two books. But the sticks in Ezekiel's prophecy have no reference to books, and this is indicated by Ezekiel himself. He designated one stick for Judah and the other one as "the stick of Ephraim." The tribe of Ephraim descended from Joseph and became the head of the ten tribes that broke away shortly following the death of King Solomon in the days of King Rehoboam, Solomon's son. Because of this headship the name Ephraim came to be applied to the ten-tribe group, the Kingdom of Israel. After the release of the Jews (tribe of Judah) from captivity in Babylon, they were effectively reunited with the ten tribes, including the Levites. This reunion of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel was what Ezekiel foretold when he spoke of the two sticks' becoming one stick. So the Bible lends no support to the claim that some other religious book is of equal authority to it.

We disagree. In these verses, the word "stick" has reference to two books, the book of Judah (the Bible) and the book of Ephraim (the Book of Mormon). In those days books were written on long scrolls of parchment, which were then rolled on a stick (Jeremiah 36:2). In this passage, the "son of man" was commanded to write upon both of these books or sticks (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], 98).

Dr. Hugh Nibley tells of an ancient technique for entering into a binding agreement or contract:

Very early, strips of parchment or cloth were attached to sticks and wrapped around them, since there was not room enough on a stick for writing a lengthy contract. This was the origin of the Jewish scroll wrapped around a staff resembling a scepter. The original tally-stick was a staff on which the contract and names of the contracting parties were written; the staff was then split down the middle and one half, the "stock," was kept by one of the parties, while the other, "the bill," was held by the other. When the time came to settle the contract the two parties would

bring their sticks together in the presence of the king, and if they matched perfectly, it was plain that neither party had attempted to tinker with the document, and the two would then be bound with a string in the king's hand and laid away in the archives. The Bar-Kochba cave has now produced twenty-three examples of this technique, and this is another score for the Book of Mormon, which claims to be that very "stick of Ephraim" which in the last days would be joined to the "stick of Judah" so that the two would come together "and they shall be one stick in my hand" (Ezekiel 37:19). The word of the Lord assures us that it is "Moroni whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fulness of my everlasting gospel, to whom I have committed the keys of the records of the stick of Ephraim" (Doctrine and Covenants 27:5). There are many "sticks" but no more significant joining of sticks than that now taking place between the Jewish and the Nephite records: "And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel" (1 Nephi 29:13) (*BYU Studies*, volume 14 [1973-1974], Number 1–Autumn 1973 125).

The return of the Jews to Judah in 539 B.C. after their release from captivity in Babylon can hardly be said to be a reunion of the tribe of Judah with the ten tribes as will be made clear by a brief review of the events of that time.

In about 931 B.C. King Solomon, who had reigned over all Israel, died, and civil war divided the whole of Israel into the Kingdom of Israel in the north, with its center in Samaria, and the Kingdom of Judah in the south, with its center at Jerusalem. The northern kingdom consisted of ten tribes and was initially led by the rebel military leader Jeroboam. The dominant tribe of the northern kingdom (actually a sub-tribe) was comprised of the descendants of ancient Joseph's son Ephraim. Thus, these northern ten tribes are often referred to in scripture as simply "Ephraim." The southern two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) were led originally by Solomon's son, Rehoboam. We may refer to the southern kingdom as simply "Judah."

All Israel, both in the north and in the south, did apostatize, and the stage was set for a major scattering of all Israel.

Between 732 and 722 BC the Assyrian army crushed the northern Kingdom of Israel and took captive, according to Josephus, 27,290 of its educated aristocracy and anyone with any leadership ability. These were carried away—back to Assyria. Their fate from that point on is historically undocumented. It is clear that many were scattered and dispersed into several countries. They never again surfaced as an organized kingdom.

The southern kingdom existed precariously until 587 BC when the Babylonians conquered Judah and partially destroyed the city of Jerusalem. The Jews were carried

off to exile in Babylon. In the Book of Mormon, the term “Jew” has a specific meaning. It refers to the inhabitants of Judah at the time Lehi left Jerusalem and their descendants, regardless of whether they descended from the tribe of Judah or from some other tribe.

Once in Babylon, instead of being absorbed into Babylonian society, the Jews preserved their religion, their culture, and their sense of national identity by excluding Babylonian influence whenever possible.

In 539 B.C. the Babylonian empire was conquered by Cyrus, King of Persia. Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to their ancestral homes. Many did return and sought to reestablish themselves on the scale of their former power. The temple was rebuilt under the direction of Zerubbabel.

Thus, we learn that the ten tribes were never gathered back to Jerusalem in significant numbers after their captivity by the Assyrians between 732 and 722 BC.

Now back to Ezekiel 37:16-17. The “son of man” is to write upon two books, the stick of Judah and the stick of Ephraim or Joseph. It is useful to examine Joseph’s blessing at the hand of his father, Jacob in Genesis 49:22-26. There we read that “Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall.” That this “well” is an ocean is suggested by the fact that they (the descendants of Joseph) will go “unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills” (verse 26). That this likely refers to the Americas is suggested by the fact that in the Americas is located the longest range of mountains in the world which stretch from the tip of South America to the borders of North America.

Plausibly, then, the “sticks” do refer to two books—the Bible or the stick of Judah and the Book of Mormon or the stick of Ephraim (Joseph). The joining of the two sticks suggests a time when there will be a great gathering of Israel. This gathering happens to be prophesied in Ezekiel 37:21-22: “And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.” This latter prophecy seems to refer to this final dispensation and the great final gathering of Israel that will occur then.

## Why all the changes In the Book of Mormon Text?

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Some critics of the Church have asked, “If the Book of Mormon is an inspired book—even “the most correct of any book on earth” (Joseph Smith, *HC* 4:461)—why has it been necessary to make so many changes in the text from the original manuscript to the present edition?

Prior to the following discussion, please make certain you are familiar with the article, *The Process of Translating the Book of Mormon*. It is a simple observational fact that during the process of the translation of the Book of Mormon, the Lord did not maintain iron-clad control of the text. The process of translation went on hour after hour, day after day. Word capitalizations and spelling were not specified except for some proper names which were spelled by the Prophet. Joseph dictated, and the scribe (usually Oliver Cowdery) wrote and read back what he had written. Joseph made no visual inspection of the record after it was recorded. The resulting transcription had many misspelled words and virtually no punctuation. Though the process, overall, was a remarkable miracle, the Lord kept a human element involved in the process. It would have been humanly impossible to complete the book without many errors.

The punctuation was left to John H. Gilbert, a typesetter and employee of the printer, E. B. Grandin. Gilbert punctuated the text as he saw fit. The original manuscript included many errors due to misspelling, miscopying, typesetting errors, and/or mishearing. Examples include *&* for *an*, *away* for *a way*, *bear* for *bare*, *chaste* for *chased*, *drugs* for *dregs*, *forth* for *fourth*, *hare* for *hair*, *head* for *heed*, *holly* for *holy*, *know* for *now*, *least* for *lest*, *life* for *light*, *loose* for *lose*, *maid* for *made*, *new* for *knew*, *no* for *know*, *oar* for *ore*, *of* for *off*, *read* for *red*, *reign* for *rain*, *strait* for *straight*, *the* for *thee*, *then* for *than*, *there* for *their*, *thou* for *though*, *tittle* for *title*, *to* for *too*, *wedge* for *wage*, *where* for *were*, and *ye* for *yea*. These were largely corrected either directly in the original manuscript, or while the printer’s manuscript was being transcribed, or when the text was first printed in 1830. Joseph apparently had little to do with the supervision of the copying, typesetting, proofreading, or printing of the first edition.

Occasionally errors were made in the process of producing the Book of Mormon which led to the possibility of alterations in meaning. One might well imagine, for example that “errors of the ear” might occur when a homophone (two words with the same sound but different meanings) is used. Examples include *straight* and *strait*, *sun* and *son*, and *right* and *rite*. Such difficulties are a natural product of the dictation process and are evidence that there was no collusion between the dictator and the scribe. The process of correcting these errors is referred to as “conjectural emendation” and requires inspired judgment. Most all of these corrections were made by Joseph Smith by the time of the second edition of the Book of Mormon, published in 1837.

As soon as the first edition was out, the readers could not avoid noticing many typographical, spelling, and grammatical errors. The common assumption is that Oliver Cowdery was poorly educated even though he was a schoolteacher. However, an examination of this supposition raises questions about the historical development and evolution that was taking place in the English language in 1829. Many of the words that we thought Oliver had misspelled are actually legitimate English variants and can be found in the Oxford English Dictionary of that day. This means that they were used by other writers at the time of the translation of the Book of Mormon. For example, the spellings *adhear*, *adultry*, *ancles*, *babtized*, *befal*, *burthensome*, *condescention*, *devlish*, *fraid*, *journied*, *moulten*, *nought*, *phrensied*, and *written*—all fail to indicate that Oliver was an unlearned schoolteacher as many have thought.

Oliver's handwriting also presented a challenge. His *r* (which looks like a "Palmer r") and his *n* are difficult to distinguish from each other. For example, in the 1830 edition *Gadianton* was once called "the nobler" rather than "the robber." In a similar way, the typesetter apparently elsewhere mistook Oliver's *rm* for *un*. In 1 Nephi 13 there are several instances in which the original manuscript read *formation*, but the typesetter apparently thought the printer's copy said *founation* and supplied what seemed to be a "missing" *d* to make it read *foundation*. This was finally corrected in the 1981 edition.

On 25 June 1833, Joseph wrote to W. W. Phelps (a printer), "As soon as we get time, we will review the manuscripts of the Book of Mormon, after which they will be forwarded to you." However, due to the pressure of other matters, the second edition did not appear until 1837, having been prepared by the Prophet with the assistance of Oliver Cowdery. Over one thousand corrections were made, and some minor clarifications were added, the majority having to do with grammar. By 1837 the Prophet, who had had limited formal schooling, was reading Greek, learning Hebrew, and studying grammar. This edition was followed in 1840 by a third edition. Appearing on the title page of the third edition (1840) are the words "Carefully Revised by the Translator." It appears that improving the printed copy continued because on 15 January 1842, Joseph recorded in his journal, "I commenced reading the Book of Mormon, at page 54, American stereotype edition [the third] (the previous pages having been corrected), for the purpose of correcting the stereotype plates of some errors which [had] escaped notice."

Any conjectural emendation found necessary subsequent to the death of Joseph Smith has been judiciously and sparingly applied. Only specially appointed committees of brethren working under direct appointment from the President of the Church have made any changes, and then only after prolonged and prayerful consideration.

In 1879 President John Taylor assigned Orson Pratt to prepare a new edition which would include a re-division of chapters (increasing the number from 114 to 239), re-versification, and scriptural cross-references. He was followed after the turn of the century by a committee, serving under the chairmanship of James E. Talmage, which

prepared the 1920 edition with double-column pages, revised references, a pronunciation guide, an index, and many grammatical improvements. This latter edition was the most commonly used edition in the Church for over half a century. As work was under way for the new LDS edition of the King James Version of the Bible, it was felt that additional work should be done on the Book of Mormon. Consequently, with further corrections growing out of research over the last twenty-five years, the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon was prepared under the supervision of the Scriptures Publication Committee by direction of the First Presidency.

It seems clear that had Joseph lived longer, he would likely have continued to correct the text of the Book of Mormon to produce a book without human errors. It has been in this same spirit that corrections have been made in succeeding editions.

In all, some 3,913 changes have been made in the Book of Mormon text since the first edition. Most all of them have been related to the correction of grammatical and spelling errors and do not really change the basic meaning of the text. In 1834 the prophet Joseph was criticized for “glaring errors” in a published revelation. He replied that shades of meaning or literary mechanics were not as important as the general message: “We did not think so much of orthography [spelling], or the manner, as we did the subject matter, as the word of God means what it says” (Letter to William Edward, et al., 30 March 1834, from Oliver Cowdery's letter book, 30-36, quoted in Dean Jessee, *Journal of Mormon History* 3 (1976): 28-29). Even before the 1981 edition was published, a careful student of the original manuscript and printer's copy said, “A great value of these early manuscripts is that for the most part they substantiate the correctness of the present Book of Mormon text—fully 99.9% of the text is published correctly” (Stanley R. Larson, “Textual Variants in Book of Mormon Manuscripts,” *Dialogue*, 10 [August 1977]: 8).

Notwithstanding the fact that this sacred Nephite witness of Jesus Christ already towers far above many of the other scriptures in the integrity of its text, still the Church has endeavored to make it even more correct, as is shown by the following statement about the 1981 edition: “Some minor errors in the text have been perpetuated in past editions of the Book of Mormon. This edition contains corrections that seem appropriate to bring the material into conformity with prepublication manuscripts and early editions edited by the Prophet Joseph Smith” (Introductory pages of the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon). The changes and corrections are not only correct but appropriate. (Horton, “Changes in the Book of Mormon and How to Handle Them,” 36-39.)

When Joseph Smith said “the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth,” it seems evident that he was not talking about grammar, punctuation, or spelling. He was referring to the clarity and depth of doctrine, to the mission and message of the book, to the spirit of inspiration that it fosters, to the divine desire that it sparks in the soul to make the “mighty change,” and to the abiding love of the Lord that it brings into our hearts. All of these correct things help make the Book of Mormon just

exactly what the Prophet said it was: “The most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (HC 4:461). The Lord himself has similarly testified with a solemn oath—“And he [Joseph] has translated the book, even that part which I have commanded him, and as your Lord and your God liveth it is true” (D&C 17:6).

Another, rather dramatic factor has now been discovered that explains most all of the grammatical errors that were apparent in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. Please see the article, “Early Modern English and the Translation of the Book of Mormon.”

## The Doctrine of Christ Is Absolute and Unchanging

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Critics decry that Mormon theology has been subjected to a series of amendments, adjustment, and sometimes plain contradictions through the years. Examples include: repeal of the doctrine of blood atonement; disavowal of the Adam-God theory; cessation of the practice of polygamy, a change in the doctrine of the Blacks and the priesthood. Others, perhaps particularly the Evangelicals feel that they have seen evidence of the LDS Church "modifying" and making "changes" in our own doctrine in order to bring ourselves more into line with "orthodox" Christianity. For example, they see more discussion, in the contemporary LDS Church, of "orthodox Christian" concepts such as grace, justification, and sanctification by the Spirit than was seen in the early days of the Church.

**Eternal truth.** We declare that there exist absolute and eternal truths. They are God's truths and are unchanging and unchangeable. God has made many of these truths available to the members of his earthly kingdom through his prophets. A modern-day prophet, President Spencer W. Kimball, said about truth:

There is an absolute truth. . . . It is as true as the near-spherical shape of the earth, and as gravity; as true as the shining of the sun—as positive as the truth that we live. Most of the world disbelieves it; ministers attempt to disprove it; intellectuals think to rationalize it out of existence; but when all the people of the world are dead, and the ministers and priests are ashes, and the highly trained are moldering in their graves, the truth will go forward—the Church will continue triumphant and the gospel will still be true. . . .

Opinion? Of course, there is a difference of opinion; but again, opinion cannot change laws or absolute truths. Opinions will never make the earth to be flat, the sun to dim its light, God to die, or the Savior to cease being the Son of God. . . . This is not another church. This is the Church. This is not another gospel or philosophy. This is the Church and gospel of Jesus Christ ("Absolute Truth," *Ensign* [September 1978], 7-8).

We declare that we in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have those eternal truths today which God has chosen to make known to mankind on the earth. We do not apologize for these truths, for they are eternal, immutable, and divine. They are available for all to hear and test through means of spiritual inquiry.

How does any individual find out for himself whether or not a thing is true? The Lord knew that Satan would sow seeds of doubt and confusion in the world and thus obscure access to eternal blessings for his children. So how is one to know the truth? James 1:5 reads: "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." In Matthew 7:7 the Lord adds:

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Later in verse 11, Jesus explains that we naturally want to give good gifts to our children. Then he says, “How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” In the Book of Mormon, we read: “O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that from thee we may receive according to our desires” (Ether 3:2). The Lord’s message is clear. We need not depend on the words of others to ascertain truth. Once we study it out in our minds, we can go to God, the source of all truth. When we ask in faith, with a pure heart, he has promised to give us wisdom and verify the truth for us. Ultimately, we must all come to terms with this important formula and gain our own witness of the truthfulness of God’s works. A personal testimony, born of the Spirit, is the only unfailing source of truth.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints declares that all people should be free to worship God according to their own beliefs. Missionaries and members of the Church can and should be active in proclaiming the news of the restored gospel and encouraging everyone to investigate and learn of the blessings available to them. This activity is not an attack on the religious beliefs of any person or sect but an invitation to partake of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who refuse to listen or choose not to heed the message are treated with respect and consideration.

**Changes in our theology?** Evangelicals and others are ignorant of what has happened in the Church during the past two to three decades as a result of former President Ezra Taft Benson’s being inspired to call the Church to repentance on the matter of the Book of Mormon. This has been a superb object lesson on the function of a modern-day prophet. President Benson observed an unsatisfactory level of Book of Mormon and other scripture study among the saints. He urged all members of the Church to repent and make the Book of Mormon more central in our lives. He reminded us that the Lord has not been pleased with the gap between scripturally revealed beliefs and the level of “popular” LDS understanding. As a result of his urgings, members of the Church, and the Book of Mormon now occupies a place in the lives of the members that is more central than ever before (see D&C 84:54-57) (see *CR*, October 1986, 3-4 and Dallin H. Oaks, “Another Testament of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, March 1994, 60-67).

As the saints have returned to careful study of the scriptures, we have been reminded of the importance of what we share with mainline Christians: Christ-centered living, the doctrine of the atonement, grace, justification, and sanctification by the Spirit. These are all LDS doctrines. They are all Book of Mormon doctrines. They have always been part of our scriptures and of our theology. However, in an understandable backlash against mainline churches who drove them from their homes and from the United States, many nineteenth century Latter-day Saints chose to distance themselves from traditional Christians and to exaggerate any differences that did exist. In this distancing, “orthodox” anti-Mormons have been only too happy to assist. Thus, much of

the sermons and other homiletic materials of the late nineteenth century recorded in the *Journal of Discourses* have a distinctly different flavor than the LDS scriptures themselves or homiletic materials from the late twentieth century.

President Benson, in returning us from a sometimes "popular" theology and homiletic to our scriptural roots, has at the same time returned the theological emphasis of the Church to many things we share with other Christians. During the past decade, the instructions to members have consistently run along these lines: Pay less attention to the *Journal of Discourses*. Return to the scriptures. Stick to the Standard Works.

This change has simply been a return to our scriptural base largely in response to D&C 84:57 as interpreted by President Benson, "And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments [the Bible] which I have given them." The only change precipitated by President Benson is that Mormonism now seeks to define itself in terms of its own canonized scriptures rather than the sometimes polemical or speculative sermons of the nineteenth century. This is simply a course correction, a return to original headings. Inevitably, non-LDS critics will see it as a change in doctrine, but viewed from within the Church it is merely a reemphasis on the basics—our basics. There is a significant irony in this course correction's being seen as our moving closer to "orthodox" theology. We are the Church of Jesus Christ and teach the doctrine of Christ and not the doctrine of men. We avow that if the Evangelicals or anyone else wish to know the whole truth about grace, works, justification, and sanctification, we are prepared to teach them.

We also see the function of a modern-day prophet in the church's new emphasis on the doctrines of blood atonement, Adam-God doctrine, polygamy, and access to the priesthood. In modern-day revelation the Lord clearly stated his prerogatives to the prophet Joseph: "Wherefore I, the Lord, command and revoke, as it seemeth me good" (D&C 56:4). Times change, situations and circumstances change, and we need a prophet to keep us on course. See also *Need for a Prophet and Continuing Revelation* in chapter .

For further discussion of the doctrines of blood atonement and the so-called Adam God theory, see the pertinent chapters in this volume.

## The Gospel in its Fullness has been Restored

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The concept of the latter-day restoration of the gospel is, of course, intimately related to the concept of the Great Apostasy. All secular Christians and especially all Catholics would, of course, be inclined to object to the doctrine of the restoration of the gospel.

In the spring of 1820 a vision was given to Joseph Smith, near Palmyra, New York, in response to his fervent prayer to know the truth concerning religion. In this experience, Joseph Smith was visited by God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ (JS-H 1:17). In subsequent visits, holy angels instructed, ordained, and prepared him to become a latter-day prophet and an instrument in God's hands in restoring the gospel of Jesus Christ for the last time and setting up the kingdom spoken of by Daniel (Daniel 2).

As part of this restoration, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized by revelation on April 6, 1830, "it being regularly organized and established agreeable to the laws of our country, by the will and commandments of God" (D&C 20:1). It has the same priesthood, doctrines, and ordinances, and the same "organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, Evangelists, and so forth" (Article of Faith 6). Eventually, all of the keys of the priesthood, which had been given to man from Adam's time onward, were restored. Prophets who held priesthood keys anciently came to Joseph Smith and conferred those keys upon him (D&C 128:18). These included John the Baptist (D&C 13), Peter, James, and John (D&C 27:12), and Moses, Elias, and Elijah (D&C 110:11-16).

Thus, through the latter-day Prophet there has been a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ on the earth with the powers, authority, and ordinances as in ancient times.

The restoration spoken of in the scriptures involves more than a reestablishment of the Church and restoration of saving ordinances. Scattered Israel will be gathered, the second coming of Christ will occur, the Millennium will begin, the kingdom of God will be established worldwide, and "the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory" (Article of Faith 10).

A few Old and New Testament scriptures refer to the latter day restoration of the gospel:

Isaiah 29:13-14 – "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, *even* a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hid."

Daniel 2:44 – "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a

kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”

Acts 3:19-21 – “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you. Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”

Ephesians 1:10 – “That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”

A few Book of Mormon scriptures also prophesy of the restoration, an example of which is 1 Nephi 13:34 – “And it came to pass that the angel of the Lord spake unto me, saying: Behold, saith the Lamb of God, after I have visited the remnant of the house of Israel – and this remnant of whom I speak is the seed of thy father – wherefore, after I have visited them in judgment, and smitten them by the hand of the Gentiles, and after the Gentiles do stumble exceedingly, because of the most plain and precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church, which is the mother of harlots, saith the Lamb – I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them, in mine own power, much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious, saith the Lamb.”

## Which is the Proper “Lord’s Day”?

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Seventh Day Adventists object to our celebrating the Sabbath on Sunday. They point out that the Lord told Moses, “Thou shalt remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it Holy.” For thousands of years, Saturday had been observed by the Jews as their Sabbath. They feel that we break the commandment of the Lord by not celebrating the Sabbath on Saturday.

The word *Sabbath* originates from the Hebrew verb *shabbath*, meaning “to rest from labor.” The Sabbath is the day of rest. The seventh day, Saturday, therefore became the day on which the Sabbath was observed.

During the times when the Mosaic Law applied to the Lord’s people, there were strict laws laid down concerning Sabbath day observance. Exodus 31:14-17 informs us that a man was to be put to death for not keeping the Sabbath day holy. Exodus 35:3 informs us that those abiding by the Old Testament Sabbath should not “kindle fire” on this holy day. All food, according to Mosaic Law, was to be prepared the evening before the Sabbath. Also the Jews observed the seventh month of every year, and also every seventh year (the year of Jubilee) wherein all debts were forgiven.

These old things were done away with the advent of the Savior and his gospel. Hebrew 8:13 tells us, “In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.”

In Revelation 1:10, John refers to Sunday, the first day of the week, as “The Lord’s Day,” and it was on the Lord’s day that the disciples gathered following his resurrection. It was on the following Sunday they met together (John 20:26) and the scriptures affirm that the sacrament was observed on “The Lord’s Day” (Acts 20:7). The collection for the saints was made on the Lord’s day (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Our authority for observing the Sabbath on Sunday comes from D&C 59:12 which was received by the prophet Joseph Smith on a Sunday in 1831. The Lord said to Joseph, “But remember that on this, the Lord’s day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.” The Lord therefore identifies Sunday as the appropriate day of worship – “this, the Lord’s day.”

An “oblation” is an offering of sacrifices or of any charitable contribution to the Church. Elder Bruce R. McConkie defined an oblation in its highest sense as “giving full devotion to the Lord, of offering him a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 541-42).

## **Biblical Characters Were Not Subject to a “Word of Wisdom.”**

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Some have utilized the following scripture to demonstrate that the Bible does not support the proscriptions mention in the Word of Wisdom, namely that we should avoid tea, coffee, alcohol, and tobacco. “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities” (1 Timothy 5:23).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has commented upon this verse: “Wine is defined as ‘The fermented, or, loosely, the unfermented, juice of any fruit or plant used as a beverage; as, currant wine’ (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*). Having knowledge of Timothy’s physical infirmities, Paul is probably here counseling him that fruit juices will be more healthful than water. It is not reasonable to suppose that Timothy was being told to drink an alcoholic beverage, unless such was under limited medicinal circumstances.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-1973], 3: 93.)

Another passage that has caused concern is: “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man” (Matthew 15:11).

One must simply read the entire 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew to understand that Jesus is criticizing here the leaders of the Jews because their perverted priorities for confusing tokens with covenants, ritual, especially ritual dietary restrictions, with religion. Further, he condemned their adherence to the “traditions of the elders” as “teaching the doctrines and the commandments of men.” In the eyes of the Lord, to present oneself as a master and expert of the law and then to miss the undergirding intent and type of the law was the height of hypocrisy. “Ye blind guides,” Jesus said in a scathing denunciation, “Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel” (Matthew 23:24). In addition, the Lord chastened the leaders of the Jews for being so caught up in the observance of the traditions of the elders (see Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-9) that they had ceased to observe the very law around which those vain traditions had been established.

## The Book of Mormon and *View of the Hebrews*

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**Some have claimed that** the Book of Mormon is not, in fact, an authentic ancient document. Rather, it was written by Joseph Smith himself who borrowed heavily from the book by Ethan Smith, *A View of the Hebrews*.

The following is taken from Richard C. Roberts's article, "View of the Hebrews" in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*.

Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* (Poultney, Vermont, 1823; second enlarged edition, 1825) combines scriptural citations and reports from various observers among American Indians and Jews to support the claim that the Indians were the descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel. It is one of several books reflecting the popular fascination at the time of Joseph Smith with the question of Indian origins. While some have claimed it to be a source for the Book of Mormon, no direct connections between this book and the Book of Mormon have been demonstrated.

The full title of the 1825 edition is *View of the Hebrews; or the Tribes of Israel in America. Exhibiting the Destruction of Jerusalem; the Certain Restoration of Judah and Israel; the Present State of Judah and Israel; and an Address of the Prophet Isaiah to the United States Relative to Their Restoration*. The author, Ethan Smith (no relation to Joseph Smith), was pastor of the Congregational Church in Poultney, Vermont.

The first chapter deals with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Romans, as referred to in scriptural prophecy and historical sources. The second chapter tells of the literal expulsion of the ten tribes of Israel in 721 B.C. and the establishment of the kingdom of Judah; it also maintains that their restoration will be literal, and it quotes heavily from Isaiah. The third chapter summarizes the outcast condition of Israel in 1823; it also argues that the natives of America are "the descendants of Israel" and propounds that all pre-Columbian Americans had one origin, that their language appears originally to have been Hebrew, that they had an ark of the covenant, that they practiced circumcision, that they acknowledged one and only one God, that their tribal structure was similar to Hebrew organization, that they had cities of refuge, and that they manifest a variety of Hebraic traits of prophetic character and tradition. These claims are supported by citations from James Adair and Alexander von Humboldt. The fourth chapter emphasizes the restoration of Israel, quoting from Isaiah and using Isaiah chapter 18 to create an "Address" to the United States to save Israel. In conclusion, Ethan Smith pleads that the "suppliants of God in the West" be faithful and helpful in bringing scattered Israel "to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the Mount Zion."

Alleged relationships of *View of the Hebrews* to the Book of Mormon have attracted interest periodically through the years. Ethan Smith's book was published in the adjoining county west of Windsor County, where Joseph Smith was born and lived from 1805 to 1811. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that Joseph Smith ever knew anything about this

book. Detractors have pointed to several “parallels” between the two books, but others point to numerous “unparallels.” As two of many examples, the Book of Mormon never mentions an ark of the covenant or cities of refuge.

I. Woodbridge Riley in 1902 was the first author to suggest a relationship between *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon (*The Founder of Mormonism*, New York, 1902, 124-26). In 1921 LDS Church authorities were asked to reply to questions posed by a Mr. Couch of Washington, D.C., regarding Native American origins, linguistics, technology, and archaeology. B. H. Roberts, a member of the First Quorum of Seventy, undertook a study of Couch’s issues; he received some assistance from a committee of other general authorities. Roberts’s first report, in December 1921, was a 141 page paper entitled “Book of Mormon Difficulties.” However, he was not satisfied with that work and later delved more deeply into other critical questions about Book of Mormon origins, which led him to a major analysis of *View of the Hebrews*.

Around March-May 1922, Roberts wrote a 291 page document, “A Book of Mormon Study,” and an eighteen-point summary entitled “A Parallel.” In the “Study” Roberts looked candidly at the possibility that Joseph Smith could have been acquainted with Ethan Smith’s book and could have used it as a source of the structure and some ideas in the Book of Mormon. He cited some twenty-six similarities between the two books. In all his writings, Roberts did not draw any conclusions that Joseph Smith used Ethan Smith’s work to write the Book of Mormon, but rather posed questions that believers in the Book of Mormon should be aware of and continue to find answers for. Roberts’s faith in the Book of Mormon as divinely revealed scripture was unshaken by his studies.

Roberts’ papers were published in 1985. This again stirred an interest in the relationship of *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon, especially since the editorial “Introduction” concluded that “the record is mixed” as to whether Roberts kept his faith in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon after making his studies (Madsen, Brigham D., ed. *B. H. Roberts: Studies of the Book of Mormon*. Urbana, Ill., 1985, 29; Madsen, Truman G., comp. *B. H. Roberts: His Final Decade*. Provo, Utah, 1985). Subsequent research, however, strongly indicates that Roberts remained committed to the full claims of the origin and doctrine of the Book of Mormon to the end of his life (Welch, John W. “B. H. Roberts: Seeker After Truth.” *Ensign* 16 [March 1986]:56-62.), and substantial evidence favors the position that there is little in common between the ideas and statements in *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon.

I have reproduced here a helpful article by John W. Welch, “B. H. Roberts: Seeker after Truth,” (*Ensign*, March 1986, 56). Dr. Welch is Professor of Law at the Brigham Young University College of Law and a prolific writer on scriptural and church history topics:

I first seriously encountered the writings of Elder B. H. Roberts of the First Council of the Seventy (1857–1933) when I was a college student. I was impressed by the stimulating analysis of LDS religious concepts in his *Seventy’s Course in Theology* (1907–

1919). I was caught up by the personally passionate historical prose in his *Missouri Persecutions* (1900), *The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo* (1900), and the *Comprehensive History of the Church* (1930). There was fire-power and electrifying conviction in his words. He called his faith “unshakeable.”

Recently, that faith has been drawn into question in the minds of some people. This is because of a set of papers about the Book of Mormon which B. H. Roberts wrote in 1922. In these papers, Elder Roberts bluntly lists many Book of Mormon “problems” and raises many arguments that he contemplated could be made against the Book of Mormon. As I read these papers, it became apparent that many people would misunderstand. For those who may be interested, here are the questions I think some people may ask about Elder Roberts’ Book of Mormon studies, and here are answers which recent research now provides.

What kind of a person was B. H. Roberts? He was fiercely loyal to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He had strong personal opinions, and on most occasions was outspoken and bluntly forthright.

All his life, B. H. Roberts sought after truth – spiritually and intellectually. For Brother Roberts – president of the Eastern States Mission from 1922 to 1927 and one of the seven presidents of the Seventy from 1888 until his death in 1933 – the search for truth was an all-consuming passion. He faced historical facts fearlessly; he confronted scientific theories confidently; and he squared off in debate spontaneously.

Did B. H. Roberts think scientific evidence could prove or disprove the Book of Mormon? No. He felt that scientific evidence was interesting and significant, but not infallible or controlling. Elder Roberts uncompromisingly recognized and openly acknowledged the Holy Ghost as the teacher of all truth. As he said in 1909:

This [power of the Holy Ghost] must ever be the chief source of evidence for the truth of the Book of Mormon. All other evidence is secondary to this, the primary and infallible. No arrangement of evidence, however skillfully ordered; no argument, however adroitly made, can ever take its place; for this witness of the Holy Spirit to the soul of man for the truth of the Nephite volume of scripture, is God’s evidence to the truth; and will ever be the chief reliance of those who accept the Book of Mormon, and expect to see its acceptance extended throughout the world.

Thus, he was not afraid to ask questions about the Book of Mormon or anything else. “I am taking the position that our faith is not only unshaken but unshakeable in the Book of Mormon, and therefore we can look without fear upon all that can be said against it,” Elder Roberts wrote upon completion of his Book of Mormon studies.

Did B. H. Roberts think he had all the answers? Brother Roberts knew that he had certain answers to many historical, scientific, and gospel questions. He also knew that he did not have them all. A rational person will not seek more truth if he thinks he already has

it all. Elder Roberts continued exploring, reading, thinking, and writing books, articles, tracts and pamphlets until he died in September 1933 at the age of seventy-six.

His knowledge about the Book of Mormon was no different. He was one of the first people ever to make a scholarly study of the Book of Mormon. His exploratory investigations found many things in the Book of Mormon which he considered “master strokes of philosophy” (as he writes in 1928) and sure signs of “divine origin” (as he speaks in 1932). Still, he knew that there were questions for which he had no answers. Yet he “most humbly prayed” and “most anxiously” awaited the “further development of knowledge that will make it possible for us to give a reasonable answer to those who question us concerning [these] matters” (as he wrote in 1921).

How long have B. H. Roberts’ papers on Book of Mormon “difficulties” been around? The papers, most of which were never given by Elder Roberts to anyone, have been in the hands of his family. They were donated to the University of Utah in 1979 and 1981, since which time copies have been made available.

How have critics of the Church reacted to these papers? For critics of the Book of Mormon, Roberts’ notes have appeared to be a bonanza. Here is one of the most intellectual General Authorities of his day seeming to expose all the evidentiary weaknesses of his own case. It is like a military officer writing an intelligence report telling the enemy where his own troops are most vulnerable. In the Study, Brother Roberts is blunt. He states a case against the Book of Mormon in tough terms. It is clear that Elder Roberts recognizes there may be no answers to some of his hard questions, but that does not deter him from asking the questions.

Why did Elder Roberts write such things? First, the project grew out of committee assignments Elder Roberts was given in 1921 by Elder James E. Talmage and President Heber J. Grant. The committee was asked to respond to several questions about Book of Mormon archaeology. B. H. Roberts pursued the assignment vigorously.

Second, Elder Roberts loved to debate. He knew how to argue a case toe-to-toe and believed that much good could emerge. Even as a mission president, B. H. Roberts, who was an outspoken character all his life, would dress up in street clothes and go out to debate on the street corners of New York. When he saw unresolved problems, he would try to state those problems as clearly and as strongly as possible, then pursue the controversy.

Third, he was loyal. He wanted to help the Church wherever he could. He knew that future generations would probably face these issues and he wanted them to be prepared. In 1927 he said of his Study, “Such a question as that may possibly arise some day, and if it does, it would be greatly to the advantage of our future Defenders of the Faith, if they had in hand a thorough digest of the subject matter.” To have presented these issues any less forcefully or dramatically would have been uncharacteristic of Brother Roberts.

What is Elder Roberts’ “Study of the Book of Mormon”? The Study is twenty

typewritten chapters (each about fifteen pages long). The first fourteen chapters discuss similarities between the Book of Mormon and a book by Ethan Smith published in Vermont in 1823 (second edition in 1825) entitled *View of the Hebrews or the Tribes of Israel in America*. The last six chapters consider the proposition that the Book of Mormon is of human rather than divine origin.

The Study is sometimes confused with a shorter, 145-page paper entitled “Book of Mormon Difficulties” which is what B. H. Roberts initially wrote by way of committee assignment from Elder James E. Talmage in 1921. In that paper, B. H. Roberts pointed out the difficulties he ran into as he was responding to five questions asked about the Book of Mormon by a Mr. Couch from Washington, D.C. Brother Roberts found in his research that the prevailing scientific theories about Indian origins and pre-Columbian fauna, flora, and technology differed from what he believed about such things.

Do we know exactly when B. H. Roberts wrote the second work, “Study of the Book of Mormon”? Yes. The first page of the original typescript says that the Study was written thirteen years “to be exact” after the publication of *New Witnesses for God* (which appeared in 1909). Due to this and several other telltale changes Roberts made on the typescript, we can date the typing of the Study to before he left to serve as mission president in New York on 29 May 1922. Most of his proofreading changes were made before that time as well. This means – contrary to assertions some people have made – that Elder Roberts did not write the Study during his mission presidency.

Did Brother Roberts consider the Study a finished piece? No. He never submitted it to Church authorities and, uncharacteristically, only proofread it lightly.

What did B. H. Roberts think of the Study? In 1932 he called it an “awful” book. He said that he had not written it for publication.

Did Elder Roberts draw any conclusions from the Study? No. He said in an unsent cover letter accompanying the Study, “I do not say my conclusions, for they are undrawn. . . . What is herein set forth does not represent any conclusions of mine.” Throughout the Study Elder Roberts asks questions. They are tough rhetorical questions, but still they are just questions, not assertions nor conclusions. They are questions he expects opponents to be asking. To these he puzzles: “What shall our answer be?” “What is to be our general standing before the enlightened opinion of mankind?” These problems he calls “legitimate queries.” He says they would be powerful weapons “in the hands of a skillful opponent,” and aimed to blunt them by paying attention to them.

Did Elder Roberts worry that people would misunderstand his Study? Yes. He wrote, “Let me say once for all, so as to avoid what might otherwise call for repeated explanation, that what is herein set forth does not represent any conclusions of mine.”

Why in his Study does Elder Roberts not suggest any answers to the problems he is raising? The Study is not an answer book. It is a question book. Many of the questions he had answered before and others he would answer in the future. For example, he raises the objection that the small party of Nephites could not possibly have constructed a temple

like the large and opulent temple of Solomon. Brother Roberts had already answered that question in 1909.

As another example, he poses the question of whether Joseph Smith's powers of imagination were sufficient to have written the Book of Mormon. Elder Roberts regularly preached in the 1930s that the "perfect" sacrament prayers in Moroni 4–5 are evidence that the Book of Mormon was not written by Joseph Smith.

Some of the questions require no answer, such as the bogus suggestion that Joseph Smith got the name "Ether" from the name "Ethan Smith." Elder Roberts himself says in the Study, "Do not take the idea too seriously."

How careful was B. H. Roberts in this research? Not very. This particular research shows signs of haste and remained unfinished. In fact, the Study was written inside of a few months. Much of it consists of long quotes from other sources, given with little analysis. Even Elder Roberts' reading of the Book of Mormon was not always as careful as it could have been. Several of his problems arise because of assumptions he has made about the Book of Mormon. For example, Brother Roberts assumed that the lands of the Book of Mormon were all relatively flat. He apparently overlooked many contrary statements, such as Alma 47:9, which speaks of a large mountain and valley.

Would B. H. Roberts feel embarrassed to know that some of his research was incomplete or flawed? Absolutely not. He wrote that "the generations who succeed us in unfolding in a larger way some of the yet unlearned truths of the Gospel, will find that we have had some misconceptions and made some wrong deductions in our day and time. The book of knowledge is never a sealed book. It is never 'completed and forever closed;' rather it is an eternally open book, in which one may go on constantly discovering new truths and modifying our knowledge of old ones." This observation pertains equally today to our continuing efforts to know the Book of Mormon better, both through study and also by faith.

Did the Study change Elder Roberts' use of the Book of Mormon? No. Before and after the Study he used the Book of Mormon as the focus of his missionary programs. He voluntarily chose to speak on Book of Mormon subjects again and again in conferences and in the media. Over fifty-six major talks or statements were made by B. H. Roberts after the Study in which he affirms his faith in the Book of Mormon. After the Study, Elder Roberts may have taken less interest in archaeology and placed more emphasis on the doctrinal and philosophical strengths of the Book of Mormon, but in no way did he ever doubt or reject the historicity of this "ancient American volume of scripture," as he called it on many occasions.

Did Elder Roberts, perhaps knowing that his Study would be troublesome to people, affirm his testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon after he wrote the Study? He wrote in May 1922 of "the tremendous truth" of the Book of Mormon. He said in 1924 that the Saints should build upon the Book of Mormon "wherein is no darkness or doubt." He spoke at general conference in April 1928 of the "hundred more such glorious things

that have come to the world in that book to enlighten the children of men.” He speaks repeatedly of the historicity of the Book.

Nevertheless, Brother Roberts knew that he had been abrasive and challenging at times during his many years of service to the Church. At October general conference, 1929, Elder Roberts may have had the Book of Mormon Study in mind when he remarked:

I happened to be reminded today that next April it will be fifty years since I commenced my public ministry in the Church. . . . I am mentioning some of these things in order that my profession of faith that I have made here today may be supported by the evidence of steady, persistent effort on my part to develop and to advocate and to establish this great work of God.

But this is my object, and my object alone; that after bearing testimony to the fundamental things of this work, and my confidence in it, I hope that if anywhere along the line I have caused any of you to doubt my faith in this work, then let this testimony and my indicated life’s work be a correction of it. I make reference to these personal things in fifty years of service so that you may know that my testimony has some sanctions for it in the life of service I have given to the cause.

Is it possible that B. H. Roberts had a faithful facade which he wore in public but in private was a skeptical doubter? If Elder Roberts was anything, he was outspoken and honest. It is extremely difficult to believe that he was two-faced. In his April 1928 general conference talk, Elder Roberts emotionally spoke of the Book of Mormon and of the appearance of the resurrected Jesus Christ among the Nephites gathered at the temple in Bountiful. He said: “And now, O Lord Jesus, if thou couldst but come into the consciousness of our souls this day, as thou didst come into the vision of the ancient Nephites in the Land of Bountiful, we would join their great song of praise and worship, saying – ‘Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God!’ And we, like them, would fall down at the feet of Jesus and worship him this Easter day! Amen.” In powerful statements like this one, Elder Roberts revealed his deep-felt faith in the Book of Mormon.

Did B. H. Roberts ever say anything after 1922 that could lead someone to think that he had lost faith in the Book of Mormon? Yes, on one known occasion. Elder Roberts had a conversation with Wesley Lloyd, one of his former missionaries, in Salt Lake on 7 August 1933, six weeks before his death. He began this conversation, if reported correctly by Brother Lloyd, complaining that his unpublished book *The Way, The Truth, The Life* had been subjected to “severe criticism” and rejected by the Brethren. He thought he had been personally attacked. He then took issue with a new church policy of not sending missionaries into the field without financial backing. He next complained about Brigham Young. Finally, he turned to the Book of Mormon, complaining that back in 1922 a “crisis had arisen where revelation was necessary” but that no answer had been forthcoming.

No doubt, Brother Roberts voiced some complaints that day. The important thing is that he did not resign his church position as he said he might do. He did not cease working on his missionary correspondence course. He did not give up on the Church. And he did not give up on the Book of Mormon. These supposed complaints are not representative of his more fundamental attitudes and beliefs.

In actual fact, the Wesley Lloyd journal is inaccurate and not reliable in many factual respects. Brother Lloyd says that Roberts “shifted his base on the Book of Mormon.” Shifting bases, however, does not mean abandoning. In reality, we know how Elder Roberts shifted: In his later years, B. H. Roberts found his doctrinal approach of the Book of Mormon’s divinity more satisfying. Brother Lloyd says that Elder Roberts thought that the Book of Mormon was in need of “the more bolstering.” Needing “more” bolstering was always B. H. Roberts’ position.

It may also be relevant that Elder Roberts, at seventy-six, was in ill health. He had lost a foot, spent several months near death’s door in hospitals, and suffered from the advanced stages of the diabetes that would kill him a few weeks later. Undoubtedly, Elder Roberts also felt a great loss due to the death of Elder James Talmage on 27 July 1933, about a week before this conversation with Lloyd.

These facts help place in context what the old fighter was feeling that day as he conversed with his young friend. After that conversation, Elder Roberts went to Chicago to represent the Church at a world conference of religious leaders. He also told Jack Christensen (another of his missionaries), sometime around 1 September 1933, “Ethan Smith played no part in the formation of the Book of Mormon. You accept Joseph Smith and all the scriptures!”

Is it necessary for members of the Church today to read B. H. Roberts’ Study to be up to date on Book of Mormon studies? No. In fact, the Study is now to a considerable extent out of date. Most of his questions have since found answers.

The Study marks a beginning stage in the history of Book of Mormon studies. With Roberts, students of the Book of Mormon began to think more deeply about shallow and inadequate archaeological explanations or “proofs” of the Book of Mormon. With Roberts, scholars like Elder John A. Widtsoe, and a few years later Hugh Nibley and Sidney Sperry, began to expand our approaches to the study of the Book of Mormon.

What were Elder Roberts’ main questions? Elder Roberts raised questions in five areas.

(1) He found that the prevailing theory in the 1920s about the origin of the American Indian was that they all came long ago over the Bering Strait, not across the sea.

(2) He pointed out the apparent absence of a credible relationship of the Book of Mormon account to the archaeology of the 1920s.

On these first two matters, we, along with science, still await definitive answers. As President Anthony W. Ivins, a counselor to President Heber J. Grant, said in general conference, April, 1929, “Where was the City of Zarahemla? . . . It does not make any

difference to us. There has never been anything yet set forth that definitely settles that question. So the Church says we are just waiting until we discover the truth. All kinds of theories have been advanced.” Plausible answers, however, have recently been developed. One such scientific and scholarly theory recently advanced is John L. Sorenson’s *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*. For example, in B. H. Roberts’ day there was no evidence of pre-Columbian domesticated barley in the Americas; today there is.

(3) Elder Roberts pointed out certain seemingly absurd or erroneous passages in the Book of Mormon.

(4) He suggested similarities between Book of Mormon conversion stories and early nineteenth-century spiritual experiences.

Today, many of these alleged absurdities, on closer examination, turn out to be strengths rather than weaknesses. For example, Alma 46 says that Captain Moroni waved the “rent” of his coat in the air. This seems impossible in English, since one cannot wave the “tear.” But in Hebrew the expression is a natural one. The similarity between the Nephites falling down during King Benjamin’s speech and Methodists falling down at revival meetings in Joseph Smith’s day is superficial. More extensive are the similarities between King Benjamin’s speech and ancient Israelite festival and coronation celebrations. ¶

B. H. Roberts displayed a list of twenty-six purported “parallels” between the Book of Mormon and a book written in 1823 (second edition 1825). That book, *View of the Hebrews* (VH), argues that the American Indians were descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel (a theory which Elder Roberts rightly wrote in 1932 is not the theory of the Book of Mormon). Since the alleged points of contact between VH and the Book of Mormon are scattered throughout VH and in some cases are supposedly quite specific, the hypothesis that Joseph Smith directly relied on VH becomes plausible only if one assumes that Joseph Smith knew VH quite well and accepted it as correct. If this were so, then he should have followed it – or at least not contradicted it – on its major points. But this does not turn out to be the case. Consider the following “unparallels”:

(a) VH begins with a chapter on the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. It has nothing to say, however, about the much earlier destruction of Jerusalem in Lehi’s day by the Babylonians.

(b) Chapter 3 comprises most of VH. It produces numerous “distinguished Hebraisms” as “proof” that the American Indians are Israelites. But few of these points are found in the Book of Mormon, as one would expect if Joseph Smith were using VH or trying to make his book persuasive. For example: VH asserts repeatedly that the Ten Tribes came to America via the Bering Strait, which they crossed on “dry land.” According to VH, this opinion is unquestionable, supported by all the authorities. From there VH documents that the Israelites spread from north to east and then to the south at a very late date. These are critical points for VH, in whose view Amos 8:11–12 prophesies that the tribes would go from the north to the east. Significant population migrations in the Book of

Mormon, however, follow a crossing of the ocean and then always move from south to north.

(c) VH reports that the Indians are Israelites because they use the word Hallelujah. Here is one of VH's favorite proofs, a dead give-away that the Indians are Israelites. Yet this word is not used in the Book of Mormon.

Furthermore, a table showing thirty-four Indian words or sentence fragments with claimed Hebrew equivalents appears in VH (2d edition, 90–91). No reader of the book could have easily missed this chart. If Joseph Smith had wanted to make up names to use in the Book of Mormon which would substantiate his claim that he had found some authentic Western Hemisphere Hebrew words, he would have looked hard at such a ready-made list. Yet none of these thirty-four Hebrew/Indian words (Keah, Lani, Uwoh, Phale, Kurbet, etc.) resemble any of the 175 words which appear for the first time in the Book of Mormon.

(d) VH says that the Indians are Israelites because they carry small boxes with them into battle. These are to protect them against injury. In VH, they are considered sure signs that the Indians' ancestors knew of the Ark of the Covenant. If Joseph Smith were depending on VH, he would not likely have passed up such a distinguished and oft-attested "Hebraism" as this. Yet in all Book of Mormon battle scenes, there is no such ark, box, or bag serving as a military fetish.

(e) The Indians are Israelites because the Mohawk tribe, a tribe held in great reverence by all the others, was paid tribute. To VH, the conclusion was that the Mohawks are the vestiges of the tribe of Levi, Israel's tribe of priests. If Joseph Smith were relying on such a belief, one might think that he would have provided something about Levites in the Book of Mormon, but he did not.

(f) VH claims that the righteous Indians quickly lost knowledge that they were all from the same family, were active "for a long time" well into recent times, and that their destruction occurred about A.D. 1400, as evidenced by tree ring counts near some of the fortifications of these people. The Book of Mormon rejects these notions, reporting that tribal affiliations were maintained for almost a thousand years and that the destruction of the Nephites occurred in the fourth century A.D.

(g) VH argues that the Indians are Israelites because they knew the legends of Quetzalcoatl. But the surprise here is that VH argues that Quetzalcoatl was none other than – not Jesus – but Moses! "Who could this be but Moses, the ancient legislator in Israel?" (VH, 2nd. edition, 206.) He was white, gave laws, required penance (strict obedience), had a serpent with green plumage (brazen, fiery-flying serpent in the wilderness), appeased God's wrath (by sacrifices), was associated with a great famine (in Egypt), spoke from a volcano (Sinai), walked barefoot (removed his shoes), and opened a golden age (seven years of plenty in Egypt – which has nothing to do with Moses, by the way). If VH provided inspiration for the Book of Mormon, it did not provide much. Besides the fact that VH sees Quetzalcoatl as Moses, none of these hallmark details associated

with Quetzalcoatl are incorporated into the account of Christ's visit to Bountiful in 3 Nephi.

The foregoing seven points can be multiplied literally twelve times over. In the face of such differences, the few similarities pale. Both works speak of long migrations for religious reasons; both report wars; both say the people knew how to write and work with metals; and both praise generosity and denounce pride; VH speaks of Indian lore that they left a "lost book" back in Palestine and buried other records with their chiefs. B. H. Roberts asks the question: "Can such numerous and startling points of resemblance and suggestive contact be merely coincidence?" One can answer "yes," for the differences outweigh the similarities and most of the similarities lose force upon examination. If Joseph Smith had given VH basic credence, he would not have contradicted and ignored it in so many ways.

Do we have all the answers to Book of Mormon questions? No. We may never have all the answers to questions about the Book of Mormon. But in the last sixty years since B. H. Roberts made his Study, many things which he thought someone might say were weak or odd about the Book of Mormon have turned out to strengthen its credibility.

The Lord apparently does not intend the Book of Mormon to be an open-and-shut case intellectually, either pro or con. If he had intended this, he would have left more concrete evidences. Instead, the Lord has given us the opportunity to address the Book of Mormon as a matter of faith, as a modern-day miracle, a product of divine revelation. As such, it serves, through revelation, as a keystone of the Restoration and as a sacred testimony of Jesus Christ. Like B. H. Roberts, all readers of the Book of Mormon should take the Holy Ghost – not a list of preconceived, self-limiting issues – as their guide.

Few have sensed the will of the Lord in this regard more keenly than B. H. Roberts, who for many years was the "lightning rod" among the general authorities to absorb the strikes against the Book of Mormon and supply answers whenever he could. Often he had good replies, but sometimes he had none. He never expected or claimed to have all the answers.

Today, while we have better answers, we still do not have all the answers; we should not expect or need to have. But this does not mean that we lose faith in the Book of Mormon.

Elder Roberts, in fact, is an inspiring example of one who kept the faith in the face of serious questions for which he did not have the answers. If in his works we find some things that on the surface seem confusing, we should remember his words in October 1929: "If anywhere along the line I have caused any of you to doubt my faith in this work, then let this testimony and my indicated life's work be a correction of it." So let it be.

## Is the Restored Church the Same as Jesus's First Century Church?

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We might well expect that the true Church of Jesus Christ would be substantially the same as the church established by the Savior during his mortal ministry. Let us consider the biblical description of the church he established. It is clear from the Bible that Christ selected and ordained twelve apostles to preside over and direct his church (see Mark 3:14; Luke 9:1-2; John 15:16). The primitive church was further organized with apostles, pastors, high priests, seventies, elders, bishops, priests, teachers, and deacons (see Luke 6:13 and Mark 3:14; Ephesians 4:11; Hebrews 5:1-5; Luke 10:1-11; Acts 14:23; 15:6; 1 Peter 5:1; 1 Timothy 3:1; Titus 1:7; Revelation 1:6; Acts 13:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-12).

Specific authority to function in the administration of the Savior's true church by the power of God is called "priesthood." This priesthood is obtained through ordination by one having such authority under the direction of Christ (see Exodus 40:15; Luke 9:1; 2 Corinthians 10:7-8; Hebrews 5:4-6).

When members of the Savior's church fell sick, they would call for "the elders" (that is, priesthood holders) of the Church, who would anoint them with oil and bless and heal them, according to God's will (see Acts 14:23; James 5:14-15). Christ's church would send forth missionaries, two-by-two to preach the gospel (see Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1; John 20:21). The true church would have a law of health (see Ephesians 5:18; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 9:25-27) and teach about a premortal existence, or pre-earth life (see John 17:5; Ephesians 1:4-5). God the Father would be recognized as having created the individual spirits of all people. Thus, spiritually speaking, we would all consider ourselves to be brothers and sisters (see Malachi 2:10; Matthew 12:50; Hebrews 12:9). Members of Christ's true church would be called "saints" (see Romans 1:7) and would be tithe payers (see Malachi 3:8-10; Hebrews 7:4-5).

In Christ's church, once an investigator is repentant, baptism by immersion is essential (see Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:5, 9-10; Acts 8:38), as is receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost (see John 3:5; Acts 2:38). Higher priesthood authority is required to bestow the Holy Ghost than is required to baptize (see Mark 1:7-8; Luke 3:16; Acts 19:2-6; John 1:33), and persons performing these ordinances must be duly authorized priesthood holders (see Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16). Christ's true church will teach and testify that the Holy Ghost will bear witness of the truthfulness of the Savior's plan, when it is presented. In this way, any child of God can know which of the many churches teaches the principles of the Savior (see John 16:13-14; 1 Corinthians 12:4-12; Ephesians 1:17).

Christ's church will provide the opportunity for salvation for all of God's children, not just for those who receive the gospel while living on the earth. The members of his church would baptize for the dead (see 1 Corinthians 15:29) and would build temples. These temples would have unique and holy purposes (see Isaiah 2:3; Malachi 3:1).

The above listed biblical references are but a small portion of those that describe the attributes and characteristics of Christ's true church. However, these scriptural references provide a profile of what one may expect in any church calling itself Christ's church. So, which of all the churches in the world best fits this profile? The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only church on earth that fits the Bible's description of Christ's church.

## Anti-Mormons' Geographical and Archaeological Attacks on the Book of Mormon

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I am indebted for much of the material in this chapter to William J. Hamblin and his article "Basic Methodological Problems with the Anti-Mormon Approach to the Geography and Archaeology of the Book of Mormon" (Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute).

It has become increasingly apparent that Joseph Smith, as he translated and throughout his lifetime, did not fully understand several things about the Book of Mormon. These included the book's geography, archaeology (population dynamics), literary forms, and cultural content. It appears that Joseph never really sought for, nor did he obtain revelation from the Lord on the correct geography of the Book of Mormon.

It is interesting and ironic to note that critics of Joseph and the Book of Mormon have attempted to diminish him by exaggerating his abilities. Members of the Church have unwittingly, and more subtly, done a similar thing. John E. Clark, a Mesoamerican archaeologist and member of the Church wrote:

Critics see Joseph Smith as author of a romantic fiction, the Book of Mormon, and in so doing they distort both the man and the book beyond belief. They see the book as a logical product of its 1820s intellectual environment, combined with Joseph Smith's native intelligence and deceitful propensities. Most Mormons fall into a more subtle error that also inflates Joseph's talents; they confuse translation with authorship. They presume that Joseph Smith knew the contents of the book as if he were its real author, and they accord him perfect knowledge of the text. This presumption removes from discussion the most compelling evidence of the book's authenticity—Joseph's unfamiliarity with its contents. To put the matter clearly: Joseph Smith did not fully understand the Book of Mormon. I propose that he transmitted to readers an ancient book that he neither imagined nor wrote ("Archaeological Trends and Book of Mormon Origins," *BYU Studies* 44/4 [2005]: 84-85).

### The Book of Mormon's Geography

There has never been an official position of the Church on the geography of the Book of Mormon. There have been two major models for that geography:

1. The "hemispheric" geography model. This model places the "narrow neck of land" at the isthmus of Panama. The "land northward" is North America, and the "land southward" is South America.

This model also includes the "one people" archaeology model. That is, Lehi, when he and his traveling party disembarked somewhere on the western coast of the western hemisphere, found the land to be unpopulated (save, perhaps, for a few

remnants of the Jaredite civilization). Only centuries later would the Lehites discover the Mulekites (Omni 1:14-15). The people of the Book of Mormon therefore became the founding fathers of the entire western hemisphere, and their descendants became the root native population of the Americas.

2. The “limited” geography model. This model places the narrow neck of land at the isthmus of Teohuantepec in southern Mexico. The “land Northward” is central Mexico, and the “land southward” is southeastern Mexico and Guatemala. By this model, the entire Book of Mormon land occupies an area of central America that is very roughly seven hundred miles long and two hundred miles wide (see the illustration *Book of Mormon Lands*).

An integral part of this model is that Lehi’s party, on arrival in the western hemisphere, found the land to be already populated. The Lehites, both Nephites and Lamanites, did intermarry with the indigenous population but remained, throughout the Book of Mormon saga, a relatively small group of people. They lived in a limited area of a large and well populated land. Consequently, the descendants of the Book of Mormon peoples, while they exist, have been well diluted by earlier indigenous populations and probably largely occupy a relatively limited area of Central America.

I believe that the evidences for this latter model are compelling (see John L. Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, revised edition [Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992]. See also John Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985]). It is my view that this model has comfortably replaced the hemispheric geography model.

### **Origin of the Hemispheric Geography Model**

In the early decades of the Church, most Latter-day Saints, including Joseph Smith, accepted the hemispheric geography model (Sorenson, *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 9-15). There is no evidence that the ideas of this model actually originated with the prophet Joseph. It seems more likely that those first exposed to the Book of Mormon, including Joseph during his process of translation, simply naturally and intuitively accepted this model. This seems to be the natural wont of most all people, even today, on their first exposure to the book. It is to presume a model close to the hemispheric geography model.

In this chapter we will consider the prophet Joseph’s early geography and archaeology notions. I will support the thesis that early on, he held to the ideas of the hemispheric (and one people) theory. Later on, however, during the Nauvoo period, there is evidence Joseph’s ideas seemed to shift toward the Limited Geography Model.

### **Origin of the Limited Geography Model**

An early version of the limited geography model arose within twelve years of the publication of the Book of Mormon. Indeed, Joseph Smith himself was either the

originator of, or was closely associated with, the development of the core idea of the limited geography model.

In 1841 a book was authored by John Lloyd Stephens with illustrations by Frederick Catherwood. The book was *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (2 vols., New York: Harper & Brothers, 1841). This work, not only recounted the author's travels to the region, but described for the first time, many of the ruins found in what is not known as Mesoamerica. The book was an instant success and was widely praised in the national press. A survey of literature written on the Book of Mormon during the Nauvoo period suggests that Latter-day Saints were also interested in these Central American discoveries and were quick to compare these discoveries with the claims of the Book of Mormon.

Latter-day Saint readers in Nauvoo first became aware of the book in an article published in the June 15, 1841 issue of the *Times and Seasons* under the editorship of the Prophet's brother Don Carlos Smith and Robert B. Thompson. These two noted the significance of the explorers' discoveries for Latter-day Saints in an article entitled, "American Antiquities—More Proofs of the Book of Mormon" (440-42). Several months later John Bernhisel, a recent convert serving as bishop over the saints in New York City, purchased a copy of the two volume work and on September 8 wrote to Joseph Smith informing him that he was sending him a copy of the set "as a token of my regard for you as a prophet of the Lord" (cited in Dean Jessee's *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, revised edition [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1002, 533]). Bernhisel asked Wilford Woodruff, who was returning home from his apostolic mission in Great Britain to carry the set back to the Prophet from New York to Nauvoo, which he did.

Joseph subsequently wrote to John Bernhisel. His letter unequivocally showed that he shared in the excitement about these discoveries. It also, in effect, signaled his approval of such interests in connection with the Book of Mormon, an interest that can be seen in subsequent Latter-day Saint publications and in some Latter-day saints themselves.

In February 1842, Joseph became editor of the *Times and Seasons*. He and the Twelve had been unhappy with how the previous editors had handled the paper. Joseph served in this position until mid-November 1842. John Taylor took over from Joseph, as Joseph was too busy with his other responsibilities in the Church. Joseph directly assumed responsibility for all articles published while he was editor.

During Joseph's tenure as editor, between March and November 1842, the *Times and Seasons* published numerous articles of doctrinal and historical significance to the Church. This included the publication of the Prophet's translations of the Book of Abraham, the Wentworth letter, early installments of the *History of Joseph Smith*, and two important letters from the Prophet to the Church giving instructions relating to baptism for the dead. We can be certain that all articles and editorials written during

this period, including those attributed to other authors were carefully vetted and approved by the Prophet. During this period five articles on the Book of Mormon were published endorsing the work of Stephens and Catherwood to the saints. At least the first three of these have been shown to have been written by Joseph Smith himself using wordprint or stylometry analysis studies.

### **Evidence of Joseph’s Early Acceptance of the Hemispheric Geography Model**

In his writings about the Book of Mormon following its publication, Joseph used terms such as “this land,” “this continent,” and “this country.” How might we understand his intended meanings for these expressions?

**“This land.”** In June 1842, while Joseph was serving as editor for the *Times and Seasons*, an article appeared comparing Aztec traditions of the confounding of languages and the subsequent traveling of the people to the Western Hemisphere with those same traditions found in the book of Ether in the Book of Mormon. The article commented on the travels of the people subsequent to the confounding of languages to “this land.” It then commented on the remarkable similarity between the Book of Mormon and Aztec accounts of this tradition by saying: “These accounts, then, precisely agree, one of which was found in Ontario County, N. Y. [the Book of Mormon account], and the other in Mexico [the Aztec account]” (“Traits of Mosaic History” *Times and Seasons* [June 15, 1842]: 820). The editor of the article, Joseph Smith, seemed to consider both New York and Mexico to be part of “this land.”

**“This Continent.”** In his account of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, now included in the Pearl of Great Price (JSH), the prophet Joseph wrote that the angel Moroni explained that the Book of Mormon gave an account of the “former inhabitants of this continent” (JSH 1:34). It is notable that Webster’s *1828 American Dictionary of the English Language* defined “continent” as, “a great extent of land, not disjointed or interrupted by a sea; a connected tract of land of great extent; as the Eastern, and Western Continent.” Here, we have the idea of two main continents on the earth, a new, western or American Continent and an old or Eastern one. The *Oxford English Dictionary* states, “Formerly two continents were reckoned, the Old and the New; the former comprising Europe, Asia, and Africa, which form one continuous mass of land; the latter, North and South America, forming another.”

Evidence suggests that, early on, the saints, including Joseph Smith, thought of events in the Book of Mormon as having occurred throughout North and South America. Consider the following excerpts taken from a presentation by Matthew Roper at the FAIR conference on August 5, 2010 titled “Joseph Smith and the Question of Book of Mormon Geography”:

The Holy Bible professes to be a history of the peopling of the *old continent*—the Golden Bible of the *new continent* (William Owen “A Comparison between the Book of Mormon and the Scriptures of the Old

and New Testaments, or The Gold Bible vs. The Holy Bible,” *Free Enquirer*, New York, 10 September, 1831, emphases added).

If Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, were the real authors of the Bible, chiefly revealed and written on the *continent* of Asia, was not the Book of Mormon also written by men who were divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit, on the *continent* of America? And did not Jesus Christ truly appear on the *continent* of America, after his resurrection, and choose twelve apostles to preach his gospel: and did he not deliver his holy doctrine, and teach the same to numerous multitudes on this American *continent*? (Eli Gilbert to Oliver Cowdery, September 24, 1834, *Latter-day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 1/1 [October 1834]:10, emphases added).

The Bible was written by a people upon the *Eastern continent*, but the Book of Mormon by a people upon *this continent* (E. Snow and Benjamin Winchester, “An Address to the Citizens of Salem (Mass.) And Vicinity,” *Times and Seasons* 3/1 [15 November 1841]: 582, emphases added).

This book also tells us that our Savior made his appearance upon *this continent* after his resurrection, that he planted the gospel here in all its fulness, and richness, and power, and blessing; that they had apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers and evangelists; the same order, the same priesthood, the same ordinances, gifts, powers, and blessing, as was enjoyed on *the eastern continent* (1842 Wentworth Letter, emphases added).

The Book of Mormon informs us that Christ visited *this continent* after the resurrection, and we believe it, because it is in perfect accordance with the glorious attributes of Jehovah. He would never leave *one half of the world* in darkness on the subject of revelation, and then punish his creatures eternally for not believing what they never heard (G. J. Adams, *A Lecture on the Authenticity & Scriptural Character of the Book of Mormon* [Boston: J. E. Farwell, 1844], 22, emphases added).

As to the original inhabitants of the *continent of America*, the Book of Mormon backs up the description of immense “ruins” in *Central America*, dispels all doubt (“Ancient Ruins,” *Times and Seasons* [December 15, 1844]: 744-47, emphases added).

Clearly, the most reasonable interpretation of the evidence is that the Prophet referred to all the Americas when he spoke of “this continent” and not the United States or North America only. A “continent” in Joseph’s day was not exactly as we would define a continent today.

**“This country.”** While the word “country” can sometimes refer to a nation such as the United States, it could also refer to “any tract of land, or inhabited land; any region, as distinguished from other regions” (Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828). “This country” can be read in a broad and generic sense, contrasting the land or region of the Americas from the eastern land or region of Europe or the land or region of Asia. That this was Joseph Smith’s meaning can be shown from the Prophet’s writings and those of his close associates. Parley P. Pratt, who was one of the earliest missionaries to the Lamanites, described the American Indians of North, Central, and South America as “Lamanites” inhabiting, “a country of more than seven thousand miles long and two thousand miles broad, extending from the frozen and scarcely explored regions of Hudson’s Bay on the north, to the extremity of Cape Horn, or the southern end of South America, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific, east and west” (“Present Condition and prospects of the American Indians, or Lamanites,” *Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star* 2/3 [July 2, 1841]: 40-42).

In a letter written on November 16, 1841, thanking John Bernhisel for sending him a copy of Stephens and Catherwood’s book, *Incidents of Travels in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, the Prophet said, “Of all the histories that have been written pertaining to the antiquities of this country it is the most luminous and comprehensive” (Joseph Smith to John Bernhisel, November 16, 1841). Here again is the use of “this country” to include Central America in connection with the Book of Mormon. This was just months before the Prophet wrote his letter to John Wentworth. So, when he speaks of “the aboriginal inhabitants of this country” and the Indian “that now inhabit this country” there can be little doubt that he and others were thinking in terms of all the Americas and not only the United States.

We may summarize by saying that usage shows that the words “this land,” “this continent,” and “this country” were used by Joseph and his associates, when referring to the Book of Mormon, in reference to all the Americas and not a limited location.

### **Did Joseph Receive Revelation on Book of Mormon Geography?**

Some claims have been made that Joseph Smith’s 1842 letter to John Wentworth provided evidence that the prophet Moroni gave Joseph specific information regarding Book of Mormon geography. A careful analysis of the letter indicates that Moroni did provide Joseph with considerable information about the book to be translated, but geography was included in Moroni’s instructions.

Others have claimed that Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph’s mother, claimed that Joseph received revelation on the book’s geography. Lucy did recall Joseph providing his family, in stories, with many aspects of the culture of the Book of Mormon people (*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 83). But again, there is no mention, in Lucy’s writings, of Joseph’s providing them with any geographic information.

Based on D&C 125:1-4, some developed the idea that a settlement, across the Mississippi River from Nauvoo in Iowa, named Zarahemla was said to be named by the Lord and was located on the very site of that ancient Book of Mormon city. That passage reads:

What is the will of the Lord concerning the saints in the Territory of Iowa? Verily, thus saith the Lord, I say unto you, if those who call themselves by my name and are essaying to be my saints, if they will do my will and keep my commandments concerning them, let them gather themselves together unto the places which I shall appoint unto them by my servant Joseph, and build up cities unto my name, that they may be prepared for that which is in store for a time to come. Let them build up a city unto my name upon the land opposite the city of Nauvoo, and let the name of Zarahemla be named upon it. And let all those who come from the east, and the west, and the north, and the south, that have desires to dwell therein, take up their inheritance in the same, as well as in the city of Nashville, or in the city of Nauvoo, and in all the stakes which I have appointed, saith the Lord.

There is no evidence in the historical record that the Lord or even Joseph Smith names this settlement Zarahemla. The saints did what they often did. That is, they named places they lived after places mentioned in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. There is no reason to associate the Iowa settlement with ancient Zarahemla.

Some claim that Joseph Smith taught that the ancient Book of Mormon city of Manti was in Randolph County Missouri. Proponents of this claim reference two documents in support of this view. The first is an entry from the journal of Samuel D. Tyler, an early member of the Church who traveled with the “Kirtland Camp” to Missouri in 1838. The Kirtland Camp was a group of five hundred saints who traveled together from Missouri to Far West, Missouri. Tyler’s journal for September 25, 1838 reads as follows:

We passed through Huntsville, Co. Seat of Randolph Co. pop. 450, and three miles further we bought 32 bu. of corn off one of the brethren who resides in this place. There are several of the brethren round about here and *this is the ancient site of the City of Manti, which is spoken of in the Book of Mormon* and this is appointed one of the Stakes of Zion, and it is in Randolph Country, Missouri, three miles west of the county seat (Journal of Samuel D. Tyler, 25 September 1838, MS 1761, Church Historian’s Department, Salt Lake City, emphasis added).

Contrary to this claim, there is no historical evidence that Tyler was reporting something he heard Joseph Smith say to the Kirtland Camp. In fact, the Prophet was not even present at the time. He did not travel with the Kirtland Camp from Ohio to Missouri, but was already living in Far West several counties away. Tyler never

explains where he heard this information, nor does he attribute the ideas about the city of Manti to Joseph Smith. What was the source of this local hearsay? Was it based upon something Joseph said, or does it reflect speculation among the local brethren? How accurately was it reported? The Tyler journal does not provide an answer to these questions.

The second source cited as evidence that ancient Manti was in Missouri is the *Manuscript History of the Church*. The relevant entry for September 25, 1838, reads as follows: “The camp passed through Huntsville in Randolph County which has been appointed as one of the stakes of Zion, and *is the ancient site of the City of Manti*” (*Manuscript History of Joseph Smith*, 25 September 1838, 829, emphasis added). This source is not a contemporary journal written by the Prophet or by anyone else in the Kirtland Camp in 1838, but was actually written by Willard Richards after the Prophet’s death. Evidence suggests that Richard’s entry was based upon the Tyler journal entry. When church historian Andrew Jensen published this entry in the *Historical Record* in 1888, he incorrectly assumed that the prophet Joseph was the source of this information and inserted the words “which the Prophet said” immediately before the part of the sentence about Manti, making it read “which the Prophet said was the ancient site of the city of Manti.”

Elias Smith has provided another contemporary source for the incident. He recorded: “We came through Huntsville the country seat of Randolph . . . near the place where the city of Manti is to be built and encamped for the night” (“Journal of the camp of the Seventies during their journey from Kirtland to Far West” 25 September 1838, MS 4952, folder 2, LDS Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City). Elias Smith did not equate the land near Huntsville with the ancient location of Manti. It would appear that the Missouri saints in 1838 initially anticipated the establishment of a future settlement and stake of Zion in the region, much as they did later with the Zarahemla settlement in Iowa. Neither Samuel Tyler nor Elias Smith attributed these plans to any prophetic revelation on Book of Mormon geography. When church historian B. H. Roberts prepared the *History of the Church* for publication he utilized the Elias Smith account. Thus, there was no reference to a relationship of the site to the ancient city of Manti.

Please see also the account of the Zelph episode in chapter , *The Zelph Story*.

In June 1834, the Prophet dictated a letter to Emma Smith in which he mentioned some of his experiences of his journey from Ohio to Missouri with Zion’s Camp. He spoke of “wandering over the plains of the Nephites, recounting occasionally the history of the Book of Mormon, roving over the mounds of that once believed people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as proof of its divine authenticity (Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, June 4, 1834, in Dean Jessee’s *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 345-46). This seems likely the result of Joseph’s mistaken intuitive preconceptions as to the location of Book of Mormon lands. He said nothing to suggest it was the result of any specific revelation.

We may summarize the evidences of Joseph's lack of revelation on Book of Mormon geography. In 1843 Joseph Smith was interviewed by a reporter from the *Pittsburgh Gazette*. He acknowledged in that interview that he was indeed a prophet and that the Lord did reveal himself to him. But he also explained that he did not always get revelation when he asked for it. "Speaking of revelations, he stated that when he was in a 'quandary,' he asked the Lord for a revelation, and when he could not get it, he 'followed the dictates of his own judgment,' which were as good as revelation to him; but he never gave anything to his people as revelation, unless it was revelation" ("The Prairies, Nauvoo, Joe Smith, the Temple, the Mormons, etc.," *Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette*, September 15, 1843).

The preponderance of evidence does not support the claim that Joseph Smith's revelations included details about Book of Mormon geography. Rather it suggests that this, as with many other questions, was an issue where Joseph Smith, as time allowed him to give it attention, followed the dictates of his own judgment" and expressed his own thinking. When Joseph Smith used terms such as "this land," "this continent," or "this country," he seems to have adopted the wording of fellow Latter-day Saints who thought of the Book of Mormon in broad terms inclusive of all the Americas.

The evidence does suggest that Joseph shared the interest of his fellow Latter-day Saints in discoveries that were thought to have shed light on the authenticity and historicity of the Book of Mormon, wherever they came from, including those from Central America. But he never seemed to have given any indication that these interests were based upon more than a knowledge that the Book of Mormon was true and that one day the Lord would make all things clear. There is likewise no indication that he ever sought to set forth a detailed geographical model for the saints. This certainly leaves open the possibility that Joseph may have erred owing to his non-revealed and intuitive biases about Book of Mormon geography and archaeology.

### **Anti-Mormon Attacks based on Geographical and Archaeological Issues**

Generally those leveling geographical and archaeological attacks against the Book of Mormon betray evidence of being poorly informed. They have not read the book carefully; nor have they studied carefully the pertinent historical settings. Their arguments often contain significant logical flaws. One example of an author misusing a reference and creating a nonexistent contradiction is found in Luke P. Wilson's article, "The Scientific Search for Nephite Remains," *Hear and Mind: The Newsletter of Gospel Truths Ministries* [fall 1992]: 3). He tried to make that point that the hill Cumorah could not be located in Mesoamerica since the Book of Mormon describes the hill Cumorah as being "an exceeding great distance from the narrow neck of land." He is misusing a quotation from Helaman 3:3-4 which says:

And it came to pass in the forty and sixth [year], yea, there was much contention and many dissensions; in the which there were an

exceedingly great many who departed out of the land of Zarahemla, and went forth unto the land northward to inherit the land. And they did travel to an exceedingly great distance, insomuch that they came to large bodies of water and many rivers.

Where in these two verses does mention Cumorah? It doesn't. It simply says that a group of people migrated "an exceedingly great distance" to the north. This is the only instance of the phrase "an exceedingly great distance" in the Book of Mormon. These people probably went past the hill Cumorah to a land of many waters. Here Wilson adds a nonexistent reference to Cumorah to his quotation and then attempts to create a nonexistent contradiction. This is a common anti-Mormon tactic.

I will consider several of the anti-Mormons' commonly used lines of attack:

**The Church has failed to positively and unequivocally identify any specific Book of Mormon site.** One critic of the Church wrote, "One might expect that determining the geographical setting of the Book of Mormon lands would be a fairly simple undertaking" (Luke P. Wilson, "The Scientific Search for Nephite Remains," *Heart and Mind: The Newsletter of Gospel Truths Ministries* [fall 1992], 2). Actually, the opposite is true. There are several notable examples where precise reconstruction of archaic geographies has proven difficult if not impossible.

One example is that scholars now agree that the Norsemen did indeed discover and temporarily colonize North America in the eleventh century AD. The precise location of the "Vinland" of the sagas is hotly disputed with nearly a dozen candidates ranging between "Hudson Bay and the state of Florida" (Gwyn Jones, *The Norse Atlantic Saga*, 2<sup>nd</sup>, ed. [New York: Oxford, 1986], 128).

The Bible itself is another case in point. For example, modern sites for only 55% of the place names mentioned in the Bible have been identified (Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, trans. A. F. Rainey, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979], 129). Examples include the fact that there are over twenty candidates for the location of Mount Sinai. There are many differing theories for the route taken by the Israelites during the exodus.

It would seem that the key to identifying biblical place names is the preservation of the ancient name over time. Of the approximately 475 place names mentioned in the Bible only about 262 have been identified with any degree of certainty, i.e., 55%. Of these 190 are based upon preservation of the name to the present. Only 72 places (15% of the 475) have been identified in situations where the ancient name is not to be found somewhere in the vicinity. And only about half of these carry a fair degree of certainty, the remainder being more or less conjectural. In other words, without the continuity of place names between biblical and modern times, only about 36 of the 475 biblical place names could be identified with reasonable certainty (8%). But, in fact, these 36 are identifiable largely because it is possible to triangulate their relationship to

known sites. It is only because of the relatively few biblical sites known with certainty through the continuity of place names that these 36 sites can be located (*Ibid.*, 128-29).

Allow me to summarize. Of the approximately 475 place names mentioned in the Bible only 36 (8%) have been identified with reasonable certainty where is no preservation of the place name to the present. And these 36 have been identified only because of their described location relationships to known historical sites.

A discontinuity of place names (“toponyms”) is a common historical occurrence, particularly in periods of major cultural, linguistic, and political transformations, similar to those described in the Book of Mormon itself. We can see just this phenomenon in the Book of Mormon, where the Jaredite hill Ramah is later called the hill Cumorah by the Nephites (Ether 15:11; Mormon 6:6). A serious problem facing Book of Mormon geography is the high rate of discontinuity Mesoamerican toponyms between the Pre-Classic period (before AD 300) and the Post-Classic period (after AD 900). There was also a major discontinuity at the beginning of the Colonial Period (after AD 1520). For example, what were the original Pre-Classic Mesoamerican names for sites currently bearing Spanish colonial names such as Monte Alban, San Lorenzo, La Venta, or El Mirador? These and many other Mesoamerican sites bear only Spanish names, dating from no earlier than the sixteenth century.

Additional problems arise even for those sites that can be located, and for which there are surviving Mesoamerican place names. Most of these names come from four languages: Aztec (Nahuatl), Mixtec, Zapotec, and various dialects of Maya. For each of these languages, the vast majority of place names are not mentioned in records before the sixteenth century. This was over a thousand years following the Book of Mormon period (Joyce Marcus, *Mesoamerican Writing Systems: Propaganda, Myth, and History in Four Ancient Civilizations* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992], chapter 6, pages 153-89).

Should we be surprised to find that the geographer of the Book of Mormon faces huge and even insurmountable problems? Taken together, these problems and many others mean that we will most likely never be able to learn the Pre-Classic names for most ancient Mesoamerican sites.

**The truth of the Bible has been verified by its archaeology. The truth of the Book of Mormon has not.** One specific example of using archaeology to confirm the presence of a biblical event is the following. One Evangelical, anti-Mormon author, Joel Groat, claims that “excavations done at the site [of Jericho] . . . support this biblical story” (Luke P. Wilson, “The Scientific Search for Nephite Remains,” *Heart and Mind: The Newsletter of Gospel Truths Ministries* [fall 1992]: 2). Groat then quotes Bryant G. Wood’s analysis of the destruction of Jericho (“Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho? A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16/2 [1990]: 44-59). In that article, Wood states that his model functions only if the Exodus is dated to about 1400 BC. He wrote: “One major problem remains: the date, 1400 BCE. Most

scholars will reject the possibility that the Israelites destroyed Jericho in about 1400 BCE because of the belief that Israel did not emerge in Canaan until about 150-200 years later.” Scholars have excellent reasons for dating the Exodus to the thirteenth century (about 1250 BC), since a fifteenth-century Exodus (1400s BC) creates more problems in the biblical account of the conquest of Canaan than it solves. The only way Wood’s theory works is if you redate the Exodus from about 1250 to 1450. Imagine what the anti-Mormon response would be if Latter-day Saint scholars attempted to move the fall of Maya civilization back 450 years so that it coincided with the fall of the Nephites about AD 400. Needless to say we would be accused (and rightly so) of gross distortion and deceit.

The main point here is that this Groat’s claim of archeology providing support for the Bible is often controversial (see John J. Bimson and David Livingstone, “Redating the Exodus,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* [September/October 1987]: 40-53, 66-68; Baruch Halpern, “Radical Exodus Redating Fatally Flawed,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* [November/December 1987]: 56-61; John Bimson, “A Reply to Baruch Halpern,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* [July/August 1988]: 52-55; Manfred Bietak, “Contra Bimson,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* [July/August 1988]: 54-55). Many scholars reject the idea that Jericho even existed as a city at the time of Joshua, while others reject the idea that there was an Israelite conquest of Canaan at all.

Groat then unwisely quotes William G. Dever as lending “support for the authenticity and accuracy of the biblical record” (Luke P. Wilson, “The Scientific Search for Nephite Remains,” *Heart and Mind: The Newsletter of Gospel Truths Ministries* [fall 1992]: 4). Does Dever believe that archaeology “supports” the Bible?

The Bible . . . has its limitations as a historical document. . . . The myths of Genesis 1-11, comprising the “primeval history,” which deal with the creation, the flood and the distant origins of the family of man, can be read today as deeply moving literature, with profound moral implications. They inform us about the thought-world of ancient Israel, but they can hardly be read in the literal or modern sense as history (“Archaeology and the Bible: Understanding Their Special Relationship,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16/3 [May/June 1990]: 52).

And the situation is not improved for the later chapters of Genesis and the Pentateuch in Dever’s view. “After a century of modern research,” Dever notes, “neither biblical scholars nor archaeologists have been able to document as historical any of the events, much less the personalities, of the patriarchal or Mosaic eras” (*Ibid.*). Archaeology, Dever says, “has not brought to light any direct evidence to substantiate the story that an Abraham lived, that he migrated from Mesopotamia to Canaan, or that there was a Joseph who found his way to Egypt and rose to power there. . . . The tradition is made up of legends that still may be regarded as containing moral truths, but until now they must be regarded as of uncertain historical provenance [origin]” (*Ibid.*, 54-

55). And what of Moses and the spectacular events of the Exodus from Egypt? “Absolutely no trace of Moses, or indeed of an Israelite presence in Egypt, has ever turned up. Of the Exodus and the wandering in the wilderness . . . we have no evidence whatsoever” (*Ibid.*, 55). As an example, Dever cites “recent Israeli excavations at Kadesh-Barnea, the Sinai oasis where the Israelites are said to have encamped for 38 years” (*Ibid.*). Surely such a lengthy stay by such a large group, somewhere during or prior to 1200 BC, would leave considerable evidence. And, indeed, the Israeli excavations at Kadesh-Barnea “have revealed an extensive settlement, but not so much as a potsherd earlier than the tenth century BC” (*Ibid.*).

Moving forward in history to the settlement of the Israelites in Palestine, Dever notes once again that “the evidence is largely negative. In particular, the ‘conquest model,’ derived principally from the Book of Joshua, has been largely discredited. That Israel did emerge in Canaan in the early Iron Age is beyond doubt. But archaeology has not shown that the settlement followed a series of destructions, miraculous or otherwise” (*Ibid.*). Professor Dever’s verdict is straightforward: “The Bible cannot simply be read at face value as history” (*Ibid.*, 53). Dever is well known for his strenuous rejection of the term “biblical archaeology.” Even some conservative Bible scholars concur with Dever’s basic position on the lack of archaeological confirmation of much of the Bible (see for example John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3d ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981], 76).

The main point here is the limitations of archaeology for “proving” historical texts or religious beliefs. Archaeology cannot prove religious beliefs to be true. Even if every historical event in the Bible were to be archaeologically verified, it still would not prove that God exists or that Jesus is the Christ.

Perhaps we, in the Church, should not look forward to the time when the Book of Mormon will be “proven authentic” by archaeological evidence. But even if the book were validated by archaeological evidence, Evangelical authors like Wilson and Groat would not accept its teachings. They reject it because of their *a priori* rejection of the possibility of modern revelation.

Groat and Wilson’s contrast between a Bible that is archaeologically “proven” and a Book of Mormon that is archaeologically “disproven” is obviously fallacious. It rests on a misrepresentation of what biblical archaeology actually demonstrates. There are still numerous disputes and unanswered questions concerning archaeology and the historicity of the Bible, despite the fact that the Bible has been studied by literally thousands of professional historians and archaeologists for over a century and a half. The Book of Mormon, in contrast, has been studied by only a few dozen professionals for only a few decades.

**Some anti-Mormons have tried to pit the “traditional geographic and archaeological teachings” of the LDS Church against the “theories of modern Mormon scholars.”** In effect they are comparing the hemispheric geography model with the limited geography model. Their implication is that the “revealed” early model is different than the present-day model. Does this mean Joseph’s revelations are not valid? At this point in this chapter, the reader should have no problem answering this argument by himself. No claim has ever been made, by Joseph Smith or anyone else, that either geographic model was given by revelation from the Lord. The understanding of the book’s geography has evolved by quite natural means from an earlier flawed intuitive version to a more sound present-day version.

**The hemispheric geography model must be valid because Joseph Smith identified the Hill Cumorah in New York.** There are two major flaws in this claim:

1. First, the name “Hill Cumorah,” referring to the hill on which Joseph found the plates, was not named by Joseph Smith. Joseph referred to the hill only as “a hill of considerable size” (JSH 1:51; HC 1:15; Dean C. Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:281, n. 1). The first person to name the hill after the hill in the Book of Mormon was Oliver Cowdery (Oliver Cowdery, *Latter Day Saint’s Messenger and Advocate* [July 1835]: 158-59; Dean C. Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984], 1:78-91). Even though Joseph may have accepted this identification, it was never put forward as revelation.

2. The identification of the hill near Palmyra as Cumorah actually contradicts a statement in the Book of Mormon. Mormon wrote, “Having been commanded of the Lord that I should not suffer the records which had been handed down by our fathers, which were sacred, to fall into the hands of the Lamanites (for the Lamanites would destroy them) therefore I made this record [the Book of Mormon] out of the [large] plates of Nephi, and hid up in the hill Cumorah all the records which had been entrusted to me by the hand of the Lord, save it were these few plates [the plates of Mormon and the small plates of Nephi] which I gave unto my son Moroni” (Mormon 6:6). In other words, the Book of Mormon explicitly states that the records hidden in the Mesoamerican Cumorah were not the plates from which Joseph translated the Book of Mormon. They were the large plates of Nephi and any other records of the Nephites. The Book of Mormon provides no name for the place in which the golden plates found by Joseph Smith were to be buried.

**Joseph Smith identified by revelation the coast of Chile as the place where Lehi’s party arrived in the New World.** This statement is based not on the writings of Joseph Smith, but on Frederick G. Williams’s interpretation of an anonymous manuscript, that Williams believed derived from Joseph Smith. This statement did not appear in print until 1882. Much of the attribution of the hemispheric geography model to Joseph Smith—and thereby the acceptance of that model by Latter-day Saints—comes from the mistaken assumption that the Chile interpretation represents a

revelation to Joseph Smith. A careful examination of the manuscripts and development of this idea, however, has demonstrated that there is no reason to attribute this idea to Joseph Smith, and it certainly was never put forward as a revelation (Frederick G. Williams III, "Did Lehi Land in Chile? An Assessment of the Frederick G. Williams Statement," FARMS paper, 1988; John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992], 57-61).

**The Zelfh story.** This is another piece of evidence that is frequently used to associate Joseph Smith with the hemispheric geography model. See chapter , *The Zelfh Story*.

**The LDS Church has had to accommodate mistaken past notions about Book of Mormon geography by awkwardly postulating the existence of two Cumorahs.** There is only one valid hill named Cumorah. It is the one described in the Book of Mormon (Mormon 6:6). The hill in New York that now bears that name was so named by the early saints because it was where the prophet Moroni buried the plates of Mormon and the small plates of Nephi. It was also the place where Joseph unearthed those plates. The Book of Mormon makes it clear that the hill called Cumorah was not the place where either event would happen (again, see Mormon 6:6). The hill in New York was *named after* the hill Cumorah in the Book of Mormon.

The question of how the plates of Mormon and small plates of Nephi (combined into one set weighing about sixty pounds) could have been carried from Mesoamerica to New York has been answered by John L. Sorenson (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 44-45). An examination of a map of North America shows that it is possible to sail along the coast of Mexico, up the Mississippi River, and then up the Ohio River to within less than one hundred miles of the New York hill where the plates were buried. Trails and waterways along these major rivers have existed for several thousand years. John Sorenson provides a sixteenth-century example of someone traveling a similar route in less than a year (*Ibid.*, 45). Moroni had thirty-five years between the final battles of the Nephites (AD 385) and when he buried the plates (420). Thus the plates could have been transported by canoe to New York, along the well-used waterways of the Hopewell Indians (who flourished about 200 BC to AD 400—see Brian M. Fagan, *Ancient North America: The Archaeology of a Continent* [New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991], 366-67, 370-76, 392-94).

**Latter-day Saints believe that all Native Americans are genetically descended only from the Lamanites.** They rightly point out that the introduction to the Book of Mormon identifies the remnant of Book of Mormon peoples, following the great final war of destruction, as the "principal ancestors of the American Indians." It is true that we claim some type of genealogical relationship between modern indigenous native populations of North, Central, and South America and the Book of Mormon remnant. We also feel that they are the beneficiaries of certain promises made to them in the Book of Mormon.

The expression “principal ancestors” does imply that the Book of Mormon peoples are not the only ancestors. We believe that many other peoples also migrated to this hemisphere and become part of the native American population. In addition, a careful reading of the Book of Mormon suggests that there were major populations of indigenous peoples in the western hemisphere when the Lehites arrived (see John L. Sorenson’s “When Lehi’s Party Arrived in the Land, Did They Find Others There?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 [fall 1992]: 1-34).

Thus, the alleged problems of population levels, genetics, and languages of modern Native Americans are largely irrelevant, since the Book of Mormon allows for, and in many ways insists upon, the existence of other inhabitants of the Americas.

**Latter-day Saint general authorities have generally condemned the limited geography theory.** It is true that a few general authorities have expressed contrary opinions regarding the limited geography model. These include Joseph Fielding Smith and Bruce R. McConkie (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:227-241). Harold B. Lee wrote: “From the writings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and of other inspired men, it seems all are in agreement that the followers of Lehi came to the western shores of South America. . . . I believe we are (today) not far from the place where the history of the people of Lehi commenced in Western America” (quoted in Sorenson’s *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 390). Note that here, President Lee is expressing his opinion (“I believe,” “it seems”) that South America was the site of the landing of Lehi. President Spencer W. Kimball is also reported to have said a similar thing about the Lehi landing site (personal communication to me from Dr. Ernest Wilkinson, President Kimball’s personal physician).

It is important to note that the opinions of these general authorities, expressed at the time they were written, do not express any official position of the Church. I have stated previously that the Church has no official position. These same general authorities may not have expressed the same opinions had they lived to benefit by modern scholarship on the matter.

It is interesting to note that the limited geography model has been published in the *Ensign*, the church’s official magazine. Also John Sorenson’s *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* was published by Deseret Book, church’s publishing company.

The real question is not which general authorities or which scholars believe which model. Rather, it is which model best matches the geographical data contained in the Book of Mormon. While a superficial reading of the book may seem to point vaguely to a hemispheric geography model, a careful reading substantiates the limited geography model at many different levels (see Sorenson’s *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 32, 215-367; see also Sorenson’s *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* and Palmer’s *In Search of Cumorah*; see also Clark’s, “Book of Mormon Geography” in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 1:176-79). It should be

clear that the official Latter-day Saint position on the limited geography model is not antagonistic. In recent decades the overwhelming trend among both Latter-day Saint scholars and leaders of the Church has been increasingly to adopt some version of the limited geography model.

**Prior to Columbus there is no solid evidence for the immigration via other routes involving long sea voyages from the Old World to the New World.** John L. Sorenson and Martin H. Raisch have published an award-winning bibliography listing and summarizing thousands of articles by non-Mormons that examine the possibility of pre-Columbian contacts between the Old and New Worlds (*Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Oceans: An Annotated Bibliography*, 2 vols. [Provo, UT: Research Press, 1990]). While the issues continue to be debated in academic circles, for an excellent article summarizing the wide range of possible pre-Columbian contacts between the Old and New Worlds by one of the leading advocates of such contacts (and a non-Mormon), see Stephen C. Jett's "Pre-Columbian Transoceanic Contacts," in Jesse D. Jennings, ed., *Ancient South Americans* [San Francisco: Freeman, 1983], 336-93).

**The limited geography model requires "northward" and "southward" be considered slightly different from "true" north as recognized by today's geographers.** This objection is raised because of the northeast to southwest orientation of the long axis of the proposed Book of Mormon land. In the book these same directions are referred to as "north" or "northward" and "south" or "southward."

This question has been long since and most satisfactorily been settled (see Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 38-42; William J. Hamblin, "Directions in Hebrew, Egyptian, and Nephite Language," in Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 183-86; Sorenson, *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 399-415).

It has been convincingly demonstrated that ancient peoples conceived of north and south based on orientations and landmarks which frequently do not coincide with the modern compass. Directions, then, are not a universal absolute. The Mesoamerican culture treated maps much more loosely than we treat them today. We demand accurate details, but Mesoamerican cultures were unconcerned with the exact mileage between places and the exact placement of north and south (Joyce Marcus, *Mesoamerican Writing Systems: Propaganda, Myth, and History in Four Ancient Civilizations* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992], 189).

One plausible solution is found in the Hebrew convention of naming directions. The Israelites of Palestine derived directions as though standing with their backs to the Mediterranean Sea, facing the desert to the east. "Yam" ("sea") meant "seaward" or "west," for the Mediterranean lay in that direction, while "qedem" ("fore" or "front") meant "straight ahead" or "east." Then "Yamin" ("right hand") meant "south," while "shemol" ("left hand") denoted "north." In fact we don't know what Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and

Nephi did call their directions since the first terms for directions appear only hundreds of years after their first landing (Mosiah 7:5; 9:14). By the same convention as used in ancient Palestine, Lehi's party may have referred to directions based on the seashore which runs northwest- southeast. Thus, by that convention, their directions would be forty-five or more degrees off the actual compass directions. What would they call "qedem," intending eastward, would actually mean northeast or even almost north and so on. It is interesting that in the Mayan languages of Mesoamerica, "south" meant "on the right hand" and north "on the left," corresponding to the Hebrew convention. Also in the ancient Mayan culture, the gulf of Mexico was the "east sea" while the Pacific Ocean is the "west sea."

**How do a "sea north" and "sea south" fit into the limited geography model?** The north and south seas are mentioned only once (Helaman 3:8). In that verse, it seems likely to me that the entire phrase "the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east" is not only hyperbolic but also metaphorical. It is likely that Mormon is waxing poetical and that the phrase has no real concrete meaning, rather he intends only to say that the Nephites spread over a wide area. It is interesting that in a parallel passage in Helaman 11:20, describing the same sort of population expansion, no north or south sea is mentioned: "And thus it did come to pass that the people of Nephi began to prosper again in the land, and began to build up their waste places, and began to multiply and spread, even until they did cover the whole face of the land, both on the northward and on the southward, from the sea west to the sea east." All *specific* references or allusions to Book of Mormon seas are only to the east and west seas.

John E. Clark has analyzed this question ("A Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies," Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1 [1989]: 63-67). His view in general is in agreement with mine. He does add the idea that it was a common idea in ancient cultures that the earth was surrounded by the primordial "ocean." Thus the vague mentions of the north and south seas refer to geographical cosmic world-view of seas surrounding the entire landmass, rather than specific identifiable bodies of water.

**The mention of metals in the Book of Mormon is anachronistic. Some anti-Mormons interpret the Book of Mormon as saying that there were large-scale metal "industries" among the Nephites.** John L. Sorenson has demonstrated that pre-classic Mesoamericans used a wide variety of metals ("Metals and Metallurgy Relating to the Book of Mormon," a FARMS paper, 1992). Sorenson also offers a full discussion and analysis of metals used in the Book of Mormon (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 278-88).

**Wheat, barley, flax (linen), grapes and olives were not found in Book of Mormon times in Mesoamerica, yet these are mentioned in the Book of Mormon.** The Book of Mormon does not actually claim that grapes or olives existed or were cultivated in the New World. Rather, Nephi and Jacob—both of whom were born in the

Old World—mention grapes and olives either in reference to the Old World, or allegorically (“The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5,” ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks, *BYU Studies*, 35:1). The Book of Mormon does mention the use of wine in the New World, but wine does not necessarily refer to the fermented juice of grapes. It can include the fermented liquid derived from a wide variety of fruits or plants, including, for example, dandelions (J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weinder, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 20:389c. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 186-87, discusses wine and its possible Mesoamerican referents. Intoxicating drinks were known in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, see Linda Schele and Mary E. Miller, *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art* [New York: Braziller, 1986], 145-155, 180, 192, 255).

The mention of barley in the Book of Mormon has long been regarded as a hopeless anachronism. In 1983 archaeologists discovered that indeed a variety of barley was used by pre-Columbian Americans (The discovery was reported in the December 1983 issue of *Science* 83, and summarized by John L. Sorenson and Robert F. Smith, in Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 162-64). Likewise “linen” and “silk”—though not exactly the same as their Old World counterparts—were known in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica (John L. Sorenson, “Possible ‘Silk’ and ‘Linen’ in the Book of Mormon,” in Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 162-64).

**There are several animals mentioned in the Book of Mormon which are not thought to have existed in pre-Columbian America.** Latter-day Saint scholars have dealt with this issue extensively, although all the questions have not been completely answered (John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 288-99; John L. Sorenson, “Animals in the Book of Mormon: An Annotated Bibliography,” FARMS paper, 1992, contains a complete listing of all references to animals in the Book of Mormon, and a bibliography to possible Mesoamerican referents).

There are actually some twelve specific animals mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Six of them are found in 1 Nephi 18:25. The entire list of twelve includes the ass (see also Mosiah 12:5), the cow (see also Ether 9:18), the dog (Mosiah 12:2; Alma 16:10; Helaman 7:19; 3 Nephi 14:6), the goat (see also Enos 1:21; Ether 9:18), the wild goat, the horse (2 Nephi 12:7; Enos 1:21; Alma 18:9, 10, 12; Alma 20:6; 3 Nephi 3:22; 3 Nephi 4:4; 3 Nephi 6:1; 3 Nephi 21:14; Ether 9:19), the sheep (Ether 9:18), the ox (see also 2 Nephi 21:7; 2 Nephi 30:13; Mosiah 13:24), the swine (3 Nephi 14:6; Ether 9:18), the elephant (Ether 9:19), the “curelom” (Ether 9:19), and the “cumom” (Ether 9:19).

Also mentioned are calf, cattle, fowl, lamb, and fatling which are variations of the twelve already mentioned.

Since the classification and nomenclature of animals have varied so widely from culture to culture, it is probably best not to assume that these animals are the same as

we know them today. For example, there is no good evidence that the cow as we know it was present in the Americas before the time of Columbus. What then is referred to in the Book of Mormon by the term “cow”? It is not entirely possible to know, but we might speculate. At the time of the Spanish conquest, some of the Indians of Mesoamerica owned and tended herds of deer. In Peru some pastoral Indians kept domesticated llamas. Could these be the Book of Mormon’s “cow”? Perhaps also the “cow” is the bison or the alpaca?

Some have long been troubled by the mention of the horse in the Book of Mormon since horses were not generally thought to be present in the western hemisphere before the time of Columbus. It would seem, however, that all one has to do is be patient. New discoveries are being made all the time. John L. Sorenson has reported, “Actual horse bones have been found in a number of archaeological sites on the Yucatan Peninsula, in one case with artifacts six feet beneath the surface under circumstances that rule out their coming from Spanish horses” (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 295-96). Also, can we be certain that the Book of Mormon’s “horse” is, in fact, a true horse as we know the horse? Ancient Mesoamerican figures have been found with people riding on the back of deer, holding onto their ears or horns.

Brother Sorenson has suggested, using the list of animals known to have existed in Mesoamerica during Book of Mormon times, the following identities for other animals mentioned in the book: The “ox” may have been the tapir, the llama, or the bison. The “ass” might be the tapir or the llama. The llama or the alpaca might qualify to be called the “sheep.” The “goat” may have been the deer, and the “swine” fits with the peccary.

The “dog” is probably one of the species of dog indigenous to Mesoamerica. Metaphorical references to animals also occur. For instance, “ye are his sheep . . . suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you” (Alma 5:60); “the people had turned from their righteousness, like the dog to his vomit, or like the sow to her wallowing in the mire” (3 Nephi 7:8); “they shall be driven before like a dumb ass” (Mosiah 12:5); “they were struck with great fear, and fled from the presence of Alma and Amulek even as a goat fleeth with her young from two lions” (Alma 14:29).

**Eminent Mesoamerican archaeologists like Michael Coe and important institutions such as the Smithsonian do accept the historicity of the Book of Mormon.** Michael Coe has written: “There is not one professionally trained archaeologist, who is not a Mormon, who sees any scientific justification for believing [in the historicity of the Book of Mormon]” (Luke P. Wilson, “The Scientific Search for Nephite Remains,” *Heart and Mind: The Newsletter of Gospel Truths Ministries* [fall 1992]: 5). It is possible for anti-Mormons can find scholars who will claim there is “absolutely nothing” supporting the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Atheists can also marshal the opinions of scholars, such as William Dever, regarding the lack of archaeological proof of the historicity of the Bible.

When Coe says there is “absolutely nothing” in the archaeological record which supports the historicity of the Book of Mormon, what he is more accurately saying is that all the archaeological evidence known to him, from the Book of Mormon period, can be adequately interpreted and accounted for based on the assumption that there were no Nephites or Lamanites. This is quite a different proposition. Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scroll community, ancient Near East historians could also adequately explain the history of the ancient Near East without a single reference to the Dead Sea Scroll community. Yet this group existed whether or not scholars were able or willing to perceive their existence.

The historicity of the Book of Mormon has been abundantly attested to by literally hundreds of “evidences” now available to those who study diligently the book. See *Book of Mormon Evidences—I Promise You*, chapter . If scholars like Michael Coe were willing to read the Book of Mormon and make themselves aware of the many evidences, they would have to acknowledge the high degree of probability that the book is authentic. It is likely he will not. Hence, his testimony against the book is meaningless.

## Why Write an Apologetic Book?

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This book contains chapters that may best be described as *apologetic* in nature. And the apologetics herein apply to the Church—to its people, its history, and its doctrines. *Apologetics* is a word that is frequently misunderstood. As applied to this particular context, it has nothing to do with apologizing for the Church or saying “I’m sorry we’re the way we are.” The word is derived from the Greek word *apologeō*, which means “to defend.” Apologetics refers to the defense of a conviction or belief.

The world has known some renowned apologists such as Socrates, Origen, Thomas Aquinas, C. S. Lewis, and many others. Socrates wrote a document called the Apology of Socrates. He created this to defend himself against the accusations of the court of justice in Athens. Daniel C. Peterson observed, regarding this document, “If you’ve read it, you know that he’s not saying, ‘I’m sorry.’ This is his defense of himself . . . where[in] he basically thumbed his nose at them, and said, ‘Go ahead, kill me, I’m not backing down.’ Well, he didn’t, and they did” (“The Obligation to Do Apologetics,” 2010 conference of the FAIR organization).

Religious apologetics is defending religious beliefs by logical, sound, and appropriate and truthful argument. Most every member of the Church, from time to time, encounters a situation in which they are expected to stick up for the Church. Indeed, we are counseled in scripture to be prepared to do just that. The apostle Peter wrote: “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). The phrase “with meekness and fear” in this passage is perhaps more clearly rendered, in a modern Bible translation, “with gentleness and respect.”

I have observed that most members of the Church, as they attempt to provide arguments supporting the church’s positions, find themselves with limited resources particularly in some areas. For example, the knowledge of the details of the historical particulars of the Church that have occurred from the beginning of the nineteenth century are, in the minds of most members, limited and, I’m afraid, a bit simplistic. It may be fairly said that most of the saints are, to some extent, naive when it comes to our church history. In their defense, it may be accurately observed that the Church itself, in its student manuals, seminaries, institutes, and Sunday School classes does little to dispel this naivety. Of practical necessity, I believe, church educators are limited to teaching a basic version of our history. This version omits many historical details. Those in charge of church education are particularly inclined to omit details that may demand additional, even extensive, explanation. This does render vulnerable the church member who is suddenly faced with historical arguments that do not quite square with his limited understandings. Sometimes the arguments raise questions the

member has never even addressed. He is at risk of becoming confused or even disillusioned.

The same principles apply to our church doctrines. Personally, I am completely convinced that today we are blessed with more spiritual truth than is available to any other religion or people on earth. It is no small task, however, to acquire a knowledge of these truths. They form a large and complex body of knowledge. Again, realistic necessity requires that they be taught simply in formal education situations in the Church. A more comprehensive version is available to the church member. But few members of the Church have the time or even the inclination to spend the necessary time, on their own, to learn a more complete version of these truths.

Those involved in religious apologetics carry a bad name in some circles. For example, those involved in LDS apologetics are sometimes accused, especially by critics of the Church, of being concerned with plausibility and cultural traditions more than candid honest and real truth. I cannot speak for others involved in apologetics. I will only speak for myself. I do lack scholarly credentials in the areas of doctrine and church history. I have, however, spent considerable time studying our doctrines and their implications. I have also been interested in comparing our doctrines with those of the Christians who fit under the label “orthodox Christians.” I have also been sensitive to those areas in which I’ve have found my historical understandings to be overly basic. In my professional life, I have been required to maintain a sophisticated level of medical knowledge, and I refuse to be considered naive in historical matters regarding my religion. I have attempted to address each of the historical issues in this book from the standpoint of being fully informed.

It must be clearly understood that apologetic argument does not create conviction. But when a lack of logical justification exists, conviction is impossible. Austin Farrer, in writing about C. S. Lewis, said:

Though argument does not create conviction, lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish (*Light on C. S. Lewis*, comp. Jocelyn Gibb [New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1965], 26).

You cannot give a person a testimony of the gospel by arguing them into the Church. But if people believe that there is no reason for belief—that you have no reason or evidence—then there is no reason for them to take you seriously. If a person were to ask you, “Why do you hold the beliefs you do about your Church” and you respond “Just because” or “I just do,” that is fatal and ends the discussion. No one is likely to pray about the truth of the gospel if they have no reason to do so and no hope for a plausible answer.

So, armed with the chapters in this book, one may not expect to convert many. But I believe an important service can be performed by those familiar with LDS apologetic lines of logic and argument. In recent years, I have become aware of more individuals, usually young adults, that have encountered stumbling blocks to their LDS faith. They have encountered anti-Mormon lines of thought, and it has given them pause. Some of these go through a period when they are truly in turmoil over their new-found doubts. Some of them have tried to find help, but have been unable. They have sought help from friends, parents, bishops, or stake presidents. Most often they are unable to get the help they need. I suspect that even many of the general authority brethren of the Church might have difficulty helping in this situation. Most commonly these troubled young people receive the counsel: "Don't worry about it. Everything will be worked out in the afterlife." Recently, a friend of mine confided that his married daughter, a returned missionary with children has been shaken by encountering some anti-Mormon blog sites. She and her husband are rethinking their dedication to and membership in the Church. I asked my friend what approach he had taken with his daughter. He responded, "Oh, I just told her that there are many things about the Church that I've found to be problems, and I told her that the Church is still a good way to live and a good place to rear a family." I groaned inwardly to myself and thought again how important it is that help be made available for this tormented group of members. The help offered by someone with an interest in and well informed about apologetics may not provide an immediate solution to the problems. But, at least it can teach them that there are logical answers to their problems that are consistent with the spiritual truths they already know. It can give them hope.

## The Zelfh Story

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### The Episode

In June, 1834, an incident occurred which has probably aroused more interest and controversy in the Church than is warranted. I am grateful to Kenneth W. Godfrey for his thorough investigation of historical documents that relate to this episode. He reported his findings in "The Zelfh Story," *BYU Studies*, volume 29, number 2, spring 1989, 31-49 (hereafter *Godfrey*).

On June 2 or 3 a vanguard party of Zion's Camp dug up a few bones from a burial mound in western Illinois. The site is located about one mile south of modern Valley City in Pike County near the Illinois River. The Illinois River nearly parallels the Mississippi River and runs near the western Illinois border. The unearthed remains included a broken femur (thigh bone), some other bones, and an arrowhead. They were found buried approximately one foot below the earth's surface.

It is well-documented that on the following day Joseph made statements about this deceased man and his historical setting. Joseph said his name had been Zelfh, and he was a "white Lamanite" warrior who had died in battle while fighting under a leader named Onandagus.

It is not entirely clear when this individual might have lived and died. According to historian Stanley B. Kimball, this particular burial mound is a "typical prehistoric Middle Woodland mortuary complex of the Hopewell culture" (Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981, 31. See also James L. Bradley, "The Naples-Russell Mound," unpublished research paper, LDS Church Archives). The "Middle Woodland" period is from AD 1 to AD 500. It is, of course, also possible that the Zelfh burial site, which was near the surface at the mound's top, dated considerably later than the period of mound construction. "Hopewell culture" is a name given to peoples living on a river and depending on the river for commerce and trade.

It is interesting that Onandagus is the name of a tribe of Indians that belonged to the five-nation confederacy of the Iroquois who occupied upper New York state.

### Explaining the Episode

This incident has become somewhat problematic. It has caused some confusion and discomfort among present-day students of the Book of Mormon. A major reason is that most of us have come to accept a specific and limited *Central American* setting as the only plausible location for the Book of Mormon lands. And while a few remnants of Book of Mormon peoples might eventually have wandered into North America, we have given up trying to attribute Hebrew or Book of Mormon origins to most all of the native American Indians. It is unlikely that a direct descendant of the Lamanite/Nephites in the

Book of Mormon would turn up buried in western Illinois—in the Northeastern United States.

We are left with several questions. For example, what did Joseph mean by the phrase “white Lamanite”? Did he intend to say that Zelph was one of the Book of Mormon Lamanites? Or, was he a descendant of the Book of Mormon Lamanites? Why a “white” Lamanite? In what battle was he killed? Was it that great final battle of the Nephites and Lamanites? Must this episode be interpreted to imply that western Illinois is a part of the Book of Mormon’s “land northward”? Before attempting to answer these questions, let us consider some background information that bears importantly on this episode and the questions it raises.

### **Whole-Hemisphere/One People Theory**

It would seem that there exists a universal tendency for members of the Church who have their first experience with the Book of Mormon to make two fundamental intuitive assumptions:

1. The first is that the Book of Mormon story involved the whole of the western hemisphere. The book’s “land northward” was North America. The “land southward” was South America. And Central America was the narrow neck of land between the two.

2. The second assumption is that in the Book of Mormon we read the foundational history of the ancestry of the peoples of the entire western hemisphere. This implies that when Lehi and Ishmael and their families disembarked somewhere on the western coast of the western hemisphere, they discovered a unspoiled land devoid of major populations or cultures. The people of the Book of Mormon story then proceeded to populate the western hemisphere.

The early members of the Church did not escape these assumptions, and even Joseph Smith seemed to accept them. It was only natural and expected that members of the early Church, including Joseph, refer to the Native American Indians as “Lamanites.” They assumed that most, if not all, American Indians could trace their origins to the Book of Mormon peoples.

Today, serious students of the Book of Mormon have come to realize that the whole-hemisphere/one-people theory is seriously flawed. The Lehites who sailed across the Pacific Ocean and disembarked on the western coast of the Americas did not encounter a pristine and uninhabited land. Rather, they settled as a small group among a large established native population. They remained a relatively small group living among many other peoples. They did not, however, remain isolated from the indigenous population. Evidence suggests that they intermarried with some of the natives who became part of the Nephite/Lamanite culture. This greatly and rapidly expanded their numbers. Yet, relatively they remained a small culture in a vast and populated land.

Further, we have learned that the text of the Book of Mormon provides incontrovertible evidence that the Book of Mormon lands were limited in size. A total area of some two hundred by seven hundred miles is most compatible with geographic data implicit in the text.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks tells of his own transition from the whole-hemisphere/one-people theory to a more realistic formulation. He also points out why anti-Mormons are so disappointed that the whole-hemisphere/one-people theory is no longer applicable:

I was introduced to the idea that the Book of Mormon is not a history of all of the people who have lived on the continents of North and South America in all ages of the earth. Up to that time I had assumed that it was. If that were the claim of the Book of Mormon, any piece of historical, archaeological, or linguistic evidence to the contrary would weigh in against the Book of Mormon, and those who rely exclusively on scholarship would have a promising position to argue.

In contrast, if the Book of Mormon only purports to be an account of a few peoples who inhabited a portion of the Americas during a few millennia in the past, the burden of argument [about its historical accuracy] changes drastically. It is no longer a question of all versus none; it is a question of some versus none. In other words, in the circumstance I describe, the opponents of historicity must prove that the Book of Mormon has no historical validity for any peoples who lived in the Americas in a particular time frame, a notoriously difficult exercise. One does not prevail on that proposition by proving that a particular . . . culture represents migrations from [eastern] Asia. The opponents of historicity of the Book of Mormon must prove that the people whose religious life it records did not live anywhere in the Americas (“The Historicity of the Book of Mormon,” in *Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scriptures*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson, Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001, 238–39).

### **The Revelations of Joseph Smith**

It is apparent that much of the revelation the prophet Joseph received was of the direct—“writing-on-the-wall”—type. That is, Joseph, had the blessing of being visited by and conversing face to face with heavenly beings. Examples include his First Vision experience and Moroni’s ministering to him repeatedly for five consecutive years prior to Joseph’s taking possession of the Book of Mormon plates. It is also apparent that as the Lord’s Church and kingdom was being established, each time Joseph took a question to the Lord in prayer, it was answered directly and recorded in a manner somewhat akin to heavenly dictation.

But it is evident also that revelation in some other matters came to him in the same way it comes to all of us—that is incrementally and over time. When the Lord,

through the ministrations of his Spirit, reveals to us a new concept, that concept must become logical and comprehensible to us according to our prior platform of knowledge. We cannot receive it unless and until it makes sense—only when it fits into what we already know. Our baseline understandings must evolve to enable the new concept to become a logical addition. It seems clear that Joseph’s revealed understandings of Book of Mormon geography and the population dynamics of the book fit into this latter category.

At the time of the Zelph experience in 1834, Joseph maintained the whole-hemisphere/one-people view of the origins of the Native Americans. It was the same as held by all other members of the Church. It seems likely, at the time, he did not consider either the geography or the population questions to be important, unresolved issues. He regarded these matters as settled, even though we now know they weren’t. His attentions were necessarily directed elsewhere. He was understandably taken up by the myriad responsibilities of his office. Book of Mormon geography and population dynamics were not likely issues he labored over or took before the Lord in prayer. It would seem he had neither the time nor the interest to seek revelation from the Lord on these matters.

But Joseph was the Lord’s prophet. The Lord continued to communicate with him, and he did so in a manner Joseph would understand. In the Doctrine Covenants it became pertinent and necessary that the Lord provide Joseph with revelation concerning the American Indians. For example, in section 28 (received in 1830), the Lord, through Joseph, commanded Oliver Cowdery to lead a missionary expedition to the Indians and build up the Church among them. The recorded counsel from the Lord refers to the Indians as “Lamanites.” Is this correct, or is it an error? Are these Indians really Lamanites? Are they direct Book of Mormon descendants? Joseph felt they were and referred to them as such in verses 8-9 and 14 of that section. These verses, of course, are scripture, and according to the nature of scripture, they are worded in a manner approved by the Lord. Some have felt that this usage meant that the Lord was providing us a second definition of *Lamanites*. That is, he was suggesting that there were Lamanites in the Book of Mormon and another group of “Lamanites” all over North America. It seems more likely that the Lord was simply tolerating and accommodating Joseph’s misunderstanding of the origin of the Native Americans who lived in North America at the time. The Lord wanted the gospel preached to the neighboring Native Americans, and if Joseph felt it was appropriate to label them as *Lamanites*, then that was acceptable to the Lord. Thus, we must conclude that the Lord himself provided, or at least accepted the title of *Lamanites* for the native American Indians. This does not necessarily imply that they had anything to do with the literal descendants of the Book of Mormon peoples. For other examples of Joseph’s (and the Lord’s) referring to the Indians as *Lamanites*, see D&C 30:6 and 32:2—revealed in 1830—and D&C 54:8—revealed in 1831.

By 1842 there is evidence Joseph had begun to change his ideas. Evidently he had begun to believe that most of the Nephite/Lamanite history had taken place in Central America. In 1842 a best-selling book by explorer John Lloyd Stephens (*Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1841) was read by Joseph Smith and associates in Nauvoo. Their reading prompted an extensive review of the book in the Nauvoo newspaper, the *Times and Seasons*. No author is listed for this review, but Joseph Smith was editor in chief, and John Taylor was managing editor.

Stephens's was the first book in English reporting great ruins in Central America. It strongly impressed the newspaper writer (whoever he was), for on September 15th the *Times and Seasons* reported, "We have to state about the Nephites that . . . they lived about the narrow neck of land, which now embraces Central America, with all the cities that can be found" ("Extract," *Times and Seasons*, September 15, 1842, 914). Stephens's new information obviously was causing the leadership in Nauvoo to begin to think of Nephite geography in a new way.

Two weeks later those who produced the newspaper continued to exult in their study of what was for them "the latest research": "We have [just] found another important fact relating to the truth of the Book of Mormon. . . . The city of Zarahemla . . . stood upon this land," that is, Central America or Guatemala, which "once embraced several hundred miles of territory from north to south" ("Zarahemla," *Times and Seasons*, October 1, 1842, 927). Since Zarahemla was located in the land southward, their new insight put the land southward to the north of Panama. The new thinking inferred that South America was of little or no significance for Book of Mormon geography. The September 15, 1842 *Times and Seasons* article also suggested that the "wonderful ruins of Palenque" in Chiapas, Mexico, "are among the mighty works of the Nephites," and that they compared favorably with the temple of Nephi. Since the Book of Mormon also places the land of Nephi and its temple in the land southward, this 1842 model further confirms the non-applicability of South America to the Book of Mormon story.

The further inference in this new thinking was that an area much smaller than the entire hemisphere could satisfactorily serve as the scene of the chief events in the Nephite record. In the long run, however, the Stephens-stimulated view of Central America as the Book of Mormon heartland did not prevail among the saints generally. The new implications were apparently overwhelmed by the inertia of the old beliefs in a whole-hemisphere geography.

Orson Pratt, who was separated from the Church during 1842 when the new thought on this topic was stirring, seems to have continued to believe in the original geographical theory (see, for example, *Journal of Discourses*, 12:340–42; 14:324–30, 333). His views along those lines are reflected in the geographical footnotes he added to the 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon. His opinions led several generations of

readers of the scripture to assume with him that only the Nephites and Lamanites of Mormon's account occupied the Americas—from the Arctic to the Antarctic—at least during Book of Mormon times.

By the beginning of the 20th century, it is likely that not more than a handful of readers of Mormon's book questioned the interpretation that Lehi landed in Chile, that Panama was the narrow neck, and that the final battle of the Nephites took place in New York. In 1856 George Q. Cannon, who in Nauvoo had worked in the *Times and Seasons* office with his uncle John Taylor and was familiar with Stephens' works, questioned the usual whole-hemisphere view of Book of Mormon geography (George Q. Cannon, "Buried Cities of the West," *Western Standard*, 15 October 1856; reprinted in *Millennial Star*, 10 January 1857, 18). In 1876 another writer, after learning of parallels between native Mesoamerican traditions and the Book of Mormon, shifted his earlier support for Orson Pratt's model. "Is it not possible," he asked in light of this new information, "that the Rio Usumasinta, 'flowing north into the sea,' may be the ancient river Sidon? Those remarkable and world-famous ruins known under the name Palenque may yet be proven to be the remains of that 'great city and religious center' of the aboriginals, called Zarahemla" (G. M. Ottinger, "Votan, the Culture Hero of the Mayas," *Juvenile Instructor* 14/5, 1 Mar. 1879: 58). The implications of placing Zarahemla either in Guatemala or in southern Mexico would obviously shift the land Bountiful to a more northerly location, leaving the Isthmus of Tehuantepec as the only viable candidate for the narrow neck of land. In contrast, Pratt's popular model puts the River Sidon, Zarahemla, and Bountiful in the northern regions of South America between Colombia and Panama (see *Journal of Discourses*, 14:324–33).

The modern theory of Book of Mormon geography and population dynamics seemed to mature in 1985 with the publishing of John L. Sorenson's book *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, Utah, and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies: Provo, Utah). The limited geography/limited population theory was now on solid scholastic footing.

It is clear that church members have held to at least two drastically different models of Book of Mormon geography. This suggests that such things were not considered to have been settled by revelation. Anecdotal evidence (there are no systematic data) suggests that even now, after church members have been reading the Book of Mormon for a century and three-quarters, a large number of readers continue to assume the whole-hemisphere view of Book of Mormon geography. Moreover, some unbelievers insist in their anti-Book of Mormon propaganda that this view always was and still is completely orthodox. If that were true, of course, their cause of damaging the Book of Mormon authenticity would much simpler (see, for example, B. H. Roberts, *Studies in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brigham Madsen, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985; Dan Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon: Religious Solutions from Columbus to Joseph Smith*, Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986; Brent Lee

Metcalfe, "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," *Dialogue* 26/3, fall 1993: 154–84; "Editors' Introduction," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002, vii–xvii; and Thomas W. Murphy, "Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics," in *American Apocrypha*, 47–77. For one response to the anti-Mormons, see William J. Hamblin, "An Apologist for the Critics: Brent Lee Metcalfe's Assumptions and Methodologies," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1, 1994: 434–523).

Actually the proportion of saints who still accept the antiquated geography is irrelevant in light of the decisive information in the Book of Mormon. The text itself gives an unmistakable picture of a restricted territory. And as President Joseph Fielding Smith said, "My words, and the teachings of any other member of the Church, high or low, if they do not square with the revelations, we need not accept them" (*Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956, 3:203–4).

### **What Exactly Did Joseph Smith Say About the Unearthed Remains?**

Let us now examine the original historical documents that bear on this episode. Again, I am grateful to Brother Kenneth W. Godfrey and his paper cited above. Several members of Zion's Camp recorded, in their journals or other subsequent writings, records about the finding of Zelph's bones and what Joseph said about them. We will learn that these records are not all entirely consistent. Together they leave a number of the details in doubt.

There are accounts written or dictated by six members of the expedition. Rather than recount each of these in detail, I will mention each author and his notable contributions to the story. I will concentrate particularly on details in each account that differ from the "standard" story recounted above in the section titled "The Episode."

**1. Reuben McBride.** This account is shorter and less detailed than the others, but it may have been the first one recorded, possibly having been written on the day the find occurred, although in no case are we completely sure when the information was put down in writing. McBride's account (Reuben McBride, Diary, 3 June 1834, LDS Church Archives) includes the following points:

- The remains were unearthed by the prophet Joseph.
- Zelph served as a great warrior under the "Prophet Omandagus" (note spelling). Zelph was killed in battle.
- The arrowhead was found in his ribs and was the mechanism of his death.
- Zelph was a "man of God" who was "known from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains."

- The “curse was taken off him.” Thus, he was a “white Lamanite.” This information seems to have been added to McBride’s diary some time after his original recording.

**2. Moses Martin.** Another member of Zion’s Camp, twenty-two-year-old Moses Martin, also kept a diary of his experiences while traveling through Pike County (Moses Martin, Diary, LDS Church Archives). His report includes the following:

- “We discovered a large quantity of large mounds.”
- “Being filled with curiosity we excavated the top of one [some] 2 feet when we came to the bones of an extraordinary large person or human being, the thigh bones being 2 inches longer from one Socket to the other than of the Prophet who is upwards of 6 feet high which would have constituted some 8 or 9 feet high.”
- “In the trunk of this skeleton near the vitals we found a large stone arrow which I suppose brought him to his end.”
- “Soon after this Joseph had a vision and the Lord showed him that this man was once a mighty Prophet and many other things concerning his people.”
- “We found those mounds to be deposits for the dead which had fallen no doubt in some great Battles.”
- “In addition to this we found many large fortifications which [also] denotes civilization and an innumerable population which has fallen by wars and commotion, and the banks of this beautiful river became the deposit of many hundred thousands whose graves and fortifications are overgrown with the sturdy oak 4 feet in diameter.”

It appears Moses Martin was present when the digging occurred, since he reports vividly the party’s curiosity that led them to excavate and find the bones. It seems likely that this diary entry was made while the party was still in Pike County, shortly after the event. It is interesting to note that while Moses is impressed with the size of the skeleton and with Joseph’s vision of the unnamed prophet, he says nothing about his being killed in battle, about his ancestry, his name, his being a white Lamanite, or his having served under a prophet chief named Omandagus or Onandagus. Instead, in the Martin account, the deceased man was “a mighty prophet.” No details are given about who did the excavating.

**3. Wilford Woodruff.** Five years later Brother Woodruff would be called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He recorded in his journal the following points (Wilford Woodruff, Diary, LDS Church Archives. This entry is on a page headed “May 8th, 1834.” See also Scott Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 9 vols., Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983, 1:10):

- “While on our travels we visited many of the mounds which were flung up by the ancient inhabitants of this continent, probably by the Nephites & Lamanites.”
- “The curse was taken from him [Zelph] or at least in part.”

- “He was killed in battle with an arrow, the arrow was found among his ribs, one of his thigh bones was broken, this was done by a stone flung from a sling in battle years before his death.”

- “Some of his bones were brought into the camp and the thigh bone which was broken was put into my wagon, and I carried it to Missouri.”

- “Zelph was a large thick set man and a man of God, he was a warrior under the great prophet that was known from the hill Cumorah to the Rocky mountains.”

- The above knowledge Joseph received in a vision.

Sometime later (date unknown), Woodruff added interlineally in the same paragraph the following information:

- “Three persons dug into the mound & found a body.”

- “Elder Milton Holmes took the arrow out of the back bones that killed Zelph & brought it with some of the bones into the camp.”

- “I visited the same mound with Jesse J. Smith. Who the other persons were that dug into the mound & found the body I am undecided.”

Apparently at the same time, he also added the word “Onandagus” after the words “great prophet,” and inserted the words “on East sea” after “Cumorah.”

Woodruff writes that the Prophet “Onandagus” was known “from the hill Cumorah on the East sea to the Rocky mountains.” This is the earliest source for this geographical data. In Reuben McBride’s account it is Zelph who was widely known. Woodruff also reports that the information about the skeleton came through a vision given to the prophet Joseph. Two other accounts of this incident were later penned by Woodruff, but their wording is essentially identical to the one above except for omitting the information added interlineally.

Sometime after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, probably during the 1850s, Wilford Woodruff began writing his autobiography. An examination of the manuscript in his own hand, now in the Church Archives, reveals that when he came to that part of his life when the bones of Zelph were found he added information not found in his journal account. Woodruff’s autobiographical account contains the following additional notable features (Undated autobiography of Wilford Woodruff, Wilford Woodruff Collection, LDS Church Archives. Wilford Woodruff wrote this autobiography in his own hand through page 50, or through the November 25, 1835 period of his life. After that, probably William Appleby or Robert Lang wrote as he dictated. Woodruff began writing the events in his life after the arrival of the saints in the Salt Lake Valley):

- “During our travels we visited many mounds thrown up by the Ancient inhabitants of Nephites and Lamanites, this morning we went unto a high mound near the river Joseph & many of the Brethren went up this mound was very high from the top of it—we could overlook the tops of the trees as far as our vision could extend and the scenery was truly delightful.”

- “On the top of the mound were stones which presented the Appearance of three Alters having been erected one above the other according to the Ancient order of things & human bones were strun [strewn] upon the ground. We had taken a shovel along with us[.] Brother Joseph wished us to dig into the mound we dug into it about one foot & came upon the skeleton of a man almost entire and an Arrow was found sticking in his back bone. Elder Milton Holmes picked it out & brought it into camp with one of his leg bones which had been brocken[.]”

- “He [Milton Holmes] put the leg bones in my waggon & I carried it to Clay County Missouri.”

- “Brother Joseph feeling anxious to learn something Governing the man, prayed to the Lord & the Lord gave him a vision in open day while lying in his waggon, this mound & his history was placed before him. His name was Zelph, He was a white Lamanite the curse had been taken off from him because of his faith and righteousness[.] He had embraced the gospel, he was a short stout thick set man, He had been a great warrior, Had joined the Nephites & fought for them under the direction of the great Onandagus who held sway & command over the Armies of the Nephites from the Hill Cumorah & Eastern sea to the rocky mountains though the Book of Mormon does not speak of him.”

- “He [Zelph] was a great warrior leader & great prophet Zelph had his thigh bone brocken from the sling of a stone while in battle in the yr of his youth He was killed with the Arrow sticking in his back bone the vision of the great prophet at the time that Zelph was killed was opened to the prophet Joseph & there [word unclear] were heaped upon the earth & that great Mound of near 300 Feet High placed over them. I felt impressed to bury Zelph’s thigh bone in Temple Block at Jackson County Missouri but I did not have an opportunity and I brought it to Clay County near the house owned by Colonel Arthur & occupied by Lyman Wight.”

At the end of the account, written in a different hand and probably at a later date, are the words, “The arrow head is now in possession of his wife Emma Woodruff.” In this account, written upwards of twenty years after the event, Joseph Smith is described as lying on his back in his wagon when he received the vision in “open day” regarding not only Zelph but the mound and its history. Zelph is here described as a “short, stout, thick set” man, in contrast to the extremely tall man in the Moses Martin account. According to Woodruff, Zelph had joined the Nephites and fought for them under the direction of the Prophet Onandagus, who “held sway” from the Hill Cumorah and eastern sea to the Rocky Mountains. Zelph’s thigh bone was broken by a stone while in a battle in his youth, and he was killed by the arrow found in his back. We are led to believe that the thigh bone was buried near the Clay County house owned by a Colonel Arthur and that Emma Woodruff had possession of the arrow, not Brigham Young. This might indicate that President Young did not attach any particular significance to either

the arrow or the remains in which it was found. Finally, in this account, Zelph was clearly associated with the Nephites, as was Onandagus.

On 22 February 1893, James E. Talmage reported a visit with Wilford Woodruff during which President Woodruff showed him “a sacred relic then in his possession in the shape of an Indian arrow head.” This arrow was said to have been the cause of the death of the white Lamanite, Zelph. According to Talmage’s account the arrow point had come into Wilford Woodruff’s possession through Zina Young Card, a daughter of Brigham Young, who had formerly had possession of it. At the suggestion of George F. Gibbs, his secretary, President Woodruff then dictated the following account of the finding of Zelph (This account was obtained by Richard L. Anderson on October 31, 1986 from the George A. Smith family papers, MS 36, box 174, folder 1, p. 26, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City. Questions have been raised regarding the arrowhead referred to in the Woodruff account. The arrowhead that was found in the Church Archives and shown to experts seems to be of the type used by the Plains Indians and is probably not more than a few hundred years old). Notable features of this version include:

- “While traveling with Zion’s camp, through the State of Ohio, we came to a very high mound, to the top of which we climbed by means of steps over which grass had grown. The steps were very wide, probably about twelve feet. We found the top of the mound to be quite level and to cover a great deal of ground. After overlooking the surrounding country, and descending half way down we were halted by command of the Prophet Joseph. We had taken a shovel with us to the top of the mound, thinking we might have some use for it, and after halting, the Prophet, speaking to the man who had the shovel, told him to throw up the dirt at a certain place to which he pointed, After removing a little more than six inches of soil the skeleton of a man was discovered, from a joint in whose backbone the Prophet drew a flint arrow head which had been the means of taking his life.”

In this account, dictated fifty-nine years after the event, Woodruff said he accompanied the Prophet onto the hill, which was not the case according to his earlier accounts. He also adds details that are absent from his journal and from the other primary sources. He tells us they took the shovel with them, while others said they had to send for them after they arrived on top of the hill. He also states that they were halfway down the hill before they began digging and that they commenced at the request of the Prophet himself. President Woodruff also tells us that they found ancient steps which they used to make their way up the hill.

According to James L. Bradley, who has visited the mound many times, there are no steps leading to the top, or altars. However, Kenneth W. Godfrey recently climbed the eastern side of the mound and found in certain places indentations that might be described as steps. Understandably, some details had faded in the memory of President Woodruff and other points had been logically added over the space of many

intervening years. Still several basic parts of the story are recognizable in this late recollection.

**4. Levi Hancock.** The longest and most detailed near-contemporaneous account was written by Levi Hancock, later one of the Presidents of the Seventy. Like Wilford Woodruff, he was not with the group that discovered the remains of Zelph, but he saw the bones and the arrowhead they brought back to camp. Hancock's account includes the following notable features (Levi Hancock, Diary, photocopy in LDS Church Archives. Typically Hancock did not let many days pass without writing in his diary):

- “On the way to Illinois River where we camped on the west side in the morning, many went to see the big mound about a mile below the crossing, I did not go on it but saw some bones that was brought with a broken arrow.”

- Joseph addressed himself to Sylvester Smith, “This is what I told you and now I want to tell you that you may know what I meant; this land was called the land of desolation and Onendagus (note spelling) was the king and a good man was he, there in that mound did he bury his dead and did not dig holes as the people do now but they brought there dirt and covered them until you see they have raised it to be about one hundred feet high, the last man buried was Zelf.”

- “He (Zelph) was a white Lamanite who fought with the people of Onendagus for freedom, when he was young he was a great warrior and had his [thigh] broken and never was set. It knitted together as you see on the side, he fought after it got strength until he lost every tooth in his head save one when the Lord said he had done enough and suffered him to be killed by that arrow you took from his breast.”

- “I then remembered what he [Joseph] had said a few days before while passing many mounds on our way that was left of us; said he, ‘there are the bodies of wicked men who have died and are angry at us; if they can take the advantage of us they will, for if we live they will have no hope.’ I could not comprehend it but supposed it was all right.”

Hancock reports different information than do the earlier accounts when he tells us the land was named Desolation, and “Onendagus” was a king and a good man. But he says nothing about his being a prophet. However, he does inform us that Zelph lost all his teeth but one, and he implies that Zelph was relatively aged at death. His account makes no mention of the Hill Cumorah or of Onandagus's wide fame, but it agrees that Zelph was a white Lamanite. Hancock's is the only source to report any specific circumstances surrounding Joseph Smith's statements about the skeleton, and this information may be significant: Joseph spoke about it to Sylvester Smith. This is not a trivial point, for Sylvester Smith was a troublemaker in the camp who “rebelled against the order of the camp,” eventually apostatizing (Hancock, Diary, 14 and 17 May 1834).

We do not know to what extent others heard Joseph speak about Zelph or whether some of their information was filtered through Sylvester Smith. The possibility

seems small, however, that Sylvester Smith had much influence on the story, since no other account mentions him. Joseph's addressing him specifically may have been intended as a warning of evil influences and threats from "the bodies of the wicked men" buried in these mounds who were "angry" at the camp as they marched through "desolation." Such threats surrounding the group required their fullest obedience and alertness in order to escape.

**5. Heber C. Kimball.** An account by Heber C. Kimball of the discovery of Zelph was published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1845 under the title, "Extracts from H. C. Kimball's Journal." An identical account, except for a lack of editing, is found in the autobiography Kimball dictated to James Sloan after the saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley (Heber C. Kimball, *Autobiography*, LDS Church Archives). The version in the autobiography contributes the following:

- "On Tuesday the 3rd, we went up, several of us, with Joseph Smith Jr. to the top of a mound on the bank of the Illinois river, which was several hundred feet above the river, and from the summit of which we had a pleasant view of the surrounding country: We could overlook the tops of the trees on to the meadow or prairie on each side the river as far as our eyes could extend, which was one of the most pleasant scenes I ever beheld."

- "On the top of this mound there was the appearance of three altars, which had been built of stone, one above another, according to the ancient order; and the ground was strewn over with human bones. This caused in us very peculiar feelings, to see the bones of our fellow creatures scattered in this manner, who had been slain in ages past."

- "We felt prompted to dig down into the mound, and sending for a shovel and hoe, we proceeded to move away the earth. At about one foot deep we discovered the skeleton of a man, almost entire; and between two of his ribs we found an Indian arrow, which had evidently been the cause of his death. We took the leg and thigh bones and carried them along with us to Clay County. Elder B. Young has yet the arrow in his possession."

- "The same day, we pursued our journey. While on our way we felt anxious to know who the person was who had been killed by that arrow. It was made known to Joseph that he had been an officer who fell in battle, in the last destruction among the Lamanites, and his name was Zelph."

- "Brother Joseph had enquired of the Lord and it was made known in a vision."

This account was probably written after the Saints had arrived in the Salt Lake Valley. There is evidence that the autobiography was taken from the *Times and Seasons* 6, 1 February 1845: 788).

Only Heber C. Kimball says that Zelph was killed in "the last destruction among the Lamanites," and the meaning of this phrase is unclear. "Last" may refer to the final destruction of the Nephites fifteen hundred years earlier, or it may have reference to the

last battle of Zelph's people, whoever they were. The battle was "among the Lamanites," which may mean between the Nephites and the Lamanites but may also refer to a battle of Lamanites against other Lamanites, if we assume that the Lamanites may have had prophets among them. Kimball's account is also unique in that he says he went with Joseph Smith to the top of the mound and relates that they felt prompted to dig down into the mound, but first they had to send for a shovel and hoe. The discovery was made after digging about one foot.

The other early accounts do not say that Joseph was present when the bones were dug up. Rather they state or imply that he was not involved until some time later. According to Kimball, it was later in the day while continuing on the journey westward that the Prophet made the identification of the person whose bones they had found. This is consistent with Hancock's statement that Joseph spoke "as the camp was moving off the ground." Kimball states further that this was made known by means of a vision to Joseph after he had inquired of the Lord.

Kimball's account has a different tone from the earlier ones, especially those of Martin and Hancock. Instead of mentioning any concerns about death, destruction, evil influences, the angry dead, or thousands of graves, Kimball paints an idyllic scene, pleasantly overlooking meadow and tree tops, and he recalls their "peculiar feelings" as feelings of sympathy for these "fellow creatures" whose bones had been scattered in ages past. His depiction is in keeping with the joyous spirit reflected in a letter Joseph wrote to Emma during those days (see below).

Kimball also speaks of locating certain remains that had "the appearance" of three altars, a detail mentioned in no other primary source. The passage of time may have dimmed Kimball's memory on this point. His account appears to be a later recollection, written possibly around 1843. Moreover, Kimball's account makes no explicit reference to the Nephites, and he sees the value of Joseph's vision primarily not in what it revealed about the ancient inhabitants of that region, but in how it showed that "God was so mindful of" the camp and especially of his "servant, Brother Joseph."

**6. George A. Smith.** George A. Smith was another member of Zion's Camp who became an apostle. He included the following unique information in a history prepared in 1857 (2 June 1834, LDS Church Archives. The following note was appended: "a narrative of which is published in the Church History"):

- "Monday, 2 June 1834: Some of us visited a mound on a bluff about 300 feet high and dug up some bones, which excited deep interest among the brethren. The President and many others visited the mound on the following morning."

According to this brief version, Joseph's visit to the mound came on the morning after the discovery of the skeleton.

## **The Importance of the Several Original Accounts**

Brother Godfrey described his reasons for considering carefully the several accounts of the primary witnesses to this event:

My purpose in scrutinizing these accounts closely is not in any way to discredit the diligent writers of these diary and journal entries. Given the circumstances under which these records were kept and the independent viewpoint of most of the authors, it is remarkable that they agree in as many respects as they do. There can be no doubt that the men of Zion's Camp were deeply impressed by the discovery on 3 June 1834 of the bones of a man Joseph Smith called Zelph. Nevertheless, the accounts give varying and sometimes conflicting details. Interestingly, the earlier accounts do not expressly identify Zelph with the Nephites, as do the later accounts. Perhaps this is because Joseph's statements to his brethren were not as clear to them at the time they were made as they seemed in retrospect or as we might be inclined to assume today. It also appears that some information couched in somewhat speculative terms in the earlier accounts later came to be understood with greater certainty and specificity. For these reasons, close and cautious examination of these historical records is necessary (*Godfrey, 42* ).

## **The Zelph Story and Joseph Smith's Book *History of the Church***

The foregoing examination of the primary sources for the Zelph story has laid the foundation for a comparison of them with the section on Zelph in the *History of the Church*, the most familiar source on this subject. The story is related in this history as if Joseph Smith himself were telling it, but that is not actually the case. How then did the story reach its present form in this history?

In 1842, Willard Richards, as Church Historian, was assigned the task of compiling a large number of documents and producing a history of the Church from them. He worked on this material between December 21, 1842 and March 27, 1843. He himself had not joined the Church until 1836, but he would easily have learned from associates that Joseph Smith had kept no record of the march of Zion's Camp. Therefore, Richards presumably had to rely on the writings or recollections of Heber C. Kimball, Wilford Woodruff, and perhaps others for his information. The McBride and Martin accounts in particular, and perhaps also the Hancock record, may have been unknown to him, as the writers were not prominent Church figures. It is possible that Richards consulted with Joseph Smith, for the Prophet was overseeing the preparation of the history.

Blending the sources available to him, and perhaps using oral accounts from some of the members of Zion's Camp, but writing as if he were Joseph Smith, historian

Richards drafted the story of Zelph as it appears in the “Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-I”:

Tuesday the 3<sup>rd</sup>—During our travels we visited several of the mounds which had been thrown up by the ancient inhabitants of this country, Nephites, Lamanites &c. and this morning I went up on a high mound near the river, accompanied by several the brethren. From this mound we could overlook the tops of the trees and view the prairie on each side of the river as far as our vision could extend and the scenery was truly delightful.

On the top of the mound were stones which presented the appearance of three altars having been erected one above the other, according to ancient order and the remains of human bones were strewn over the surface of the ground. The brethren procured a shovel and hoe, and removing the earth to the depth of about one foot discovered the skeleton of a man, almost entire, and between his ribs the stone point of was a Lamanitish arrow, which evidently produced his death. Elder . . . Brigham Young retained the Arrow, and the [brethren] carried some pieces of the skeleton to Clay County. The contemplation of the scenery around [and] fore us produced peculiar sensations in our bosoms and subsequently the vision of the past being opened to my understanding by the Spirit of the Almighty, I discovered that the person whose Skeleton we had seen was before us was a white Lamanite, a large thick set man and a man of God. His name was Zelph. He was a warrior and chieftain under the great prophet Onandagus who was known from the hill Cumorah or eastern Sea, to the Rocky Mountains . . . The curse was taken from Zelph . . . or at least, in part. One of his thigh bones was broken by a stone flung from a sling, while in battle, years before his death. He was killed in battle, by the arrow found among his ribs, during a last great struggle with the Lamanites and Nephites.

Elder Woodruff carried the thigh bone to Clay county (Joseph Smith, “Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-I,” 3 June 1834, LDS Church Archives, see n. 1, Addenda p. 5).

It is apparent that a number of details were not settled in Richards’s mind as he drafted and revised this statement. A close study of the primary accounts enables us to see how Richards probably came to write what he did. Since this was only one small incident in a long narrative, he understandably did not go to great lengths to check for detailed consistency in what he wrote. At any rate, he introduced minor differences or discrepancies into the story. For example, Wilford Woodruff’s “inhabitants of this continent” became “the inhabitants of this country” (others would later say “county”), and Woodruff’s statement that mounds in the area had been built “probably by the Nephites

and Lamanites” became an implied certainty when Richards left out the word “probably.” The mere “arrow” of the three earliest accounts became an “Indian Arrow” (as in Kimball), and finally a “Lamanitish Arrow.” The phrase “known from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains,” as in the McBride diary, became “known from the Hill Cumorah” (stricken out) or “eastern sea to the Rocky Mountains,” similar to words penned by Wilford Woodruff. The statement that the battle in which Zelph was killed occurred “among the Lamanites” (as in Kimball) became “with the Lamanites.” We cannot tell whether these changes were true to Joseph Smith’s original intent, for they give the account an air of greater precision than may have been originally present.

A second copy of the same material exists, known as “Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-2,” apparently written entirely in the hand of Wilmer Benson. It differs from the Richards version in a dozen details of spelling, punctuation, and phrasing, but only two differences are substantive. Where Richards describes Zelph as “a man of God,” Benson puts “a son of God,” and Richards’ “a great struggle with the Lamanites” reads in Benson, “the last great struggle with the Lamanites.” The second manuscript was written as a back-up in case the first was lost or destroyed.

Following the martyrdom of the Prophet, the *Times and Seasons* published serially the “History of Joseph Smith.” When the story of the finding of Zelph appeared in the January 1, 1846 issue, it read as follows:

We encamped on the bank of the river until Tuesday the 3rd during our travels we visited several of the mounds which had been thrown up by the ancient inhabitants of this county, Nephites, Lamanites, &c., and this morning I went up on a high mound, near the river, accompanied by the brethren. From this mound we could overlook the tops of the trees and view the prairie on each side of the river as far as our vision could extend, and the scenery was truly delightful. On the top of the mound were stones which presented the appearance of three alters having been erected one above the other, according to ancient order; and human bones were strewn over the surface of the ground. The brethren procured a shovel and hoe, and removing the earth to the depth of about one foot discovered [the] skeleton of a man, almost entire, and between his ribs was a Lamanitish arrow, which evidently produced his death, Elder Brigham Young retained the arrow and the brethren carried some pieces of the skeleton to Clay county. The contemplation of the scenery before us produced peculiar sensations in our bosoms; and the visions of the past being opened to my understanding by the spent [sic] of the Almighty I discovered that the person whose skeleton was before us, was a white Lamanite, a large thick set man, and a man of God. He was a warrior and chieftain under the great prophet Omandagus, who was known from the hill Cumorah, or Eastern sea, to the Rocky Mountains. His name was

Zelph. The curse was taken from him, or at least, in part; one of his thigh bones was broken, by a stone flung from a sling, while in battle years before his death. He was killed in battle, by the arrow found among his ribs, during the last great struggle of the Lamanites and Nephites (*Times and Seasons* 6, 1 January 1846: 1076).

Many of the words that were crossed out in the Richards manuscript are, for some unknown reason, included in this publication, along with the point that the prophet's name was Omandagus (spelling). The reference to the Hill Cumorah, from the unemended Wilford Woodruff journal, is still included in the narrative. Further, the concluding sentence in the *Times and Seasons* account reads, "during the last great struggle of the Lamanites and Nephites," whereas both the Richards and Benson manuscripts had crossed off "and Nephites."

The story of Zelph appeared again in June 1888 in the *Historical Record*, a periodical edited and published by Andrew Jenson, the Church's primary historical writer at that time. In this account, Burr Riggs, and not Brigham Young, is said to have retained the arrow, and the Hill Cumorah is still mentioned, as are the Nephites (*Historical Record* 7, June 1888: 581).

The 1904 first edition of the B. H. Roberts edited, seven-volume *History of the Church* repeats the account as Richards had left it. In 1948, after Joseph Fielding Smith had become Church Historian, explicit references to the Hill Cumorah and the Nephites were reintroduced (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 7 vols., Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1902, 2:79-80. Compare 1948 edition, 79-80).

When Reorganized LDS Church historian Heman C. Smith, in 1922, wrote his "History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints 1805-1890," he followed the 1845 *Times and Seasons* account with only minor editing. However, he did not give Zelph's name (Heman C. Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 7 vols., Independence, Mo.: Board of Publications of the Reorganized Church, 1922, 1:460-61).

It is obvious, then, that historians in both the LDS and RLDS churches have written the accounts so that the reader believes he is reading the Prophet Joseph Smith's own words. While, as Dean Jessee has shown, this was an accepted practice among nineteenth-century historians (Dean C. Jessee, "Has Mormon History Been Deliberately Falsified," *Mormon Miscellaneous*, no. 2, April 1982: 1-6; "The Reliability of Joseph Smith's History," *Journal of Mormon History* 3, 1976: 23-46), it has misled many readers by conveying the impression that Joseph Smith personally recorded far more about the events in which he participated than was the case. Moreover, the official historians would be faulted by modern scholars both for shaping and modifying the published narratives to agree with particular sources without considering their factual merits and for ignoring several of the earliest sources.

Kenneth Godfrey notes: "I shall not attempt to reconstruct what Joseph Smith may have said to members of Zion's Camp regarding Zelph on 3 and 4 June 1834. His exact words are beyond our historical grasp. But it seems to me we are warranted in drawing certain conclusions from the available evidence" (*Godfrey*, 45).

### **The Significance of the Zelph Story**

Brother Godfrey writes:

It seems obvious that discussion and argumentation about historical and geographical questions in LDS circles has put more weight than is justified on the detailed phrasing of the account of Zelph as it is published in the *History of the Church*. . . .

An examination of the original accounts of the events of 3 June 1834 yields the following general descriptions: The extant accounts vary widely in length (from 40 to about 375 words) and in the range of information they cover. Where they report statements or observations about the same particular point, unanimity is rare; noticeably different "facts" are reported about the same events. Only Hancock's account makes it perfectly clear that he was not a firsthand witness to the primary happenings. All the others leave it unclear whether the writers saw or heard for themselves some or all of what they report or whether their information came by hearsay. In no case are we certain how much time elapsed before the journal accounts were recorded.

The experience of historians and the experiments of psychologists have established that precise recall of details about a happening fades notoriously rapidly. Differences in the reported facts among the basic sources may owe in part to delays in recording. Certainly Wilford Woodruff's recollections fifty-nine years after the event were markedly inaccurate, and Heber C. Kimball's story, which he seems to have put on the record at least a decade after the Zelph affair, contains phrasings only uncertainly supported by other accounts. The earlier accounts are more tentative, including words such as "suposed" (McBride), "suppose" and "no doubt" (Martin), "probably" and "undecided" (Woodruff). The later accounts are more specific and certain. . . .

While it is impossible with the available evidence to reconstruct the exact process by which the narrative, as it appears in the *History of the Church*, was constructed by historical writers, some points are apparent. Practically all elements of the story incorporated into the account by Willard Richards are found in just two sources, Woodruff and Kimball. Kimball's diaries begin with his British mission in 1837, and the journal from which the account of the finding of Zelph is taken was dictated from

memory to Robert B. Thompson in 1840. It is probable that Joseph Smith read what his clerks, Willard Richards and Wilmer Benson, wrote about this event for the *History of the Church*. Their manuscript accounts cross out all reference to “the Nephites” and to the “hill Cumorah.” We cannot know on present evidence, however, whether the crossing out was at Joseph’s instance or with his approval.

That members of Zion’s Camp dug up a skeleton near the Illinois River in early June 1834 is certain. Equally sure is that Joseph Smith made statements about the deceased person and his historical setting. It is unclear which statements attributed to him derived from his vision, as opposed to being implied or surmised either by him or by others. Nothing in the diaries suggests that the mound itself was discovered by revelation. Moses Martin indicates that the men dug because they were “filled with curiosity.” Levi Hancock simply reports that “many went to see the big mound about a mile below the crossing.” Heber C. Kimball seems to say they went to the mound to get “a pleasant view of the surrounding country.”

Most sources agree that Zelph was a white Lamanite who fought under a leader named Onandagus (variously spelled). Beyond that, what Joseph said to his men is not entirely clear, judging by the variations in the available sources. Therefore, those who try to support a particular historical or geographical point of view about the Book of Mormon by citing the Zelph story are on inconclusive grounds.

The date of the man Zelph remains unclear. Expressions such as “great struggles among the Lamanites,” if accurately reported, could refer to a period long after the close of the Book of Mormon narrative as well as to the fourth century AD. None of the sources before the Willard Richards composition, however, actually say that Zelph died in battle with the Nephites, only that he died “in battle” when the otherwise unidentified people of Onandagus were engaged in great wars “among the Lamanites.” Archaeological research in mounds near the one where the bones of Zelph were discovered indicates that the mounds and the artifacts found within them belong to the Middle Woodland Period, dated somewhere between perhaps 100 BC and AD 500. However, the Zelph skeleton came from a shallow burial near the top of the mound. Who knows whether it was intrusive, buried there more recently than the period of the main mound construction? Apostle John A. Widtsoe once wrote [referring to the Zelph story], “[This is not of much value in Book of Mormon studies, since] Zelph probably dated from a later time when the Nephites and Lamanites had been somewhat dispersed and had

wandered over the country” (John A. Widtsoe, “Is Book of Mormon Geography Known?” *Improvement Era* 53, July 1950: 451). Thus, it is unclear when Zelph himself lived.

Zelph was identified as a “Lamanite,” a label agreed on by all the accounts. This term might refer to the ethnic and cultural category spoken of in the Book of Mormon as actors in the destruction of the Nephites, or it might refer more generally to a descendant of the earlier Lamanites and could have been considered in 1834 as the equivalent of “Indian” (see, for example, D&C 3:18, 20; 10:48; 28:8; 32:2). Nothing in this study can settle the question of Zelph’s specific ethnic identity (Godfrey, 46-48).

## **Conclusion**

Where does all this lead us? What can we conclude about Zelph? What does the Zelph incident tell us about LDS Church history, Book of Mormon geography, and Joseph Smith? What did Joseph mean when he said Zelph was a “white Lamanite”?

Joseph’s intended meaning in 1834, seems clear. It is apparent he did attribute Nephite/Lamanite origins to this skeleton. In a letter written to Emma during that time, Joseph referred to the members of Zion’s Camp as “wandering over the plains of the Nephites, recounting occasionally the history of the Book of Mormon, roving over the mounds of that once beloved people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as a proof of its divine authenticity” (Dean C. Jessee, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1984, 324). It is obvious that in 1834 Joseph believed parts of the Book of Mormon story took place in that part of North America. Those critical of the Church are quick to point out the conflict between Joseph’s geographic concepts of the Book of Mormon and present-day concepts:

The Lord through Joseph could not have been any clearer that this very mound was within the boundaries of Book of Mormon lands . . . The rejection of Joseph Smith’s statements about Zelph is required by Mesoamerican proponents [those who believe in the limited geography theory] to maintain a belief in their geographical inclinations. . . . They must discard the statements of Joseph Smith for the acceptance of their proposed theories (Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 107).

We do know that the prophet Joseph himself did not record the incident himself, and so we are dependent upon the accounts of six other members of Zion’s Camp who were present during or near the time of the event. When these accounts are analyzed it appears that the Prophet received revelation about an individual named Zelph, but it is unclear what, if any, relationship Zelph and his activities may have had to the events and the geography of the Book of Mormon narrative. I believe today we need not assume that Zelph was a part of, or a descendant of, the Nephite/Lamanite culture of the Book of Mormon.

The details of what Joseph did and did not say on that occasion are unclear. He may well have said some things implying that the burial mound was in “Book of Mormon lands.” Joseph’s preconceptions and understandings at that time might well be expected to influence what he said. He spoke using the best of his comprehension at the time. While there were likely divine elements in his pronouncements, there likely were also evidences of Joseph’s flawed understandings in 1834. From a practical standpoint, this need not be a matter of significant concern. Some have worried, “Can we not simply take Joseph Smith at his word in all matters? Isn’t the Zelph story, in some ways, misleading and false?” Joseph Smith was a man called by the Lord to be a prophet of God. In all revelatory matters Joseph simply reported as he felt impressed. He seemed never to be concerned with creating a grand tapestry free of any inconsistencies. He didn’t have to. He wasn’t involved in any scheme to deceive. He knew he was on the Lord’s errand. He simply reported information he received as he felt inspired to do. There was no manipulation or retrofitting. Joseph was sincere and honest and was obviously learning as he went along. Might Joseph have made some errors based on his own misunderstandings? Of course. We are well-counseled to be cautious about drawing unwarranted conclusions from the Zelph account.

## The Role of Divination (“Magic”) in Joseph Smith’s Early Life

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### Introduction

Many well-read members of the Church know about Joseph Smith’s finding and carrying with him a seer stone from the time of his youth. For some of us this is a source of uneasiness. We are uncomfortable with the idea that Joseph and his family dabbled in “magic.” We are inclined to minimize the importance of Joseph’s seer stone. It is easy to attribute this bias to our most commonly available church history sources. They have little to say about Joseph’s use of his seer stone or his being involved in supernatural activities of any sort. Today, most of us are intuitively disinclined to think the Lord might participate in that type of interaction with man. In fact, wouldn’t Satan be more inclined than the Lord to encourage that type of activity?

We do know that Joseph’s family was frequently financially distressed. This left to Joseph and his brothers the responsibility of hiring themselves out to perform any work for which people were willing to pay. They simply had to find a way to supplement the family’s income. An obvious way is to sell one’s services to those who need help with physical labor. Many people in those days needed wells to provide them ready access to water. Others had heard there might be “treasure” buried on their land. Hence, there were an appreciable number of those willing to pay for help in finding and accessing water and trying to locate treasure. We concede that perhaps Joseph even hired himself out as a “seer” as well as a laborer. If people wished to try to find treasures, then Joseph was willing to help—both with the seeking and with the digging. And, we are not aware of his ever having located a valuable cash of buried treasure. Surely his work as a seer was not an important aspect of his life. Or was it?

Those of us who are students of the Book of Mormon *are* aware that Joseph’s seer stone did play a vital role in the translation of that ancient record. Why did Joseph’s bringing forth of the Book of Mormon obligatorily involve a seer stone? How might we explain that? We mostly attribute the actual process of translation to the Lord himself. After all, the Lord, through the prophet Moroni, did provide young Joseph with a device for translating—the Urim and Thummim. Joseph apparently made use of this device during the translating he did with Martin Harris in 1828. However, in 1829 Joseph used almost exclusively his own seer stone instead of the Urim and Thummim.

Anti-Mormons delight in throwing wrenches into the substance of our presuppositions, and prejudices in these matters. They insist that we minimize the role of divination in the lives of Joseph and his family. They maintain that Joseph was far more involved in “magic” they we want to believe. They claim that Joseph’s father, Joseph Smith Sr. was heavily involved in the use of divining rods and seer stones for obtaining information in supernatural ways even before Joseph Jr. was born. They report he was experienced in selling his services to others as a diviner. Further, they

contend that Joseph Jr. was encouraged by his father and became involved in the same practices. They even point to evidence that Joseph Jr. even had something of a reputation for being unusually successful in divination activities.

This chapter will examine closely the truth of these claims and attempt to place them in an appropriate eternal context. As a vital resource for this chapter, I am indebted to Mark Ashurst-McGee, PhD, and his masters degree thesis written at Utah State University in 2000: *A Pathway to Prophethood: Joseph Smith Junior as Rodsman, Village Seer, and Judeo-Christian Prophet*.

## **Divination**

Divination is the act of trying to foretell the future or obtain other information by “preternatural” means. *Preternatural* means “out of the ordinary” and implies the participation of occult or supernatural—“magical”—forces.

Attempts to categorize divination often meet with ambiguities and complexities. In general, however, we may acknowledge three general types of divination experiences:

**1. Intuitive Divination.** This is knowledge gained through divinely enabled hunch, insight, or presentiment (premonition or foreboding) in the mind of the *diviner*. The “diviner” is the receiver of this special knowledge.

**2. Wisdom Divination.** This type assumes correspondence between non-human and non-personal elements of the universe and the diviner here on earth. Examples include astrology, numerology, palm reading (palmistry), and physiognomy—discerning the character or characteristics of an individual from the form and features of the body.

**3. Possession Divination.** This category includes a number of methods whereby spirits in the universe communicate with diviners on earth by way of an intermediary. These intermediary entities can be human or non-human. The spirits are said to “possess” the intermediary entity—hence, the name “possession” divination.

**Non-human media.** When the intermediary entity is non-human, we may call this type of divination “mechanistic.” It is also sometimes called “augury.” Examples of mechanistic divination include:

a. A planchette (pencil) becomes “possessed” and spells out a message on a Ouija board. The message is thought to come from a spirit.

b. When a high priest casts lots, he expects the Lord to determine their outcome. The lots, then, are said to be *possessed*. The high priest is the diviner, or the receiver or beneficiary of the knowledge.

c. The use of a peep stone or seer stone to discern supernaturally-revealed information fits into this category.

**Human media.** When the intermediary entity is human we may refer to the process as “revelation” or “prophecy,” and the intermediary individual is a prophet. If we

regard the prophet as the diviner, then there is no real intermediary entity. If we regard the prophet as the intermediary entity, then the information or revelation is intended for those to whom the prophet delivers it. For purposes of this system of categorization, these recipients of the messages are the “diviners.”

The term *possession* inaccurately describes prophecy because prophets are not possessed. They retain reason, self consciousness, and self control during their revelations. This type of divination can also be called “ecstatic.” *Ecstatic* does not necessarily imply any loss of reason or self control, but simply a preternatural event experienced within the mind or soul of the diviner.

**Ascensional and descensional revelation.** To the above categorization of divination, we may overlay another grouping. When the diviner initiates the revelatory experience, we may refer to the receipt of divine information as “ascensional revelation” (from earth up to heaven). When the experience is initiated by the Lord, it is “descensional revelation” (from heaven down to earth). The experience of Paul on the road to Damascus was an example of the latter. Sometimes both types are seen in one experience. For example in Ether 3 in the Book of Mormon, Jared and his people built eight barges with which to sail to the New World. To have light in these barges, which were entirely enclosed, Jared’s brother “did molten out of a rock sixteen small stones; and they were white and clear, even as transparent glass; and he did carry them in his hands upon the top of the mount, and cried again unto the Lord, saying . . . prepare them that they may shine forth in darkness” (Ether 3:1-4). The brother of Jared’s prayer on the mountain can be classified as an ascensional effort in divination. In response to his prayer, Jesus “stretched forth his hand and touched the stones one by one with his finger. This part of experience of the brother of Jared can be classified as a descensional divination or revelation.

Different cultures prioritize these categories of divination in different ways. For example, Hindu belief holds intuitive divination in the highest regard followed by mechanistic divination with ecstatic or revelatory experience at the bottom of the list. Western civilization and Judeo-Christianity places prophetic revelatory experience at the top of the heap. In addition to prophecy, Judaism has also sanctioned lesser forms of divination such as Urim and Thummim and lots. Most Europeans have looked to the biblical prophets as the pinnacle of divinatory experience.

### **Divination in the Environment of the Smith Family**

The enthusiasm for divining for water or finding buried treasure has, for the most part, slipped away into a forgotten world. Though strange to us today, treasure seeking in eighteenth and early nineteenth century America was common. Many believed that treasures had been secreted in the earth by ancient inhabitants of the continent, Spanish explorers, pirates, or even the dwarves of European mythology. Treasure hunters usually looked to hills, caves, lost mines, and Native American mounds as

places to find these hidden deposits. A legend, a map, or a dream of buried wealth often triggered the quest for treasure.

To aid those who had an interest in finding treasures, local specialists were often enlisted to use their divining rods or seer stones to locate the treasure. In order to conceal the location of the hidden wealth and, not wanting to share the treasure, fortune seekers often worked under the cover of darkness. This habit also spared them the ridicule of “sophisticated” onlookers.

Let us consider a few pertinent definitions.

**Dowse.** The verb *dowse* means to use a divining rod. The rod may be either forked or straight. The dowser holds the two branches of the fork in his hands with the main branch lifted upward or held level. The rod is thought to dip toward the ground and point to the object sought.

Dowsers used the rod to locate water and other objects such as metal. In 1826, the American *Journal of Science* (October 1826, 204) reported the general notion that “the rod is influenced by ores.” An article appearing in 1825 stated that the dipping of a divining rod “closely resembles the dip of the magnetic needle, when traversing a bed of ore” (“The Divining Rod,” *The Worcester Magazine and Historical Journal*, October 1825, 29).

**Witch.** The word “witch” is the name given to the individual, male or female, who uses a divining rod to look for water or other objects. The word seems to derive from witch hazel, a small tree or shrub with especially succulent and pliable branches. Early American dowsers preferred this wood for its elasticity, and because its unseasonable budding reminded them of Aaron’s rod that budded. Water witches used freshly cut branches of wood because of the water inside them. This practice rests on the principle of sympathy so prevalent in magic. The most well-known example of sympathetic magic is the Voodoo doll. By sticking needles into an imitation of an enemy, one can injure the actual person. Supposedly, the sympathies between the water in the “succulent twig” and the water under the ground resulted in an attraction that made discovery possible.

While living in Vermont and New York, the Smiths found themselves in a culture that included divining rods, seer stones, and treasure seeking. In Middletown, Rutland County, Vermont, Congregationalist excommunicant Nathaniel Wood led a “fraternity of rodsmen” who called themselves the “New Israelites.” We know very little of the New Israelites. The earliest source that mentions them is a short article that appeared in a Vermont newspaper in 1828. This article explained their use of rods for divination. They claimed inspired powers for curing all sorts of diseases. They also claimed intuitive knowledge of lost or stolen goods, and the ability to discover the hidden treasures of the earth. The instrument of their miraculous powers, was a cleft stick, or rod, something of the form of a “Y,” and when this talisman was firmly grasped in both hands, by its two points, it was believed to indicate the proper course to be pursued, or

point out some substances of medicinal utility, or fix the locality of some valuable mine—whichever of these the diviner sought. The New Israelites were also intense and aggressive millennialists or adventists who looked forward to the imminent second coming of the Lord and the thousand years of peace.

This movement has been more commonly referred to as the “Wood Scrape.” The word *scrape* here means a distressing or embarrassing situation. The title refers to the heightened anxieties Nathaniel Wood’s group caused in Middletown when they predicted January 14, 1802 as a day of apocalypse (the Lord’s Second Coming). When the anticipated day of destruction came and went, the New Israelites decided to leave town. Most resettled in St. Lawrence County, New York. They continued to be involved with divination.

Actually, treasure seeking flourished *throughout* New York State. Caroline Rockwell Smith, who grew up just down the road from the Smith family farm, remembered “considerable digging for money in our neighborhood by men, women, and children.” Smith neighbors Joshua Stafford, William Stafford, and Sally Chase used seer stones in an effort to locate treasures.

### **Public Image of Diviners**

Contempt for treasure seeking became universal among the genteel or upper class by the early nineteenth century as part of their wider criticism of the common folk for inadequate ambition, lackluster work discipline, and attachment to unsupported traditions. Dowsing for water with a rod (“water witching”) fell under the same opprobrium. And yet, very few had the confidence to dig a well without having it “witched” first.

While the term *water witch* had its origins in the type of wood used (as mentioned above), the word “witch” had two meanings. Those people aspiring for gentility used the word “witch” to express their disdain for dowsing—one of “the monstrous births of the dark ages which yet survive” as one contemporary science magazine put it (“The Divining Rod,” *American Journal of Science & Arts*, October 1826, 211).

### **Joseph Smith Senior’s Involvement in Divination**

Joseph Smith Sr. may have inherited a tradition of divination and revelation from his father Asael. Joseph Smith Jr. wrote, “My grandfather, Asael Smith, long ago predicted that there would be a prophet raised up in his family, and my grandmother was fully satisfied that it was fulfilled in me” (*HC*, 2:443). Grandfather Asael Smith was clearly a man with a “millennialist” mind-set. Like other millennialists of his day, he anticipated the one thousand years of peace promised in the Bible. In a Christian eschatological timetable, the fulfillment of Asael’s prediction of a prophet would precede the Millennium. Millennialistic belief, then, determined that the predicted prophet must soon arise.

Asael's extraordinary presentiment was noted by all in the family. Some descendants of Asael, aware of his prediction, wondered if they or one of their children might become the promised prophet? In 1828, Joseph Sr. wrote a letter to his father's family telling them about his son's recent spiritual experiences. But the story of the golden plates was just too strange for the extended family. Then Joseph Jr. himself wrote a letter. Asael's son John read the letter and was impressed. His son George A. Smith later recounted, "I well remember the remark he made about it. "Why," said he, "he writes like a prophet" ("A Discourse by Elder George A. Smith, delivered in the Bowery, Great Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, August 2, 1857," *JD* 5 [1857]:102-3).

Like his father, Joseph Smith Sr. was also a millennialist. Although their evidence is thin, D. Michael Quinn and John L. Brooke argue that while in Vermont Joseph Smith Sr. was one of the New Israelites ("Wood Scrapes"). As mentioned, they were enthusiastic millennialists (Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 116-135; John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 31, 50-58, 102-6, 121-24, 132-142, 213, 282, 357n12). Six decades after the "Wood Scrape" occurred, a local historian reported a rumor that Joseph Smith Sr. had resided in nearby Poultney, Vermont, during this time and had participated in the New Israelite group as one of its "leading rods-men" (Frisbie, *The History of Middleton, Vermont*, 62). The Smiths, however, in 1802 lived in the White River Valley on the other side of the Green Mountains" from Middletown. Current historical efforts to place Joseph Smith Sr. in Poultney at the turn of the century remind one of the former efforts to place Sidney Rigdon in Palmyra before 1830. Whether Joseph Smith Sr.'s associated with the New Israelites or not, he lived in a national culture of millennialism.

As an inheritor and perpetuator of a family tradition of millennial expectation, and living in a national environment wherein such expectations were common, Joseph Smith Sr. must also have scanned the temporal horizon for an imminent fulfillment of the idea of a new prophet. He probably expected that his father's prediction of a prophet in the family would soon be fulfilled.

It has also been suggested that William Cowdery, the father of Oliver Cowdery, may have also been a member of the Wood Scrape in Vermont. The weight of the evidence, however, suggests he was not.

When did father Smith begin using a divining rod? In 1843 James C. Brewster who had searched for treasure with Joseph Smith Sr. in the Kirtland, Ohio, area recounted that in the summer of 1837 the elder Smith claimed, "I know more about money digging than any man in this generation, for I have been in the business more than thirty years" (pamphlet by James Colin Brewster: "Very Important! To the Mormon Money Diggers." This pamphlet ends with "JAMES COLIN BREWSTER, Springfield, Missouri, March 20, 1843"). If Brewster can be trusted, Joseph had been hunting treasure as far back as 1807. Brewster's reminiscence dates Joseph Smith Sr.'s treasure hunting back to his Vermont years. He moved New York in 1816. There is

other evidence to suggest that Joseph Smith Sr. began treasure dowsing in Vermont (*Early Mormon Documents* 1:597, 624-25). Vermont treasure diviners used rods more than any other method to search for treasures. He moved to New York in 1816, and apparently he continued to dowse for water and treasure there.

Prior to 1816, Joseph Sr. and Lucy Smith contemplated a move to the west. Joseph and Lucy had moved their family a number of times, but always within the vicinity of their ancestral homeland. Pulling up roots to move westward posed a more difficult decision. If Joseph Sr. had a rod by this time, it makes sense that he would have inquired by it concerning the family move.

Joseph Sr.'s water witching and subterranean "dirty work" probably contributed to the negative statements some of his neighbors later made about him. In 1887, Joseph Rogers recalled, "Old Joe, was called a devil. He was very intemperate, profane, and vulgar in conversation" (Joseph Rogers, statement, Los Gatos, California, 16 May 1887, quoted in Arthur B. Deming, "Mormon Prophet," *Naked Truths about Mormonism* [Oakland, California], April 1888, p.1, col. 2). James H. Kennedy called Joseph Smith Jr. "the well-digger's son" as a term of opprobrium (James Harrison Kennedy, "The Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon," 1890, Diedrich Willers Papers, Seneca Falls Historical Society, Seneca Falls, New York, 1, 10).

The Smith family spent their first three years in New York in the village of Palmyra. After that, they moved southward to the Palmyra-Manchester township line to farm. Local historians and former neighbors recalled that when the Smiths first moved to Palmyra they opened a "cake and beer shop" which featured ginger bread and root beer. Joseph Sr. and the boys supplemented the family income by hiring out as harvesters and well-diggers.

In addition to digging wells, the Smith males rocked wells, dug and rocked cisterns, and built fireplaces and rock walls. These forms of labor were commonly engaged in by those who worked as well-diggers and water witches. In their mid-twentieth century study of American water witching, anthropologist Evan Z. Vogt and psychologist Ray Hyman found that the five most common occupations held by water witches were in order farmer, well-driller, retired people or pensioners, ranchers, and general laborers (Evan Z. Vogt and Ray Hyman, *Water Witching U.S.A.*, 2d ed. [Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1959; Phoenix Book ed., 1979], 164). The Smiths had farmed in Vermont and would farm again as soon as possible. They also dug wells and hired out as general laborers. Joseph Sr. fit squarely within water witching culture. J. H. Kennedy, who interviewed the Smiths' Wayne County neighbors in preparation for his 1888 book on Mormonism, wrote that Joseph Sr. had been a water witch (Kennedy, *Early Days of Mormonism*, 19. On Kennedy's interviewing, see v-vi). In the summer of 1880, investigative journalist Frederic G. Mather visited the old Smith neighborhood and spoke with Orlando Saunders. He reported father Smith's use of a "forked stick or hazel rod" to find water and treasure

(Mather, "The Early Days of Mormonism," *Lippincott's Magazine*, August 1880, 198. On Joseph Smith Sr.'s water witching, see also Donald Enders', "The Joseph Smith Sr. Family," 222).

In 1825, the Smiths lost title to their farm and began paying rent to Lemuel Durfee who lived north of Palmyra Village. The Smiths paid part of their rent in labor. Donald L. Enders, curator of New York LDS sites, suggests that the Smiths dug and rocked some of the wells on the Durfee farm ("The Joseph Smith Sr. Family: Farmers of the Genesee," in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, The Man*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr. [Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993], 222). It was at this time that the Smiths met Martin Harris, who lived just down the road from Durfee. Willard Bean wrote that Joseph Senior and Hyrum dug and rocked the well on the Martin Harris farm in the mid-1820s (Bean, *A.B.C. History of Palmyra and the Beginning of "Mormonism,"* 35). Bean did not mention whether Joseph Sr. witched the well, but one of the reasons Bean wrote his book was to counter local traditions about the Smith family's treasure seeking. It was while they were digging this well that Martin became acquainted with the Smiths.

### **Joseph Smith Junior's Involvement in Divination**

Over the last two decades, a number of scholarly studies by devout Latter-day Saint scholars and empathetic secularists have concluded that Joseph Smith was involved in treasure seeking and an early American milieu of beliefs and practices that many modern Americans would label "magic." He was born into a family tradition of wisdom divination. It is likely his mother, Lucy Mack Smith, was largely instrumental in mentoring him in wisdom divination. He learned to use a divining rod largely from his father. Later on, again at the encouragement of his father, he evolved into the use of seer stones.

Actually little is known about Joseph's use of the rod. He may have become involved in dowsing with a rod as early as 1817, shortly following the family's arrival in New York from Vermont. He began using the seer stone when he looked into the seer stone of his neighbor Sally Chase probably in 1819. He began using his own seer stones by the early 1820s. It is possible that Joseph's elder brothers, Alvin and Hyrum, were also involved in divination, but it is Joseph that is most often mentioned.

It was apparent early that Joseph was uncommonly gifted in using these divining instruments, and soon he had a reputation in Palmyra as the "village seer." He hired himself out as a water witch and treasure hunter. He also used his instruments to look for stray livestock and other things as people needed.

Joseph held a "theocentric" view of the "gift of seeing." That is, he felt that the gift was God-given and God-approved. Some time between 1825 and 1830, Joseph told Emma Smith's brother Alvah "that his (Smith's) gift in seeing with a stone and hat, was a gift from God" ("Mormonism," *The Susquehanna Register, and Northern*

*Pennsylvanian* (Montrose, Pennsylvania), 1 May 1834, p. 1, col. 4). Joseph believed there were three essential elements in the so-called “dowsing formula.” All three needed to be present before successful divination could be accomplished. They were the rod, God, and the dowser. While all three were vital, God’s favor was the most important. This formula applied equally to the rod or the seer stone. The idea of the association of God and the use of rods was corroborated by early LDS scripture. Today, D&C 8:6 refers to one of Oliver Cowdery’s gifts. It is the “gift of Aaron.” It was referred to in the original manuscript of this revelation (the 1833 Book of Commandments) as “the gift of working with the rod.” Ancient Aaron was the elder brother of Moses, and with his rod in his hand he went before Moses as a spokesman. God had instructed that Moses’s rod (originally his shepherd’s staff—see Exodus 4:2-4) was to be the instrument by which he and Aaron would perform signs and wonders. This rod was then carried by Aaron, and was sometimes called the rod of God (see Exodus 4:20; 17:9) and sometimes the rod of Moses (see Exodus 9:23; 10:13; 17:5), but usually it was called the rod of Aaron (see Exodus 7:10, 12, 19; 8:5, 16). It was a tangible symbol of Aaron’s authority and stewardship, of his relationship to Moses and to God, and an instrument by which he accomplished what God commanded him through the mouth of Moses. The Book of Mormon includes a revelation received by Joseph of Egypt promising him that God would some day raise up a Moses for his people and would “give power unto him in a rod” (2 Nephi 3:17). The revelations to Oliver Cowdery regarding his “gift of working with the rod” stressed that this gift came from God and reminded, “without faith you can do nothing” (D&C 8:10).

Diviners were not all equal. Some had more of a gift than others. Also, apparently not just any stone would do. Apparently there were special stones that possessed some inherent virtue that made them particularly suitable for divining.

While digging wells in and around Palmyra in the 1817-19, Joseph’s rodsmanship was probably overshadowed by that of his father. However, in 1825, a treasure-hunter named Josiah Stowell would seek out Joseph Jr. for his gift of seeing. By obtaining a seer stone, Joseph Smith not only fulfilled his father’s expectations but also developed an individual identity.

It is possible that Joseph had more than two seer stones, but two of them are particularly well known—a brown one and a white one.

**Joseph’s brown seer stone.** Joseph’s first stone was probably found in late 1821 or early 1822. He likely saw the stone in 1819 or early 1820 by looking in the stone of a neighbor girl, Sarah (“Sally”) Chase. Sally was probably a little older than Joseph and grew up with him. It is not known exactly where Joseph found this stone. William Purple, a contemporary of Joseph Smith, wrote that Joseph saw his first stone in the ground about a mile from Lake Erie, “not far from the New York and Pennsylvania line” (“Joseph Smith, the Originator of Mormonism: Historical Reminiscences of the Town of Afton,” *Chenango Union*, 2 May 1877, p. 3, col. 8). This was about 150 miles

from Palmyra. The time away from work that a journey of 150 miles would require may account for the time lapse between seeing the stone in vision and acquiring it. It is also possible that the great lake Purple remembered hearing about may have actually been lake Ontario, about twenty miles from the Smith home. Purple's recollections in this matter were given over fifty years after the event. Whether Joseph traveled twenty miles or 150, this journey was vastly important and likely carried with it something of a rite of passage. Before, he had been a water dowser. He was about to become a more socially acceptable "village seer." Brigham Young described his journey: He "went right to the spot & dug & found it" (*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:382-83). William Purple wrote that Joseph "did not have the glass [Sally Chase's seer stone] with him, but he knew its exact location" ("Joseph Smith, the Originator of Mormonism," *Chenango Union*, 2 May 1877, p. 3, col. 8).

Joseph's First Vision of the Father and the Son may have occurred shortly after his vision of his first seer stone but before he actually obtained the first stone. It's also possible that Joseph's First Vision occurred shortly before his actually seeing his first seer stone in Sally Chase's stone.

This first seer stone was buried fifteen feet underground in an "iron kettle." Native American Indians of this area were known to have been using European pots or kettles by the early seventeenth century. In 1810, a copper kettle was unearthed from a native burial ground near Canandaigua, about ten miles to the south (Hill, *Joseph Smith, the First Mormon*, 71-71).

The stone is described as being "about the size of a small hen's egg, in the shape of a high instepped shoe or a "baby's foot." It was composed of layers of different colors passing diagonally through it. It was very hard and smooth, perhaps from being carried in the pocket" (Kirkham, Francis, W. *A New Witness for Christ in America*, 2:365). Emma Smith once described it as "a small stone, not exactly black, but it was rather a dark color" (unpublished letter of Emma Smith Bidamon to Mrs. George W. Pilgrim, March 27, 1870, RLDS Archives P 4 F 20). Historian Andrew Jenson described the stone as an "oval shaped, chocolate colored stone, about the size of an egg but more flat" (*The Historical Record*). This was the stone used in the translation of the Book of Mormon.

Following the translation of the Book of Mormon, this seer stone was passed on to Oliver Cowdery who maintained it in his possession until his death. It was then passed to his widow, Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery, who gave it to Phineas Young. Phineas took it to Utah and gave it to his brother, Brigham Young. From that time, with the exception of a brief hiatus when it was purchased by someone else, it has remained in the possession of the First Presidency where it remains today.

**Joseph's white stone.** The second stone was found in 1822 in the context of digging a well for Willard Chase, the brother of Sally Chase. Actually, Joseph was not

actually digging for water. He was specifically digging for a white seer stone he had visualized with the help of his first stone.

President Wilford Woodruff spoke about “the seer stone known as ‘Gazelem’, which was shown of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph to be some thirty feet under ground, and which he obtained by digging under the pretence of excavating for a well” (George A. Smith Papers, Box 174, folder 26, Manuscripts Division, Marriott Library, University of Utah). This stone was transparent or at least translucent. It’s size was probably comparable to the brown stone, but a little smaller.

Section 130 of the Doctrine and Covenants speaks of those who will inherit the celestial kingdom and states that each will receive a “white stone”:

Then the white stone mentioned in Revelation 2:17, will become a Urim and Thummim to each individual who receives one, whereby things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms will be made known; And a white stone is given to each of those who come into the celestial kingdom, whereon is a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it. The new name is the key word (verses 10-11).

The name *Gazelem* is interesting. Alma 37:23 has the Lord saying: “I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light, that I may discover unto my people who serve me, that I may discover unto them the works of their brethren, yea, their secret works, their works of darkness, and their wickedness and abominations.”

The punctuation of this verse suggests that “Gazelem” is the servant. The stone is the Urim and Thummim. If a comma were placed following the word servant, then the phrase might suggest that the title Gazelem referred instead to the stone. Perhaps it refers to both. It is interesting to recall that Jesus gave to Simon Peter the title “stone”: “And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone” (John 1:42). The title “Gazelem” in this verse may refer to any seer or prophet, but it has been suggested that it might be a direct reference to Joseph Smith. In the Doctrine and Covenants (pre-1981 editions only), Joseph Smith is called “Gazelam” (note the different spelling), which is perhaps a variant spelling of Gazelem.

Another notion about this white stone has persevered. Apparently, the white stone was superior to Joseph’s first (brown) stone. He had a greater capacity to see the future and other spiritual things with this stone. Apparently, at one point, using the white stone, Joseph began viewing individuals’ futures. Some neighbors spoke of Joseph’s “oracles” and “fortune telling.” Joseph Smith, himself, never used these terms. He referred to these practices as “blessings” and “prophecies.” Apparently the angel Moroni instructed Joseph to look into his stone to see the person he should marry. Joseph Knight wrote that Joseph “looked in his glass and found it was Emma Hale.” This was another way Joseph used his stone and developed his gift (Dean Jessee,

“Joseph Knight’s Recollection of Early Mormon History,” 31. See also Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 163-64).

Joseph taught that the white stone of the Book of Revelation (Revelation 2:17) was a seer stone and that a stone existed for each righteous person. It is likely that Joseph identified his white stone as the white stone the Bible promised to the righteous. If so, his acquisition of the white stone symbolized that he had grown spiritually.

After finding the stone, a disagreement arose between Joseph and Willard Chase as to who actually owned the stone. Willard, of course, claimed ownership because it was found on his property. This disagreement was settled only gradually and grudgingly. The dispute between Joseph and Willard over the seer stone foreshadowed the dispute over the ownership of the golden plates that would ensue when Joseph obtained them. In 1827, Chase led the group of men who attacked Joseph and tried to steal the plates. Chase and other men had hunted for treasure with Joseph in earlier years and viewed the ancient record as a treasure of gold. They felt they were entitled to a share of the value of the plates. Chase may have based his claim to the plates in part on the fact that Joseph had discovered them with the white stone, which Chase considered his own property.

A tradition has grown up, even among several early members of the Church, that Joseph used his stone to find the plates of the Book of Mormon (and the Urim and Thummim). This has caused a dilemma, since Joseph’s accounts of finding them indicates that a heavenly visitor, Moroni, showed them to Joseph. Two authors, Richard Van Wagoner and Steve Walker have attempted to harmonize both versions of the event as given in Joseph Smith’s 1839 account of the Moroni visitation. Joseph recounted, “Moroni, the person who deposited the plates . . . appeared unto me, and told me where they were; and gave me directions how to obtain them” (*Elder’s Journal* [Far West, Missouri], July 1838, p. 42, col. 2 - p. 43, col. 1.). Van Wagoner and Walker write, “The seer stone could have been the medium through which Moroni’s instructions were given” (Van Wagoner and Walker, “Joseph Smith: ‘The Gift of Seeing,’” 57).

To support their argument, Van Wagoner and Walker point to another event in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon: Joseph’s seer stone vision of Emma. According to Joseph Knight, Moroni “appeared and told him . . . he might have the Book if he brought with him the right person. Joseph says, ‘who is the right person?’ The answer was ‘you will know.’ Then he looked in his glass and found it was Emma Hale” (“Joseph Knight’s Recollection of Early Mormon History,” 31, spelling and punctuation corrected). Martin Harris related a similar story. When Joseph needed help to translate the Book of Mormon, the angel “told him to go and look in the spectacles, and he would show him the man that would assist him. That he did so, and he saw myself, Martin Harris, standing before him” (“Mormonism—No.11,” *Tiffiny’s Monthly*, June 1859, 169). The discovery of the gold plates could have followed a similar pattern: a visitation of the angel followed by a seer stone vision locating the object (or subject) under discussion.

While Joseph carried the brown stone on his person, he apparently kept this white stone in a safe place. Emma would later make a pouch for the brown stone. This probably occurred sometime after their wedding in January of 1827. In contrast, the white stone may have been kept in a box. Apparently, today this stone is also in the possession of the First Presidency.

One way seer stones were used in Joseph's day was most peculiar and unique. They were placed in the bottom of the crown of an inverted hat. The diviner's face was then placed into the hat and the crown gathered about the face to exclude the light. Then, in the dark, the diviner could read the message on the stone. The student of the Book of Mormon will readily recognize this technique as the same as Joseph used to translate that book. The brown stone was utilized in translating the Book of Mormon. One account describing Joseph's use of the white stone suggested that Joseph held the stone up to a light (the sun or a candle) in order to read messages off the stone. Thus, there may have been two fundamentally different processes for utilizing seer stones.

For eight years the Smiths hunted for treasure (from about 1818 to 1826). During this period, fewer than twenty ventures were documented (Vogel, Dan "The Locations of Joseph Smith's Early Treasure Quests," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 27, no. 3 [fall 1994]: 197-231). Joseph described his best known treasure hunting venture:

In 1825 I hired with an old Gentleman, by name of Josiah Stool [Stowell] who lived in Chenango County, State of New York. He had heard something of a silver mine having been opened by the Spaniards in Harmony, Susquehanna County, State of Pennsylvania. . . . He took me among the rest of his hands to dig for the silver mine, at which I continued to work for nearly a month without success in our undertaking, and finally I prevailed with the old gentleman to cease digging after it (Manuscript History of the Church, *Joseph Smith Papers*, LDS Church Archives, Book A-1, pp. 7-8, in PIS, 1:282. For a photograph of one of the silver mine excavations, see *Church History in Black and White*, 198).

### **Joseph Jr.'s Transition from Treasure Seeker to Prophet**

Over the years, several anti-Mormons have developed the theory that Joseph "stumbled" into prophethood "more by accident than by design." After all, he already had a reputation for being a village seer. Then add to that Joseph's ambitious nature, his creative imagination, need for an audience, and a desire for financial security. All of these coalesced and served as driving forces that led to his assumption of the prophetic role.

How did Joseph Smith really become a prophet? How would committed members of the Church describe the process? For most believing Latter-day Saints, the answer is quite simple: he was called by God. God the Father and Jesus Christ

visited him in 1820 when he was only fourteen years of age. Intuitively most members of the Church see Joseph's First Vision experience in the spring of 1820 simplistically as the defining moment in his life: Prior to that experience he was an inquisitive, conflicted young man confused about religion. Afterward, his direction and role were clear. He was to become the prophet of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Actually, at the time of Joseph's First Vision, he was wavering between organized religion and folk magic. Historian Richard Bushman explained that the First Vision would have driven Joseph away from the organized churches in his mother's social orbit toward the treasure-seeking culture of his father ("Joseph Smith's Family Background," 1-18, especially 11-14. See also Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 31). Perhaps it is more accurate to regard the First Vision as merely the beginning of a gradual transition in Joseph's life. At the time of his vision experience, Joseph was a member of a family fighting for economic survival. Joseph Sr. was heavily involved in the practices of a diviner, and Joseph Jr. was becoming involved. Joseph Jr.'s focus was not particularly on materialistic self-aggrandizement. Rather he was fixed upon the issue of adequate financial resources for his family. His spiritual gift for divining was initially regarded by himself as a way to make money. Even following his epiphany in the sacred grove, he didn't fully understand the eternal significance of his remarkable gift for receiving revelation. Joseph's First Vision may have actually provided further impetus and direction for Joseph's step-wise divinatory development. Is it possible that Jesus may have instructed Joseph to obtain a stone? Joseph would come to understand the awesome responsibility his First Vision had placed upon him only gradually.

In addition to grandpa Asael's predictions of a prophet that was soon to be born in the Smith family, there is a rather extensive family tradition that Joseph Jr. was marked by his family—for other reasons—from an early age as one who was destined to become great. In those days, there was a tradition that a baby who was born with a "caul" or veil over its head was headed for greatness. The caul is a piece of the amniotic sac that separates from the rest of the sac and happens to affix itself to the baby's head during the birth process. There is some evidence to suggest that Joseph had such a caul. Also there was a numerological tradition that a seventh son or a third son had more of a chance of becoming someone great. Joseph, of course, was a third son. Thus, the family's expectations was a "naturalistic" factor that might have given some impetus and direction to young Joseph as he grew up.

Joseph's preparation for eventually becoming a prophet developed and progressed through the decade of the 1820s. It moved through basic modes of divination including rods and seer stones to visions, angelic visitations, and theophanies. I do not doubt that this incremental development took place under the orchestration of the Lord.

Following the First Vision in the spring of 1820, Joseph received no further heavenly messengers until September 22, 1823, when he was visited by the prophet Moroni the last prophet in the Book of Mormon and the son of the prophet Mormon. Joseph Smith was subsequently tutored over at least the next four years in the ways of prophethood by the resurrected Moroni. Indeed, that four-year period may well have been required by Joseph to enable him to overcome his treasure-seeking mentality and become a true prophet. Moroni mentored Joseph much as the Old Testament prophet Elijah mentored his successor Elisha. Among other things, Moroni revealed to Joseph Smith the location of the golden plates from which he would translate the Book of Mormon.

In Joseph Smith's day, there were laws in the state of New York that made the practice of "money digging" (treasure seeking) illegal. Undoubtedly this was because most of those involved in the business were swindlers out to make a quick dollar. Joseph was arrested in 1826 and charged with breaking this law. His trial in Chenango County turned out to be a watershed moment in Joseph's life. Previous to the trial, he had mostly viewed his uncommon gifts at divining as a way to make money for his family. The trial, during which he was acquitted, proved to be an experience that started him on the path of using his divining gifts for more wholesome purposes such as finding lost property and eventually eternally significant purposes.

Actually neighbors and acquaintances spoke of Joseph's role as a finder of things lost even before the 1826 trial. Around 1823, Joseph had begun to use his brown stone to find missing things. The 1826 court record confirms this by stating that Joseph had "been in the habit of looking through this stone (the brown stone) to find lost property for three years" (The court record is published in "A Document Discovered," *Utah Christian Advocate*, January 1886, p.1 , cols. 1-3. On the authenticity of the record, see Marvin S. Hill, "Joseph Smith and the 1826 Trial: New Evidence and New Difficulties," *BYU Studies* 12, no. 2, winter 1972: 223-233; "The 1826 Examination," Bibliographic Essay 2, in Marquardt and Walters, *Inventing Mormonism*, 222-30).

Joseph Smith Sr.'s testimony in the 1826 court record is revealing. "He [Joseph Smith Sr.] swore that both he and his son were mortified that this wonderful power which God had so miraculously given him [Joseph Jr.] should be used only in search of filthy lucre" (William D. Purple, "Joseph Smith, the Originator of Mormonism," *Otenango Union*, 2 May 1877, p. 3, col. 9). Following the trial, Joseph Jr. gave up treasure seeking entirely.

Historians' narrow focus on the treasure-seeking component of the village seer role follows understandably from the historical record. When Smith's early neighbors wrote about him, they usually emphasized treasure seeking in order to denigrate his religious claims. We get a different picture in the record of Joseph Smith's court appearance. It is the only source mentioning seer stones that is contemporary to the time period in which Joseph functioned as a village seer. Notes of Joseph Sr.'s

testimony read, "He [Joseph Jr.] had a certain stone, which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were . . . and while at Palmyra he had frequently ascertained in that way where lost property was of various kinds" (A reproduction of the court minutes appears in "A Document Discovered," *Utah Christian Advocate*, Salt Lake City, January 1886, p. 1, col. 1-2). This point was originally made by Richard Lloyd Anderson ("The Mature Joseph Smith and Treasure Searching" 533).

Following the trial, Joseph's role and reputation as a village seer expanded when he began looking less for treasures and more for lost property and into the future. His ability to find lost items doubtless grew out of his previous treasure hunting. Martin Harris related that on one occasion Joseph used a seer stone to help him find a missing toothpick:

I was at the house of his father in Manchester, two miles south of Palmyra village, and was picking my teeth with a pin while sitting on the bars. The pin caught in my teeth, and dropped from my fingers into shavings and straw. I jumped from the bars and looked for it Joseph and Northrop Sweet also did the same. We could not find it. I then took Joseph on surprise, and said to him, "Take your stone." I had never seen it, and did not know that he had it with him. He had it in his pocket. He took it and placed it in his hat . . . [he] placed his face in his hat. I watched him closely to see that he did not look [to] one side; he reached out his hand beyond me on the right, and moved a little stick, and there I saw the pin, which he picked up and gave to me. I know he did not look out of the hat until after he had picked up the pin ("*Mormonism—No. II*," *Tiffany's Monthly*, June 1859, 164, 411).

The Lord's complicity in Joseph's using instruments for divining is evidenced by a passage in the Book of Commandments: "Now this is not all, for you have another gift, which is the gift of working with the rod: behold it has told you things: behold there is no other power save God, that can cause this rod of nature, to work in your hands, for it is the work of God; and therefore whatsoever you shall ask me to tell you by that means, that will I grant unto you, that you shall know." As already mentioned, when the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was published in 1835, "the gift of working with the rod" was changed to "the gift of Aaron" (D&C 8:6).

Another obvious indicator of the Lord's approval of Joseph's becoming skillful in using the seer stone was his using his brown stone to accomplish the translation of the Book of Mormon. In fact, in translating the book, he used the very same technique he had used previously for less enduring purposes. That is, he inverted his hat, placed the stone in the crown, placed his face in the hat and occluded the hat around his face to create darkness. He then directly read the revelatory message from off the seer stone.

Thus, we learn that Joseph's gift of seeing in the stone was destined early to extend beyond treasure quest. As he matured, he used stones more and more to look into the future, to find stolen property, and to locate missing livestock. Most anti-Mormon authors have either missed or underappreciated this critical concept. Almost all have focused on the treasure seeking aspect of Joseph's use of seer stones. It eventually became apparent that Joseph's role in using a seer stone was considerably larger than treasure hunting. Religious Studies professor Jan Shipps, in her now standard study of Mormonism (*Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), writes, "Smith's efforts to find ordinary buried treasure were gradually transformed into a search for treasure of infinitely greater value" (11). BYU history professor D. Michael Quinn's *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (1987) discusses the full range of activities in the village seer's role. As might be predicted of Quinn, however, he focused sharply on treasure seeking.

Brigham Young, taught that "the gift of seeing was a natural gift" and that "there are thousands in the world who are natural born Seers, but when the Lord selected Joseph Smith to be his vice-gerent [a "gerent" is a ruler or manager] and mouthpiece upon the earth in this dispensation, he saw that he would be faithful and honor his calling" (*Deseret News*, Salt Lake City, 26 December 1860, p. 337, col. 3. This article reports a discourse delivered by President Brigham Young at the tabernacle in Salt Lake City on 23 December 1860). While Brigham's statement acknowledged Joseph's prior role as a seer, it returned to the simple explanation of a calling. God's calling transformed Smith from a treasure seeker to village seer, and then to a prophet of God.

Joseph's evolution through the sequence of his instruments of translation is another illustration of his progression from treasure seeker to prophet. When he began the process of translation in April 1828 with Martin Harris, he used the spectacles—the Urim and Thummim—and the plates to translate. The spectacles were apparently the most powerful tool Joseph had available to him. He was able to successfully use them when his own abilities were not yet fully developed. They were, however, awkward for him to use. They consisted of two large clear lenses, attached by a movable arm to the breastplate and fixed in a frame. When in the frame, they were placed too wide apart for Joseph's eyes. In that fixed condition he had to use both of his eyes to look through one lens. Apparently, from time to time, he used the spectacles in different ways. At times he detached them from the frame and carried one or both with him, probably in a pouch. In this way, he could use them when he was away from home. At other times, he would put one or both lenses in the bottom of his hat and place his face in the hat, sealing out the light with his hands around his face.

The next most powerful tool he had was his white stone—the one he found on the property of Willard Chase. As mentioned, this seer stone was used either by holding it up to a light—a candle or the sun—or he could put it in the bottom of his hat. The least powerful of his translating tools was his brown seer stone. He was able to

use this only when his own abilities to translate were more developed. This stone apparently provided less divine help and required more of his own native ability. The exact nature of that “ability” is not understood. As mentioned, it is felt that virtually the entire Book of Mormon was translated in 1829 using this brown stone.

The restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the organization of the Church were the final steps. They signaled Joseph’s transition from visions through the medium of the seer stones to unaided revelation. In 1866, early Mormon Zebedee Coltrin recalled that he had once asked Joseph “what he had done with the Urim and Thummi[m].” Joseph replied that “he had no further need of it . . . . He had the Melchizedek Priesthood, and with that he had the key to all knowledge and intelligence” (“Record and Minute Book of the High Priests of Spanish Fork Ward opened 29th April 1866-1898,” 128-29, LDS Church Archives). Joseph later taught that all of the Old Testament prophets held the Melchizedek priesthood.

The pattern in the Old Testament conforms to Joseph’s divinatory development. Whereas Aaron and his successors in the High Priest’s office—holding the lesser priesthood—received revelation through the Urim and Thummim, the Old Testament prophets with the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood received revelation directly from God into their minds. After John the Baptist’s restoration of the Aaronic priesthood, Joseph still used the seer stone. After receiving the Melchizedek priesthood, he received direct revelation.

David Whitmer later wrote concerning Joseph’s transition from seer to prophet:

After the translation of the Book of Mormon was finished, early in the spring of 1830, before April 6th, Joseph gave the [brown] stone to Oliver Cowdery and told me as well as the rest that he was through with it, and he did not use the stone any more. . . . He told us that we would all have to depend on the Holy Ghost hereafter to be guided into truth and obtain the will of the Lord. The revelations after this came through Joseph as “mouth piece”; that is, he would inquire of the Lord, pray and ask concerning a matter, and speak out the revelation, which he thought to be a revelation from the Lord (“A Witness to the Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, 32. See also 30-36).

Further evidences of his status as prophet of God were soon to follow. These included the published collection of Joseph’s revelations published initially in the Book of Commandments in 1833 and later as the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835. In June of 1830 he would begin his “new translation” of the Bible. Later on, he would “translate” the Book of Abraham, apparently using Egyptian papyri.

Following the organization of the Church in April 1830, Joseph “fell back” on the use of his media (Urim and Thummim, white stone, brown stone) only occasionally and

temporarily. Orson Pratt Pratt, who witnessed several of Joseph's revelations, observed:

Sometimes Joseph used a seer stone when enquiring of the Lord, and receiving revelation, but that he was so thoroughly endowed with the inspiration of the Almighty and the spirit of revelation that he oftener received them without any instrument, or other means than the operation of the spirit upon his mind ("Report of Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith," *Deseret Evening News*, 23 November 1878, p. 1, col. 5).

In *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, Richard L. Bushman combines natural evolution with supernatural incursion to chart Joseph's transition. According to Bushman, when Joseph first went to Cumorah in 1823 he viewed the golden plates in a treasure-hunting context. He intended to secure them as a treasure with which he could relieve his family's poverty. As Joseph grasped the plates, the angel Moroni appeared, interrupting the natural course of events. The angel rebuked him, reminded him that this gold could not be sold, and informed him that the Lord's purposes were bigger than the Smith family's financial situation. In a later appearance, Moroni instructed Joseph to "quit the company of the money-diggers." These moments of divine intervention served as impetus for Joseph's evolution. "Although he did not repudiate the stone or ever deny its power to find treasure, Joseph Jr. began to orient himself toward a new mission obtaining and translating the book of Mormon" (73-74). Bushman also feels that Joseph's 1826 trial expedited his reorientation from treasure seeker to his new purpose.

Richard L. Bushman has written further on the hypothesis that Joseph's transition was incremental. In an essay on "Joseph Smith as Translator," he writes that the "treasure-seeking stones from the magic culture . . . helped Joseph move step-by-step into his calling." Bushman notes that when Joseph received the Urim and Thummim spectacles he knew how to use them because of his previous experience with the stones" (see *The Prophet Puzzle: Interpretive Essays on Joseph Smith*, ed. Bryan Waterman [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999], 79. See also Bushman, "The Secret History of Mormonism," *Sunstone*, March 1996, 66-70).

In a metaphorical way, Joseph's father represented his previous treasure-seeking orientation, and his mother, his higher calling. Joseph Sr. initially refused to affiliate with any local church congregation. He remained an un-churched treasure hunter. His mother joined the Presbyterian Church. The plates of gold conformed with his father's treasure-seeking beliefs while the translation of those plates into a sacred book accorded with his mother's pursuit of Bible religion.

Joseph Smith Sr. may have initially failed to provide Joseph with an adequate spiritual father figure. One is reminded of the almost fatherly role, perhaps by default, Joseph Jr.'s elder brother Alvin played in his life. It does seem clear, however, that

Joseph Sr. became thoroughly converted to the gospel under the tutelage of his son. He died in 1840 the patriarch of the Church.

Although finding treasure eventually became less important to Joseph than finding lost property, none of his antagonistic contemporaries wrote much about that transition of his divination activities. Treasure seeking was more sensational and easier to ridicule, and so that is what they wrote about. For those who left early antagonistic accounts and for the historians who have used them, the context of treasure digging has provided an easy explanation of early Mormonism. Treasure seeking comprised only one part of the village seer role.

Mark Ashurst-McGee, in his introduction to his masters thesis, provided a thoughtful overview of the “transition theory”:

To elucidate the theory, I will specify four precise increments in Joseph Smith’s transition. First, Joseph Smith used the seer stone of a neighborhood girl to find a seer stone for himself. Second, he used his own seer stone to find a better seer stone. Third, he used this new superior stone to find a special seeric instrument that resembled a pair of glasses. Joseph considered these spectacles the ultimate seeric instrument, and identified them as a “Urim and Thummim” similar to that used in the Old Testament Fourth, he used the Urim and Thummim spectacles to train himself for unaided revelation.

These increments not only increased Smith’s seeric abilities, but sequentially aligned him with the role of the Old Testament prophets. To expand upon the [transition] theory, I will argue that Joseph’s transition from village seer to prophet forms only one phase in a larger progression. Joseph was born into a family tradition of divination. Coming out of this background, he learned to use a divining rod. After becoming a rodsman, he then progressed to village seer. Finally, he attained prophethood. With each step, Joseph moved further from mechanical divination and dowser to ecstatic revelation. I further explore the possibility that from the beginning Joseph Smith and his parents had some understanding of this process and its direction (masters thesis: *A Pathway to Prophethood: Joseph Smith Junior as Rodsman, Village Seer, and Judeo-Christian Prophet*).

One might well raise the question as to why instruments such as the interpreters and the seer stone were needed in the translation process in the first place. Orson Pratt, who had considered this same question, reported that Joseph told him that the Lord gave him the Urim and Thummim “when he was inexperienced in the spirit of inspiration. But now he had advanced so far that he understood the operation of the Spirit and did not need the assistance of that instrument” (Richard Lloyd Anderson, “The Mature Joseph Smith and Treasure Searching”). Zebedee Coltrin, a friend of the

Prophet, related that he had once asked Joseph what he had done with the Urim and Thummim and that “Joseph said that he had no further need of it and he had given it to the angel Moroni. He had the Melchizedek Priesthood and with that priesthood he had the key to all knowledge and intelligence” (*High Priests Record of Spanish Fork Branch*, September, 128). These statements do not provide a complete answer to the question as to why the Lord required Joseph to utilize objects or instruments in the process of translation. I believe we are left with the idea that the seer stone and the Urim and Thummim represented the Lord’s part in the miraculous process, but more was required for the process to work—likely substantial personal preparation and effort were also required by the translator himself. The exact nature of that preparation is unknown.

### **Divination Among Joseph’s Contemporaries**

As early Mormon history unfolded, divining cropped up in other situations. In 1830, Book of Mormon witness Hiram Page used his seer stone to receive a series of revelations—one of which apparently located the New Jerusalem. Joseph Smith Jr. received a subsequent revelation in September of that year stating that Page’s revelations had come from Satan. The Lord revealed to Joseph, “I say unto you, that it is not revealed, and no man knoweth where the city shall be built, but it shall be given hereafter” (Book of Commandments 30:8, 11). For an analysis of the Page and Smith revelations, see Bruce G. Stewart, “Hiram Page: An Historical and Sociological Analysis of an Early Mormon Prototype” [master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1987], 112-139, 145).

Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball used rods. In 1837, while voyaging to the British Isles, Heber C. Kimball had a visionary dream in which Joseph Smith appeared to him and gave him a rod “with which . . . to guide the ship.” On their return, Joseph gave rods to both Heber Kimball and to Brigham Young. Brother Kimball held his rod when praying for revelation. An early Church historian wrote that Brigham Young carried Oliver Cowdery’s Aaronic rod with him when he led the way to the Salt Lake Valley and then used it to point out where the temple should be built. This was actually a cane (Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 258).

### **Conclusion**

From 1830 to 1844 Joseph filled this role as prophet of God. He restored the principles and ordinances of the gospel in their primitive purity and ancient order untarnished by creed or tradition. Like Moses, he led the children of Israel. Like Peter, he presided over the church. As Richard Bushman notes, Joseph was *living* the Bible (*Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 183-88).

Joseph never denied his use of seer stones or repudiated their efficacy, but it is obvious to us that are students of his life that he did not speak of them publicly. An obvious example is his miraculous translation of the Book of Mormon. Why did Joseph

recount only the descensional half of his history? One reason is that he did not want his past to be misunderstood in a way that would hurt the church. Bushman writes:

Conventional Christianity was fighting to protect itself from the Enlightenment critics' charges of superstition, and, to prove their rationality, Christian apologists vented their anger on the remnants of magic carried down from an earlier time when magic and religion mingled. Joseph did not want to make himself a target for attacks that would cripple the work ("Joseph Smith as Translator," 79).

Another reason Joseph neglected to write of his ascensional divination with rods and stones was simply that it held less meaning for him when compared to his experiences with descensional divination. Speaking face to face with God, the Father, prepared Joseph to be a prophet more than locating a well site. Joseph's First Vision of the risen Christ made a larger impression on him than his first vision of his first seer stone. His discussions with the angel Moroni concerning the plates and the spectacles stood out in his memory more than when he used his white stone to see their location. With maturity, the Book of Mormon eventually eclipsed the spectacles in importance.

We have traced Joseph's life through a remarkable transition. It began with a family background of belief in wisdom divination. Then he gained facility with a divining rod and seer stones. He eventually became recognized as a "village seer" who not only sought for treasures but also assisted those in need in finding lost objects. He then was mentored by the resurrected Moroni through his finding the gold plates and translating the Book of Mormon. Finally, he became a fully competent prophet of God—able to receive revelation without the help of any intermediary device. Obviously both naturalistic and divine influences were involved in this translation.

The story is so remarkable that even Joseph himself excused the doubter. Shortly before his assassination he stated, "I don't blame you for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I could not have believed it myself" (Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2, winter 1978: 208).

## Oliver Cowdery Controversies

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Of all the people in the restored Church of Jesus Christ, the one perhaps we would least expect to ever separate himself from the Church, aside from the prophet Joseph Smith, is Oliver Cowdery. Just imagine the remarkable spiritual experiences he had. He was a witness of many critical events in the restoration of the gospel. As one of three Book of Mormon witnesses, Oliver testified that an angel displayed the gold plates and that the voice of God proclaimed them correctly translated. He was with the prophet Joseph when John the Baptist restored to them the Aaronic Priesthood and when Peter, James, and John ordained them to the Melchizedek Priesthood and to the apostleship. He was present again during the momentous Kirtland Temple visions (D&C 110). And yet he was excommunicated and did leave the Church! How is that possible? It is no surprise that many critics of the Church have delighted in the conclusions many are willing to make of this combination of circumstances. If Oliver was able to actually leave the Church, and remain separated from the saints for ten years, then he must not have actually had those remarkable experiences!

In this chapter, I will first briefly review Oliver's biography. I will then consider individually each of several specific accusations made against Oliver by critics of the Church. Then, I will review the circumstances surrounding his excommunication from the Church in April 1838. Then I will look closely at the event of his rebaptism into the Church in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Finally, I will draw a few conclusions as to Oliver's true mind set during the unpleasantness surrounding his excommunication and during those ten years he lived separate from the Church.

### **Brief Biography of Oliver Cowdery**

Oliver was born October 3, 1806 in Wells, Vermont, to William Cowdery Jr. and Rebecca Fuller. His parents married three years after Oliver was born. He was born into a New England family with strong traditions of patriotism, individuality, learning, and religion.

In 1809 Oliver's family moved to Middletown, Vermont. His mother died there, possibly of tuberculosis, at age 43 (It is ironic that Oliver would later die of the same disease at the same age). Subsequently, between 1809 and 1813, he apparently lived with his Uncle Rufus and Aunt Huldah Fuller Glass in Wells, Vermont. Huldah was Oliver's mother's older sister. The Cowdery and Glass homes were just a mile apart in Wells. Oliver grew up with the Glass children.

On March 18, 1810, Oliver's father William married Keziah Pearce Austin, a Middletown widow who came from a respected Poultney family. William and his family soon moved to Williamson, New York. Oliver remained with the Glass household.

In 1813 Rufus and Huldah Glass died, probably of typhoid fever. After their death Oliver returned to the home of his father and step mother. Shortly thereafter, the family moved back to Middletown.

Later in 1818 they moved to Poultney, Vermont. They would live in Poultney for nearly a decade. It is possible that Oliver lived with the Arunah Glass family in Wells, Vermont between 1820 and 1822 while he attended school there. Arunah was the son of Rufus and Huldah Glass.

In 1825 Oliver moved to Wayne County, New York where he possibly lived with his brother Lyman in Lyons, a few miles northeast of Palmyra. Oliver's younger sister provided us with the only information we have about his childhood. She described his childhood thusly: "Oliver was brought up in Poultney, Rutland County, Vermont, and when he arrived at the age of twenty [Oliver was probably only 19], he went to the state of New York, where his older brothers were married and settled. . . . Oliver's occupation was clerking in a store until 1829 [Oliver started teaching in 1828], when he taught the district school in the town of Manchester" (Lucy Cowdery Young to Andrew Jenson, March 7, 1887, Church Archives). The William Cowdery family followed Oliver to New York two years later in 1827.

In late 1828, while Joseph and Emma were living in Harmony, Pennsylvania, Oliver met David Whitmer and the Smith family in Palmyra. In early 1829, while teaching school in Manchester and boarding with the Smith family, he learned of their convictions about the ancient record that their son Joseph was translating. Oliver prayed for and received a divine visitation calling him to assist Joseph Smith.

Joseph described Oliver's experience: "The Lord appeared unto . . . Oliver Cowdery and shewed unto him the plates in a vision and . . . what the Lord was about to do through me, his unworthy servant. Therefore he was desirous to come and write for me to translate" (*Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:10).

In late March 1829, he departed Manchester with Samuel Smith and arrived in Harmony, Pennsylvania on April 5. There he met Joseph Smith for the first time. Just two days later, on April 7, Joseph and Oliver began the translation of the Book of Mormon. Joseph dictated, and Oliver acted as scribe.

During the process of translation, on May 15, 1829, Joseph and Oliver received the Aaronic Priesthood with Joseph from John the Baptist. Oliver and Joseph then baptized each other. Probably sometime within the next two weeks both men received the Melchizedek Priesthood from Peter, James, and John. This was likely just prior to Joseph and Oliver's moving away from Harmony.

Between June 1 and 3 Oliver moved with Joseph to the Peter Whitmer farm in Fayette, New York. There the translation of the Book of Mormon was completed about the end of June. On June 20, with Joseph Smith, Oliver, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, in open vision, saw Moroni and the Book of Mormon plates. Also in June, Oliver

drafted a document called the “Articles of the Church of Christ.” This document would form as a foundation for section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

On about July 1, 1829, Oliver completed his work as the scribe for Joseph’s translation of the Book of Mormon. Between July and February 1830 Oliver completed a copy of the entire Book of Mormon for use by the printer. This was the so-called printer’s manuscript. The actual printing of the Book of Mormon, by the E. B. Grandin Press in Palmyra, was begun in August 1829 and completed in March 1830. Oliver, along with Martin Harris and Hiram Smith, supervised the printing.

In January, 1830, Oliver traveled to Ontario, Canada, with Hiram Page in an attempt to sell the Book of Mormon copyright. This occurred at about the same time that Abner Cole was illegally printing extracts from the Book of Mormon under his pseudonym, Obadiah Dogberry. He printed them in his weekly periodical, *The Reflector*.

On April 6, 1830, Oliver became one of the six original members of the Church when it was organized in Fayette, New York. Oliver was ordained an elder by Joseph and sustained Second Elder of the Church. On April 11, Oliver preached the first public discourse of the Church of Christ.

Between June and October of 1830 Oliver served as scribe for Joseph’s inspired “translation” project, the writing of the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. During 1830 and 1831, Oliver served as church Recorder.

Between October 1830 and February 1831, Oliver led the Lamanite mission to Ohio. He traveled with Parley P. Pratt, Peter Whitmer Jr., and Ziba Peterson. This was the first major mission of the Church. The missionaries’ access to the Indians was limited by the federal Indian agent. But the mission succeeded in doubling the membership of the Church.

Oliver was ordained a high priest by Sidney Rigdon on August 28, 1831.

Between November 1831 and July 1833, Oliver assisted O. O. Phelps with publishing church periodicals in Missouri. Between July 1833 and the fall of 1837, Oliver preached, published, and assisted in church administration in Kirtland, Ohio. He was ordained assistant president of the High Priesthood on December 5, 1834. He was thus ranked above Sidney Rigdon who had long served as Joseph’s first counselor. Oliver’s church career peaked from 1834 to 1836. He was a highly effective preacher, writer, and administrator.

During the years 1835 through 1837, he served a second stint as Church Recorder.

On April 3, 1836, he saw a vision of the Savior with Joseph Smith, followed by visits from Moses, Elias, and Elijah (see D&C 110).

On September 3, 1837, Oliver was ordained “assistant counselor” of the First Presidency of the Church. The situation of the First Presidency at this time was a little complicated. As of September 3, 1837, the First Presidency consisted of its three

“presidents” (D&C 107:22) and four “assistant counselors.” The three presidents were President Joseph Smith Jr. and his first and second counselors, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams. The four assistant counselors were Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith Sr., Hyrum Smith, and John Smith (the brother of Joseph Smith Sr., and therefore the Prophet’s uncle) (*HC*, 2:509).

In late 1837 Oliver’s letters began to reveal a crisis of personal and family estrangement from Joseph Smith especially over Joseph’s economic and political programs. The Three Witnesses had seen an angel with Joseph Smith, but later they tended to compete rather than cooperate with his leadership. Oliver sought personal financial independence that ran counter to the cooperative economics essential to the Zion society Joseph Smith envisioned. Oliver was tried for his membership, and he sent a resignation letter in which he insisted that the truth of modern revelation was not at issue: “Take no view of the foregoing remarks, other than my belief on the outward government of this Church” (*Far West Record*, 165-66). Five charges were considered by the church court against Oliver: inactivity, accusing the Prophet of adultery, and three charges of beginning law practice and seeking to collect debts after the Kirtland bank failure. Oliver was excommunicated in absentia by the high council at Far West, Missouri. In the fall of 1838 he moved from Missouri back to Kirtland.

In early 1840, Oliver began practicing as an attorney in Ohio. In the fall of 1840 he moved from Kirtland to Tiffin, Ohio, and practiced law there. He also became a prominent civic leader and ardent Democrat.

Oliver’s good friend and Brother-in-law Phineas H. Young—Brigham’s brother—visited Oliver in Tiffin. Phineas reported to Brigham and the Twelve that Oliver’s “heart is still with us.” Phineas made consistent efforts over the next six years to effect Oliver’s reconciliation. In October 1845, Oliver wrote to Brigham Young and offered legal and personal services to the Church. Late in 1846 Oliver traveled to Washington, D.C., to visit political contacts for the Church.

In April 1847 Oliver moved from Tiffin to Elkhorn, Wisconsin, and practiced law there with his brother Lyman. There he was almost elected to the first state legislature in spite of newspaper accounts ridiculing him for declaring his declarations of seeing an angel and the Book of Mormon plates.

In late 1847 he received a letter from Brigham Young and the Twelve (by way of Phineas Young) inviting him to be rebaptized. He responded favorably to Brigham’s letter in February 1848. In October, 1848, he left Elkhorn, and on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October he bore his testimony to the saints camped near Council Bluffs, Iowa. He was rebaptized by Apostle Orson Hyde, president of the Quorum of the Twelve, on November 12, 1848.

Because Oliver and his family had started for Council Bluffs late in the season, they were forced to winter in Richmond, Missouri, where most of the Whitmer family lived. They traveled to Richmond in January 1849. Letters throughout 1849 repeated Oliver’s hope to move west and also disclosed his lack of means. In June 1849 he

informed Phineas that he would not be able to travel to the Great basin that year, as he had planned. Oliver's health steadily deteriorated in the summer of 1849, probably from the effects of tuberculosis. He reported coughing up blood, a long term respiratory condition. On March 3, 1850, Oliver died at the age of 43 in Richmond, Missouri. He reaffirmed his testimony of the Book of Mormon on his deathbed.

In Oliver's ten years outside the Church, he never succumbed to the considerable external pressures to deny his testimony of the Book of Mormon. Letters to his LDS relatives show that he was hurt at the church's rejection but remained a deep believer. David Whitmer and other relatives living near Oliver in his final year claimed that he disagreed with many Kirtland and Nauvoo doctrines, but Oliver's documented criticisms at this time concerned only intolerance and a continuing concern about polygamy. Although David Whitmer considered Joseph a fallen prophet, in 1848 Oliver said publicly and privately "that Joseph Smith had fulfilled his mission faithfully before God until death" (George A. Smith to Orson Pratt, MS 11 [October 29, 1848]: 14), and "that the priesthood was with this people, and the Twelve were the only men that could lead the Church after the death of Joseph" (Anderson, *Improvement Era*, November 1968, 18). In his last known letter, Oliver accepted an assignment from the Twelve to lobby in Washington and acknowledge the leadership of the "good brethren of the [Salt Lake] valley" (Gunn, Stanley R. *Oliver Cowdery, Second Elder and Scribe*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962, 261).

Oliver's wife, Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery (1815-1892) had known him when he was taking dictation during the translation of the Book of Mormon, before their marriage. She said of his lifelong commitment: "He always without one doubt . . . affirmed the divinity and truth of the Book of Mormon" (Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981, 63). This confidence stood the test of persecution, poverty, loss of status, failing health, and the tragic deaths of five of his six children. He penned his inner hopes to fellow witness David Whitmer: "Let the Lord vindicate our characters, and cause our testimony to shine, and then will men be saved in his kingdom" (Oliver Cowdery to David Whitmer, July 28, 1847, *Ensign of Liberty*, 1:92).

### **Specific Accusations Made Against Oliver Cowdery**

Let us now carefully consider the merits of each of several specific accusations leveled against Oliver Cowdery and his family.

### **The Smiths and Cowderys were Involved in the Woodscrape**

The specific charge made by detractors of the Church is that Joseph Smith Sr. and William Cowdery (the fathers of Joseph and Oliver) participated in a divining-rod incident known as the "Wood Scrape," forming associations that impacted their sons' founding of the Church a quarter of a century later.

**Chronology of the Cowdery family in Vermont and New York.** For a chronology of the family of Oliver and Oliver himself in Vermont and New York, see the “Brief Biography of Oliver Cowdery” above.

**Chronology of the Smith family in Massachusetts, Vermont, and New York.** Joseph Smith Sr. was born in Topsfield, Massachusetts, July 12, 1771. As a young man, he moved with his parents to Tunbridge, Vermont, where he met Lucy Mack. They were married January 24, 1796, in Tunbridge. The couple began married life as part owners in the Asael (Joseph Sr.’s father) Smith farm and received a \$1,000 wedding present from Lucy’s brother Stephen and his business partner, John Mudget. Joseph and Lucy’s finances declined, however, after they opened a mercantile store in Randolph and invested in ginseng, a root that grew wild in Vermont and was prized in China as a medicine. A failed exporting venture required them to sell their farm and sacrifice their wedding gift to pay their debts. Now tenants instead of landowners, beginning in 1803, they moved from one rented farm to another in Vermont and New Hampshire. Joseph Smith Jr. was born December 23, 1805 in Sharon, Vermont, near Tunbridge. After three successive crop failures in Norwich, Vermont, they moved to Palmyra, New York, in 1816.

Insert map: Locations in Vermont and New York pertinent to the early life of Oliver Cowdery

**The Wood Scrape.** Nathaniel Wood, a preacher who had tried unsuccessfully to become pastor of Middletown’s Congregational Church, and several of his relatives broke from the Congregational Church and claimed they were “modern Israelites.” In 1799, the Wood movement was gathering momentum. There is some suggestion that an unsavory character named either Winchell or Wingate arrived in Middletown. He was said to be a fugitive and a counterfeiter. He joined with the Wood group and is thought to have introduced them to the divining rod. Apparently under Winchell’s tutelage, the practice of divination was engaged in with increasing enthusiasm. The group began digging for hidden treasures, searching for missing persons, and predicting things to come. This practice reached a frenzied peak on January 14, 1802. The Wood group had predicted an apocalyptic earthquake and massive destruction carried out by “destroying angels.” There was no sleep that night by anyone in Middletown. But no earthquake occurred. The disgraced Wood group bolted to New York. Winchell was “warned out” of Middletown. This episode in January 1802 has been referred to as the “Wood Scrape.” The word *scrape* in this label, seems to refer to an embarrassing or distressing situation—one of the meanings of *scrape*.

It may be evidenced that there is no compelling evidence whatever that either William Cowdery or Joseph Smith Sr. was involved with the “New Israelites.” It is notable that the Wood Scrape occurred seven years before the William Cowdery family

moved to Middletown (early in 1809). Vermont civic and religious records from 1802 place Joseph Sr.'s family across the state in Tunbridge, Vermont, through the birth of Sophronia in May 1803. Thus, at the time of the Wood Scrape, Joseph Smith Sr. was a young married farmer some fifty miles from Middleton in Tunbridge or nearby Randolph.

The earliest church critic to suggest a relationship between the Wood Scrape and the origins of Mormonism was nineteenth-century Middletown historian Barnes Frisbie (*History of Middletown*). Frisbie claimed that Joseph Smith Sr. and William Cowdery were both involved with the Wood group and with Winchell (Wingate) in Vermont around 1800 and that they resumed that association two decades later in New York. He wrote:

There we find these men [Joseph Smith Sr. and William Cowdery] with the counterfeiter, Winchell, searching for money over the hills and mountains with the hazel rod, and their sons Joe and Oliver, as soon as they were old enough, were in the same business, and continued in it until they brought out the “vilest scheme that ever cursed the country” (*Ibid.*, 62).

Frisbie himself, however, admitted that the evidence for these claims was thin. Describing Joseph Sr.'s involvement in the Scrape, Frisbie wrote, “I have been told that [he] resided in Poultney . . . and that he was in it [the Wood movement]. . . . Of this I cannot speak positively, for the want fo satisfactory evidence” (*Ibid.*). Similarly, Frisbie, in an obviously ambivalent statement, could not place William Cowdery directly in the Wood movement but was wont to suggest an ongoing relationship between William Cowdery and Winchell:

Winchell, I have been told, was a friend and acquaintance of Cowdery's, but of this I cannot be positive. They were intimate afterwards . . . Winchell stayed at Cowdery's some little time, keeping himself concealed (*Ibid.*, 46-47).

Richard Lloyd Anderson pointed out that in Frisbie's reporting of the Wood Scrape incident, he offered a detailed description of the incident—with specific names, dates, and locations—but said nothing at all about Smith or Cowdery. Frisbie also explained that before 1860 he interviewed more than thirty men and women who were living in Middletown in 1800. According to Frisbie's summary, these survivors said nothing of a counterfeiter or of William Cowdery (*Ibid.* 42-63).

In spite of the absence of real historical evidence, a modern-day historian and church critic, D. Michael Quinn (*Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 116-135) decided to revive a Winchell-Smith-Cowdery association. Quinn considers it “likely” that Winchell mentored the Smiths in the occult and that Oliver Cowdery's “gift of working with the rod” (see D&C 8:6-7) came by way of Winchell's influence on William Cowdery (*Ibid.*, 37). Implicit in these conclusions are Quinn's assumptions that:

1. William Cowdery was involved in the Wood Scrape.

William Cowdery was never actually identified as a rodsman or as a participant in the Wood Scrape. Quinn's assertion that William was "described as a divining rodsman by his Vermont neighbors" (*Ibid.*, 318) is not accurate. Frisbie claimed only that Winchell briefly stayed with Cowdery three years before the Wood Scrape, and Frisbie was uncertain whether Winchell used the rod at that time. Frisbie, therefore, had jumped to a conclusion when he argued that "Oliver Cowdery's father was in the Wood Scrape" (*Ibid.*, 62). Quinn compounds this mistake by frequently asserting that Cowdery was identified as a Vermont rodsman.

It is obvious that even if William Cowdery knew Winchell (someone who knew Nathaniel Wood) that does not mean that Cowdery was a participant in the Wood Scrape.

Following the Wood Scrape incident Winchell was "warned out" of Middletown, and the Woods were pressured to leave "seeing the 'slow moving finger of scorn' pointed towards them from all their neighbors; and fearing, moreover, that the heavy hand of the law would all on them for their misdeeds" ("The Rodsmen," *Vermont American*). Meanwhile Cowdery went about his business in Wells and appears to have been a respected citizen both before and after the Wood Scrape. In 1803, a year after the Wood Scrape, he was named as a surveyor of highways, a position he had held in the previous decade. After leaving Wells, Cowdery moved to Middletown, the last place one would expect a disgraced rodsman to go. And, in contrast to Nathaniel Wood's excommunication from the Middletown Congregational Church, William was married to Middletown resident Keziah Austin in the same church, by Congregational minister Henry Bigelow, whom Frisbie called "truly orthodox, and firm in his religious sentiments" (*History of Middletown*, 93). Nor can William and Keziah's move to New York be taken as an attempt to flee Middletown, because they returned three years later and remained in Middletown for another four years.

2. William Cowdery gained knowledge of working with the rod from Winchell and transmitted that knowledge to Oliver.

Quinn himself noted, "The historical record is silent about how or when Oliver Cowdery obtained the divining rod he was already using for revelation before April 1829" (*Magic World View*, 38). In fact, a revelation given to Joseph Smith within weeks of Oliver's arrival in Pennsylvania in April 1820 offers all that is known on this subject (see D&C 8:6-7). Here it should be noted that the use of rods and stones was common in New England at that time. It is certainly possible, and even probable, that Oliver—and Joseph Jr. and Joseph Sr. for that matter—were using rods and stones as were many of their New England contemporaries. This does not mean that Winchell had anything to do with it.

3. Joseph Sr. moved temporarily from eastern to western Vermont around 1800 and also got involved in the Wood Scrape.

It is a simple fact that Joseph Sr.'s well-documented history does not include a move to Poultney, Vermont. The historian Frisbie asserted (based on an unidentified source who offered no specific details) that Joseph Sr. lived in Poultney and participated in the Wood Scrape). This hardly constitutes a basis for Quinn's writing that Joseph Sr. "may have visited Poultney or Middletown while the Wood movement was developing from the spring of 1800 to January 1802" (*Magic World View*, 125). Vermont civic and religious records place Joseph Sr. across the state in Tunbridge from 1798 (birth of Alvin) to 1802 (birth of Sophronia).

Quinn has searched public records for the name Joseph Smith. He points out that the name listed as Joseph Smith in the 1800 Tunbridge census does not really match the description of Joseph Sr.'s family. Another historian Dan Vogel has observed that Lucy Mack Smith indicated that the family at the time had relocated temporarily to Randolph, Vermont (about ten miles northwest of Tunbridge). Vogel suggests that the family could have been in transit when the census was taken. Quinn also alleges that a Joseph Smith was listed in the 1800 census for Poultney. But that Joseph Smith had been a long time resident of Poultney and was obviously not our Joseph Smith Sr. Also in Lucy Mack's history, which is full of names and dates, she never mentions Rutland County or Poultney. Quinn's allegations are obviously based on baseless assumptions.

#### 4. Joseph Sr. was reunited with Winchell in New York in the early 1820s.

Historical evidence which might suggest Winchell's presence in New York is simply non-existent. Quinn has found evidence that three years after the Smith family moved to New York, the Palmyra Register noted that the post office was holding an unclaimed letter for a "Justus Winchell." A similar notice appeared in the Wayne Sentinel almost five years later (July 7, 1824). Quinn finds this to be evidence that "Winchell followed Joseph Sr. from Vermont to New York" and that Winchell was an occult mentor for the Smiths. Two unclaimed letters over a five-year period do not prove residence and may point to the very opposite. Also no case has been made that this "Justus Winchell" was the same who lived in Middletown, Vermont in 1802. Finally, there is nothing that links a Winchell with the New York money-digging activities. It is particularly telling that the manifold affidavits collected by the likes of Philastus Hurbut, Chester C. Thorne, and Arthur B. Deming—all of whom sought to link the Smiths with shady occult practices, money digging, and fraud (the very accusations made against Winchell in Vermont)—say nothing about anyone name Winchell.

Nor can William Cowdery be linked with Winchell in New York. This is a crucial point because Quinn relies heavily on Frisbie, who insists that Winchell, Smith, and Cowdery were in the Wood Scrape in Vermont and were reunited in Palmyra. But, according to Quinn, Winchell's alleged Palmyra residence did not begin until 1819 and ended with his death in 1823. William and Oliver Cowdery were clearly in Vermont during this period, as demonstrated above. Oliver moved to New York in 1825, and William did so in 1827.

Quinn is left without historical support in his claims. Historian David M Ludlum states the case succinctly: “The strands of connection between the Wood Scrape and the Palmyra outcroppings are too tenuous to withstand historical criticism” (*Social Ferment in Vermont, 1791-1850* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1939; New York: AMS Press, 1966], cited in Quinn, *Magic World View*, 386).

We may summarize by concluding that D. Michael Quinn has no real historical evidence for any of these four assumptions.

### **Oliver Enabled Joseph Jr. to Use View of the Hebrews as a Basis for the Book of Mormon**

Specifically, anti-Mormons have charged that Oliver and his family were associated with Ethan Smith, the author of *View of the Hebrews*. They passed on knowledge of the book—or a copy of the book itself—to Joseph who borrowed freely from it in producing the Book of Mormon. Ethan Smith (1762-1849), no relation to Joseph, was a prominent New England minister who published a number of sermons and books. From 1821 to 1826 he served as a minister of the Poultney, Vermont, Congregational Church, and during that period published his best-known work, *View of the Hebrews*. This book “combines scriptural citations and reports from various observers among American Indians and Jews to support the claim that the Indians were the descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel” (Richard C. Roberts, “View of the Hebrews” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow [New York: Macmillan, 1992], 41509). By the early twentieth century, and down to the 1980s, suggestions of a relationship between *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon were made by several authors.

Frankly, this argument has always had an element of comedy about it. Let us consider a hypothetical example. Let us say we were to learn that prior to the Russian author, Leo Tolstoy’s, writing and publishing his classic novel *War and Peace* in 1869, he discovered a document that contained a nuance about the French-Russian war of 1812 that was previously not widely know. And in his novel, which centers on that conflict, he mentioned that detail. Would it then be reasonable to conclude that Tolstoy was enabled to write his magnum opus novel because of learning that detail? Was that esoteric point a significant factor in his being able to write the novel? Might he not have written his novel had he not come across that heretofore unknown aspect? Consider the staggering complexity and historical importance of his novel and compare that with the role of some heretofore unknown detail that Tolstoy was able to include in his novel. In an analogous way, just exactly how might the book *View of the Hebrews* which suggested Israelite origins for American Indians have enabled, or in any way assisted, Joseph to write the Book of Mormon? The Book of Mormon contains a comparable complexity to Tolstoy’s book. This complexity and uncanny internal consistency has been well documented over the past twenty-five years. It has little to do with the

isolated fact that some American Indians might have Israelite origins. Just as Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is much grander than the details of the French-Russian war, so is the Book of Mormon exceedingly more splendid, complex, and important than the idea that some American Indians came from Israelite stock.

Though it seems almost unnecessary, I will summarize any evidence for or against a timely *View of the Hebrews*-Oliver Cowdery-Joseph Smith connection. To be credible, the connection must have been timely. Both Oliver and Joseph have claimed that they had not met prior to Oliver's arriving in Harmony, Pennsylvania on April 5, 1829. Joseph and Oliver began the translation of the book two days later. The translation was nonstop. There was not time for creating or writing. A delivery of the book *View of the Hebrews* on April 5, 1829 would not have given Joseph sufficient time to compose the Book of Mormon from that "vital" information contained in Ethan Smith's book. Joseph's exposure to Smith's book would have to have been well prior to April 1829.

Frankly, it matters little whether or not Joseph knew of Ethan Smith's book and its contents. It is simply not pertinent to the creation of the Book of Mormon which has been abundantly corroborated and rendered unimpeachably valid by modern evidences. See chapter , *Book of Mormon Evidences—I Promise You*.

What is documented is that Ethan Smith was pastor of the Congregational Church in Poultney from 1821 to 1826. The William Cowdery family lived in Poultney from 1818 to 1827. Oliver Cowdery actually lived there from 1818 to 1825, except he lived with Arunah Glass between 1820 and 1822 in Wells, Vermont, while he attended school in Wells. Also found is a baptismal record of three of William Cowdery's children from 1818, in that Congregational Church. This was three years before Ethan Smith became the minister or pastor. There is no evidence of Oliver Cowdery's being in New York prior to 1825, and no evidence of his meeting anyone in Joseph Smith Sr.'s family prior to 1828.

All of this does not prove that the Cowderys , including Oliver did or did not know Ethan Smith or his book, *View of the Hebrews*. Anyone who says the Cowderys did or did not is simply without objective evidence. Biases exist in both directions, but all is mere baseless speculation.

A recent—and frankly surprising—attempt to link Joseph Smith with *View of the Hebrews* through Oliver Cowdery has been attempted by Richard S. Van Wagoner (*Sydney Rigdon*, 455-56). His creativity is interesting in supposing that Oliver was a "traveling agent" in Vermont and New York for the Poultney printing firm of Smith & Shute, the company that printed *View of the Hebrews*. Van Wagoner speculates that Oliver "had copies of *View of the Hebrews* in his knapsack when he visited . . . the Smiths" in New York. This, in Van Wagoner's estimation, explains how Joseph, in the autumn of 1823, began telling his family interesting details about the ancient inhabitants of America. Van Wagoner is completely without the support of any primary documents

in this. And besides, Oliver would only have been sixteen years old in the autumn of 1823, and it is unlikely a sixteen-year-old would be hired as a traveling salesman.

### **Oliver Had a Vital Role in the Solomon Spalding Gold Bible Conspiracy**

For most of the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century, those who rejected Joseph Smith's account of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon argued that the Book of Mormon narrative was based upon an unpublished romance written by a former minister named Solomon Spalding. Proponents of this theory argued that by some means Sidney Rigdon obtained a copy of this manuscript to which he added additional religious material and then had Joseph Smith publish the manuscript as the Book of Mormon. One of the many weaknesses of this theory is that it inadequately explains how Rigdon, who was living in Western Ohio at the time the Book of Mormon was translated and published, could have interacted with Joseph Smith who live hundreds of miles away in New York. Although the Spalding theory has largely fallen out of favor, a few zealous critics have recently tried to resurrect this explanation. Three contemporary authors, Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. Davis, and Arthur Vanick claim that Oliver was responsible for bringing Rigdon and Joseph Smith together. They make their argument for this claim in chapters 8, 9 and 10 of their book, *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? The Spalding Enigma*. To examine this claim, I have drawn heavily from Matthew Roper's review of the book in *FARMS Review*, 17/2 (2005): 7-140.

These three Spalding advocates argue that Oliver could have provided a missing link between Sidney Rigdon in Ohio and Joseph Smith in New York. In order to bolster this theory these critics have tried to place Oliver near Palmyra, New York, in the early 1820s—1820 to 1822—where he could have conspired with and helped the Smith family in such an endeavor. The issue of just how this remarkably itinerant Oliver Cowdery might have made contact with Sidney Rigdon in Kirtland, Ohio, in the early 1820s seems to have been ignored by Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick.

The three authors appear to be inclined to see conspiracies everywhere. For example, they claim that the history of Oliver's life in the early 1820s contains a significant gap. They also claim that LDS scholars have not really made an honest effort to uncover "who this man [Oliver Cowdery] was" (*Ibid.*, 210). Matthew Roper wrote, "Their claims are misconceived. There is a substantial literature on Oliver Cowdery of which the authors show little or no awareness and with which they make little attempt to engage" (*FARMS Review*, 17/2 [2005]: 7-140).

It should be noted that there is no primary source evidence whatever that Oliver Cowdery was in New York prior to 1825. As is noted above, Oliver's younger sister Lucy described his childhood: "Oliver was brought up in Poultney, Rutland County, Vermont, and when he arrived at the age of twenty, he went to the state of New York, where his older brothers were married and settled. . . . Oliver's occupation was clerking in a store until 1829, when he taught the district school in the town of Manchester" (Lucy

Cowdery Young to Andrew Jenson, March 7, 1887, Church Archives). Oliver's initial move to New York, then, would have been about 1825. Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick assert that Lucy was mistaken about this, but there exists no primary source evidence to refute her recollections.

The three authors have based their case for Oliver's being in New York prior to 1825 on two newspaper articles and a book containing a history of western New York during that period. In November 1830, when Oliver along with Parley P. Pratt, Peter Whitmer, Jr., and Ziba Peterson, visited western Ohio on their way to Missouri to fulfill a mission to the Lamanites, an article appeared in the *Cleveland Herald*. The author of the article—probably the editor, John St. John—had noticed the name of Oliver Cowdery in some of the newspaper descriptions of the missionaries activities. They had commented on Oliver's being one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon. St. John wrote:

On reading the name of Oliver Cowdry [sic], in support of the divine authenticity of the work [Mormonism], whatever faith we might have been inspired with on reading the certificate [the Testimony of the Three Witnesses], was banished, for we had known Cowdry some seven or eight years ago, when he was a dabbler in the art of Printing, and principally occupied in writing and printing pamphlets, with which, as a pedestrian pedlar he visited the towns and villages of western New York and Canada ("The Golden Bible," *Cleveland Herald*, November 25, 1830).

In what was likely simply an echo of this earlier article, the *Lockport Balance* in New York printed another piece in 1832 on Mormonism. The author, probably the editor Orasmus Turner, portrayed the Book of Mormon witness, without further explanation, as "an itinerant pamphlet pedlar, and occasionally, a journeyman printer, named Oliver Cowdry" ("Mormonism," *Lockport Balance*, ca. September 1832; reprinted in the *Boston Recorder*, October 10, 1832).

In 1849, this same Orasmus Turner published a local history of western New York in which he described early settlers and pioneers of the region. In a short sketch of the town of Albion, New York, near Lockport, he recalled, "In 1823, it [the area of Albion] had sufficiently advanced to indicate the necessity of a press and newspaper, and Oliver Cowdery, (who has been the pioneer printer in at least a half dozen localities), took a part of the old battered 'small pica' [a printing press] that had been used in printing the *Lockport Observatory*, and adding to it indifferent materials from other sources, commenced the publication of the 'Newport Patriot'" (*Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of Western New York* [Buffalo: Jewett, Thomas, 1849], 658).

If correct, these two newspaper articles and Turner's 1849 recollection would place Oliver in New York around 1822 or 1823, working there as a "pioneer printer" and "journeyman printer," a veteran of various publishing ventures that included commencing a paper in Albion in 1823 and writing, publishing, and peddling pamphlets

in western New York and Canada. Keep in mind that in October 1822, Oliver would have turned only sixteen years of age.

There is no evidence that Oliver was involved in printing before December 1829 when he provided some assistance in the preparation of the Book of Mormon for publication. In a letter to Joseph Smith in December 1829, Oliver wrote: “It may look rather strange to you to find that I have so soon become a printer” (Oliver Cowdery to Joseph Smith, December 28, 1829, in Richard L. Anderson and Scott H. Faulring, eds., *Witness of the Second Elder: The Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery* [Provo, UT; FARMS, 1999], 1:80). The clear implication here is that printing was a new experience for him. Moreover, it can be clearly shown that it was *Franklin* Cowdery, and not Oliver, who began publication of the *Newport Patriot* in 1822 (Milton W. Hamilton, *The Country Printer: New York State, 1785-1830* [Port Washington, NY: Friedman, 1936], 266).

There is better explanation for these three sources—that have provided encouragement to the three anti-Mormon authors. Oliver Cowdery had an uncle in New York during those years named Franklin Cowdery who was in the printing business. It is likely that the two newspaper articles and the book mistakenly reported the activities of Franklin Cowdery and attributed them to his nephew Oliver. Franklin Cowdery was, indeed, a pioneer printer who engaged in numerous publishing ventures in New York from 1817 to 1848. These included the *Moscow Advertiser and Livingston Farmer* (1817), the *Hamilton Recorder* (1819-20), the *Allegany Republican* (1820-22), the *News Record and Allegany Patron of Industry* (1822), the *Newport Patriot* (1824-25—Turner was off by one year in his recollection), the *Ontario Chronicle* (1828-29), the *Orleans Mercury* (1832), the *Cuylerville Telegraph* (1847-48), the *Genesee Olio* (1847), and, in Ohio, the *Oberlin Evangelist* (1847).

It is not enough, though, to get Oliver Cowdery to New York in 1822. The authors also want to place him in or near Palmyra where he can conspire with the Smith family in the early 1820s. In order to bolster this claim, they cite an 1869 history of Vermont by Robert Parks. Parks recalled, “We well remember this same Oliver Cowdery when in our boyhood [in Wells, Vermont]. . . . He attended school in the District where we resided in 1821 and 1822 [in Wells]. He *then* went to Palmyra, N.Y.” (*Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? The Spalding Enigma*, 237, italics added). Cowdery, Davis, and Vanick interpret this as meaning that Oliver left Wells, Vermont, and arrived in Palmyra in late 1822 or 1823. We know that Oliver did go to Palmyra after he left Vermont. But we know he traveled to New York in 1825, living initially in Wayne County, New York, where he possibly lived with his brother Lyman in Lyons, a few miles northeast of Palmyra. It was not until later that he moved to Palmyra. We know that he began teaching school there in 1828. Parks wrote fifty years after the event. He could easily have meant by “then” any time from 1823 to 1828.

Cowdery, Davis, and Vanick are, of course, anxious to place Oliver Cowdery in New York in the early 1820s. They attempt to use Orsamus Turner’s 1869 history of

western New York in yet another way. Turner's personal association with Joseph Smith and his family ended in 1822. In August of 1822 he moved from Palmyra to Lockport, New York, about one hundred miles north of Palmyra. He purchased the *Lockport Observatory* in August of 1822. Turner's discussions of Mormonism are therefore based on a brief and early experience in Palmyra and subsequent hearsay. His comments are filled with sarcasm and permeated with a tone of ridicule. Richard L. Anderson wrote, "Turner's personal recollections of Joseph Smith of necessity refer to the period prior to the late summer of 1822 and are probably no later than 1820, the latest date of Palmyra memoirs in his writings" ("Circumstantial Confirmation of the First Vision through Reminiscences," *BYU Studies* 9, no. 3 [1969]: 378). Any observations recorded by Turner about the events in Palmyra subsequent to 1822 are recorded from the standpoint of a distant observer. For example, Turner wrote that after the death of Alvin Smith, "the mantle of the Prophet which Mrs. and Mr. Joseph Smith and one Oliver Cowdery, had wove of themselves—every thread of it—fell upon their next eldest son, Joseph Smith, Jr" (Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement*, 213). This, of course, is transfigured by the three authors into firsthand testimony for Oliver's being in Palmyra in 1823. But Turner, at the time of the death of Alvin in 1823, was one hundred miles away in Lockport. There is no evidence that he was in Palmyra, must less that he was lurking at Alvin's deathbed. Turner's comments are only distant hearsay. While Turner describes firsthand experiences with Joseph Smith, he never gives any indication that he had so much as met Oliver Cowdery.

Matthew Roper concludes his analysis of *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? The Spalding Enigma*:

Based on dubious foundations, Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick then embark on a series of bewildering speculations and irrelevancies as they opine where Oliver may have been and what he might have been doing. *Maybe* he was dousing with Walters the magician over in Sodus or Palmyra or wherever. *Maybe* he was scribing for William Morgan on his exposé of Freemasonry. This kind of thing can be fun, of course. Stacking each unproven assumption upon the previous unproven assumption, the authors construct an ugly theoretical caricature of Cowdery, a veritable castle in the clouds, but it has no foundation and the picture is a mirage. It is their wish list, not history. Those seeking to know the historical Oliver Cowdery will have to look elsewhere.

### **Oliver Cowdery Was a Scribe for William Morgan**

Morgan is the Mason who was kidnapped and killed after he became disaffected with the Masons and threatened to expose their secrets.

### **Oliver Denied His Testimony Following His Excommunication from the Church**

In a publication "Defense in a Rehearsal of My Grounds for Separating Myself from the Latter-day Saints," Oliver supposedly admits that when John the Baptist appeared, he later realized that "John sounded a lot like Sidney Rigdon." This pamphlet surfaced in 1906 and claimed that Oliver published it in 1839. Richard Anderson has analyzed this document point by point and has demonstrated that it is a forgery. Jerald and Sandra Tanner note on their website that they knew this document was a forgery by 1967. This document need not be taken seriously.

### **When Oliver Returned to the Church in Council Bluffs, Iowa, It Wasn't Really Oliver Who Presented Himself to the Saints**

In a document called "A Confession of Oliver Overstreet," this Oliver Overstreet claimed that he had been bribed to impersonate Oliver Cowdery in a return to the Church. This is even a clumsier forgery than that mentioned in the previous paragraph. This is easy to refute since when Oliver bore his testimony in Council Bluffs, there were several members of the congregation who had known him, his wife, and his daughter from the years before. Jerald and Sandra Tanner also have admitted that they know this document is a forgery.

Diaries and official minutes record Oliver Cowdery's words in rejoining the Church. He sought only rebaptism and fellowship, not office. He publicly declared that he had seen and handled the Book of Mormon plates and that he was present with Joseph Smith on the occasions when "holy angels" restored the two priesthoods (Anderson, *BYU Studies*, 1968, 278).

### **Oliver Believed He Retained the Keys of Priesthood Leadership Following Joseph's Death**

Oliver made this claim in a published letter to David Whitmer. Following his return to the Church, the high council questioned him closely on this matter. Apparently it was Oliver's opinion that he had retained those keys. Oliver said that he changed his mind once he saw the revelation from the Lord giving all Oliver's former keys to Hyrum Smith (see D&C 124:91-96). He said of this scriptural passage: "It was that revelation which changed my views on this subject" (Anderson, *Improvement Era*, November 1968, 19).

### **Oliver Cowdery Practiced Unauthorized Plural Marriage After He Was Told of the Doctrine by Joseph Smith**

In an entry in Wilford Woodruff's journal in 1857 we read, "President Young stayed 3 hours in compiling his history. He remarked that the revelation upon a plurality of wives that was given to Joseph Smith. He revealed it to Oliver Cowdery alone upon the solemn pledge that he would not reveal it or act upon it, but he did act upon it in a secret manner and that was the cause of his overthrow."

In a note written in 1872 by Charles Walker who was reporting a speech of Brigham Young we read, "While Joseph and Oliver were translating the Book of Mormon they had a revelation that the order of Patriarchal Marriage and the Sealing was right. Oliver said to Joseph, 'Why don't we go into the Order of Polygamy, and practice it as the ancients did? We know it is true, then why delay?' Joseph's reply was 'I know that we know it is true, and from God, but the time has not yet come.' This did not seem to suit Oliver, who expressed a determination to go into the order of Plural Marriage, anyhow, although he was ignorant of the order and pattern and the results. Joseph said, 'Oliver if you go into this thing it is not with my faith or consent.' Disregarding the counsel of Joseph, Oliver Cowdery took to wife Miss Annie Lyman cousin to George A. Smith. From that time he went into darkness and lost the spirit. Annie Lyman is still alive, a witness to these things."

Several of the church scholars believe that Oliver did practice plural marriage in Kirtland between August 1833 and May 1834. This would have been before Joseph first entered into plural marriage with Fanny Alger. The problem with Brigham Young's saying that from "that time he went into darkness and lost the spirit" just doesn't fit at all because in December of 1834 he was ordained assistant President of the high priesthood. And in 1836 he saw the Savior with Joseph Smith.

On the other hand, Oliver wrote a letter July 24, 1846 to Daniel and Phoebe Jackson. Phoebe Jackson was Oliver's sister. This letter was written before Oliver came back into the Church. In the letter he made a strong statement against the principle of plural marriage. In the letter, Oliver wrote:

Now, brother Daniel and sister Pheobe, what will you do? Has sister Pheobe written us the truth? and if so, will you venture with your little ones into the toils and fatigues of a long journey and that for the sake of finding a resting place, when you know of miseries of such magnitude as have, as will, and as must rend asunder the tenderest and holiest ties of domestic life? I can hardly think it possible that you have written us the truth, that though there may be individuals who are guilty of the iniquities spoken of—yet no such practice can be preached or adhered to as a public doctrine. Such may do for the followers of Muhammad; it may have been done some thousands of years ago; but no people professing to be governed by the pure and holy principles of the Lord Jesus, can hold up their heads before the world at this distance of time and be guilty of such folly, such wrong, such abomination. It will blast, like a mildew, their fairest prospects, and lay the ax at the root of their future happiness."

The issue of whether or not Oliver practiced plural marriage is uncertain.

## **Oliver Accused Joseph of Committing Adultery**

Oliver wrote a letter to his elder brother, Warren in January 1838. He spoke of Joseph Smith and wrote:

When he was here we had some conversations in which, in every instance, I did not fail to affirm that what I had said was strictly true, a dirty nasty, filthy affair of his and Fanny Alger's was talked over in which I strictly declared that I had never deviated from the truth of the matter and as I supposed was admitted by himself. At any rate just before leaving, he wanted to drop every past thing, in which had been a difficulty or difference. He called witnesses to the fact, gave me his hand in their presence, and I might have supposed of an honest man, calculated to say nothing of former matters.

Never believe that Oliver will disgrace the gray hairs of his father or the high sense of honor in the bosom of his brothers, so much as to acknowledge to Joseph Smith, Jr., that he has lied about him. There is something to damning in the thought. My former conduct towards him and that family, when they were poor, and hated, in giving the last cent of my honest earnings to save him from being turned into the streets, is so manifest in the memory of those who knew me at the time, and my course pursued in defending him before all men with my ability and talent, since speak sufficiently in my own heart and proclaim the honest integrity dwelling there too loudly to overlook unnoticed what is passed.

The rather awkwardly-worded passage is difficult for me to interpret in unequivocal detail, but there is no mistaking Oliver strong disapprobation of Joseph's actions regarding Fanny Alger. It seems obvious that he was not aware that Joseph's relationship with Alger was a plural marriage. Oliver's reaction is a reason for concluding that he didn't practice plural marriage himself. One argument used by those who felt Oliver did enter into plural marriage, prior to Joseph's relationship with Fanny Alger, is that Oliver was angry that his own plural marriage was not approved, yet Joseph was able to take a second wife.

One author, Todd Compton, who wrote the book "In Sacred Loneliness" about Joseph Smith's plural marriages, believes that Oliver Cowdery did not practice plural marriage at that time or at any time.

I'm afraid we are left without a clear answer on the matter of Oliver Cowdery's ever practicing plural marriage. I believe the predominance of evidence suggests he did not, but there are quite compelling testimonies to the contrary.

### **Oliver Renounced the Church and Joined the Methodist Church**

This claim is basically traced to Charles Keen who lived in Tiffin, Ohio in the 1840s, where Oliver went after he was excommunicated. Keen wrote in 1885:

Mr. Cowdery opened a law office in Tiffin, and soon effected a partnership with Joel Wilson. In a few years Mr. Cowdery expressed a desire to associate himself with a Methodist Protestant church of this city. Reverend John Souder and myself were appointed a committee to wait on Mr. Cowdery and confer with him respecting his connection with Mormonism and the Book of Mormon. We inquired of him if he had any objection to making a public recantation of Mormonism. He replied that he had objections; that in the first place it could do no good; that he had known several to do so, and they always regretted it; and in the second place it would have a tendency to draw public attention, invite criticism, and bring him into contempt. But he said, nevertheless, if the Methodists' church requires it, I will submit to it. We did not demand it, but submitted his name to the church and he was admitted a member thereof. At that time he arose and addressed the audience present, admitted his error and implored forgiveness, and said he was sorry and ashamed of his connection with Mormonism. He continued his membership while he resided in Tiffin and became superintendent of the Sabbath-school, and led an exemplary life while he resided with us (Source: Affidavit of G. J. Keen, 1885, in Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of the Book of Mormon*, 58-59).

This statement was made forty years after the fact and it's unfortunate we don't have a contemporary record. It would be most interesting to know exactly what Oliver said at that time. There is little question that Oliver did associate himself with the Methodists. A woman named Adeline Fuller Bernard apparently lived in the Cowdery home during the 1840s wrote: "I have often heard Mr. Cowdery say that Mormonism was the work of the Devil." She made that statement in 1881.

We have then two statements that indicate Oliver Cowdery made negative statements about the Church. There is no question that in 1838 when he was excommunicated he felt he had been unjustly cut off from the Church and unjustly treated. At the time, his life and the lives of his family were threatened and all of his belongings were thrown out into the street and he left, along with the Whitmers, under very regrettable conditions. In some of his letters he refers to the High Council who excommunicated him pretty harshly. It could be that his negative statements about the Church were an understandable reaction to the circumstances of his excommunication.

It is interesting to contrast these negative statement about the Church with the statements of two other residents of Tiffin, William Gibson and William Lang. Gibson said, "I think it is absolutely certain that Mr. Cowdery, after his separation from the Mormons, never conversed on the subject with his most intimate friends and never by word or act, disclosed anything relating to the conception, development, or progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Lang also commented on whether or

not Oliver ever openly denounced Mormonism: "Let me say this to you: No man ever knew better than he how to keep one's own counsel. He would never allow any man to drag him into a conversation on the subject. . . . He suffered a great deal of abuse here because it was association with Mormonism on that account" (Source: William Lang to Thomas Gregg, 5 Nov 1881, cited from Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of The Book of Mormon* [Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1914], 56-57).

In 1855, Brigham Young told the story of Oliver's bearing his testimony of the Church while working in a court hearing as an attorney in Michigan:

A gentleman in Michigan said to him, when he was pleading law, "Mr. Cowdery, I see your name attached to this book; if you believe it to be true, why are you in Michigan?" The gentleman read over the names of the witnesses, and said, "Mr. Cowdery, do you believe this book?" "No, sir," replied Oliver Cowdery. "That is very well, but your name is attached to it, and you say here that you saw an angel, and the plates from which this book is said to be translated, and now you say that you do not believe it. Which time were you right?" Mr. Cowdery replied, "There is my name attached to that book, and what I have there said that I saw, I know that I saw, and belief has nothing to do with it, for knowledge has swallowed up the belief that I had in the work, since I know it is true." He gave this testimony when he was pleading law in Michigan. After he had left the Church he still believed "Mormonism;" and so it is with hundreds and thousands of others, and yet they do not live it (*JD*, 2:258).

There are actually several versions of this account told by several different witnesses. Some have it happening in Michigan. Others place it in Ohio or Illinois. Some of the dates and details do not match up. It is probably reasonable to conclude that the account of this incident rests on less than satisfactory grounds.

### **Oliver Cowdery Was Emotionally "Unstable"**

The anti-Mormon historian Dan Vogel wrote: "Cowdery was far from being a dispassionate teacher, lawyer described here, and at least during this early period of his life he was known to be unstable and given to obsessive and morbid thoughts. Also, like Harris and Whitmer, he had a history of visions prior to June of 1829. Considering his state of mind and visionary predisposition, his obsessive thoughts may have carried him to the point of delusion; at least, this possibility must be taken into consideration when assessing his role as one of the witnesses."

Was Oliver unstable following his excommunication from the Church? Let us look at several statements made by individuals who knew him during this period and were not members of the Church.

From Tiffin, Ohio, "Oliver led an exemplary life while he resided with us" (Source: Affidavit of G. J. Keen, 1885, in Shook, *Book of Mormon*, 58-59).

“Cowdery was an able lawyer, and agreeable, irreproachable gentleman” (“Letter from General W. H. Gibson,” *Seneca Advertiser*).

He was an able lawyer, a fine orator, and led a blameless life, while residing in this city. His life was as pure and undefiled as that of the best of men. He was an able lawyer, a great advocate. His manners were easy and gentlemanly; he was polite, dignified, yet courteous. His addresses to the court and jury were characterized by a high order of oratory with brilliant and forensic force. He was modest and reserved, never spoke ill of anyone, never complained” (William Lang, *History of Seneca County* [Springfield, Ohio 1880], 365. For a fuller treatment of Cowdery's ten years out of the Church see Anderson, "Oliver Cowdery, Esq.: His Non-Church Decade").

“Mr. C. earned himself an enviable distinction at the bar of this place and of this judicial circuit, as a sound and able lawyer, as a citizen none could have been more esteemed. His honesty, integrity, and industry were worthy the imitation of all whilst his unquestioned legal abilities reflected credit as well upon himself as upon the profession of which he was a member” (*Seneca Advertiser*, May 5, 1848. This article was copied verbatim as a political endorsement in the *Walworth County Democrat* and then republished [May 30, 1848] by Horace A. Tenney in the *Wisconsin Argus* at Madison several weeks after Cowdery's defeat).

A Wisconsin newspaper described Oliver as “a man of sterling integrity, sound and vigorous intellect, and every way worthy, honest and capable” (*Wisconsin Argus*, May 16, 1848).

When Oliver died in 1850, the local circuit court and bar honored him with a resolution: “In the death of our friend and brother, Oliver Cowdery, his profession has lost an accomplished member and the community a reliable and worth citizen” (Circuit Court Record, Ray County, Missouri, Book C, 190 [entry Mar. 5, 1850]).

These quotations suggest a solid, well-ordered individual who was hardly “unstable.”

Oliver's friend William Lang said of Oliver: “[Joseph] Smith was killed while C [Oliver Cowdery] lived here. I well remember the effect upon his countenance when he read the news in my presence. He immediately took the paper over to his house to read to his wife. On his return to the office we had a long conversation on the subject, and I was surprised to hear him speak with so much kindness of a man that had so wronged him as Smith had. It elevated him greatly in my already high esteem, and proved to me more than ever the nobility of his nature. Cowdery never gave me a full history of the troubles of the Mormons in Missouri and Illinois” (Source: William Lang to Thomas Gregg, 5 Nov 1881, cited from Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of The Book of Mormon* [Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1914], 56-57.).

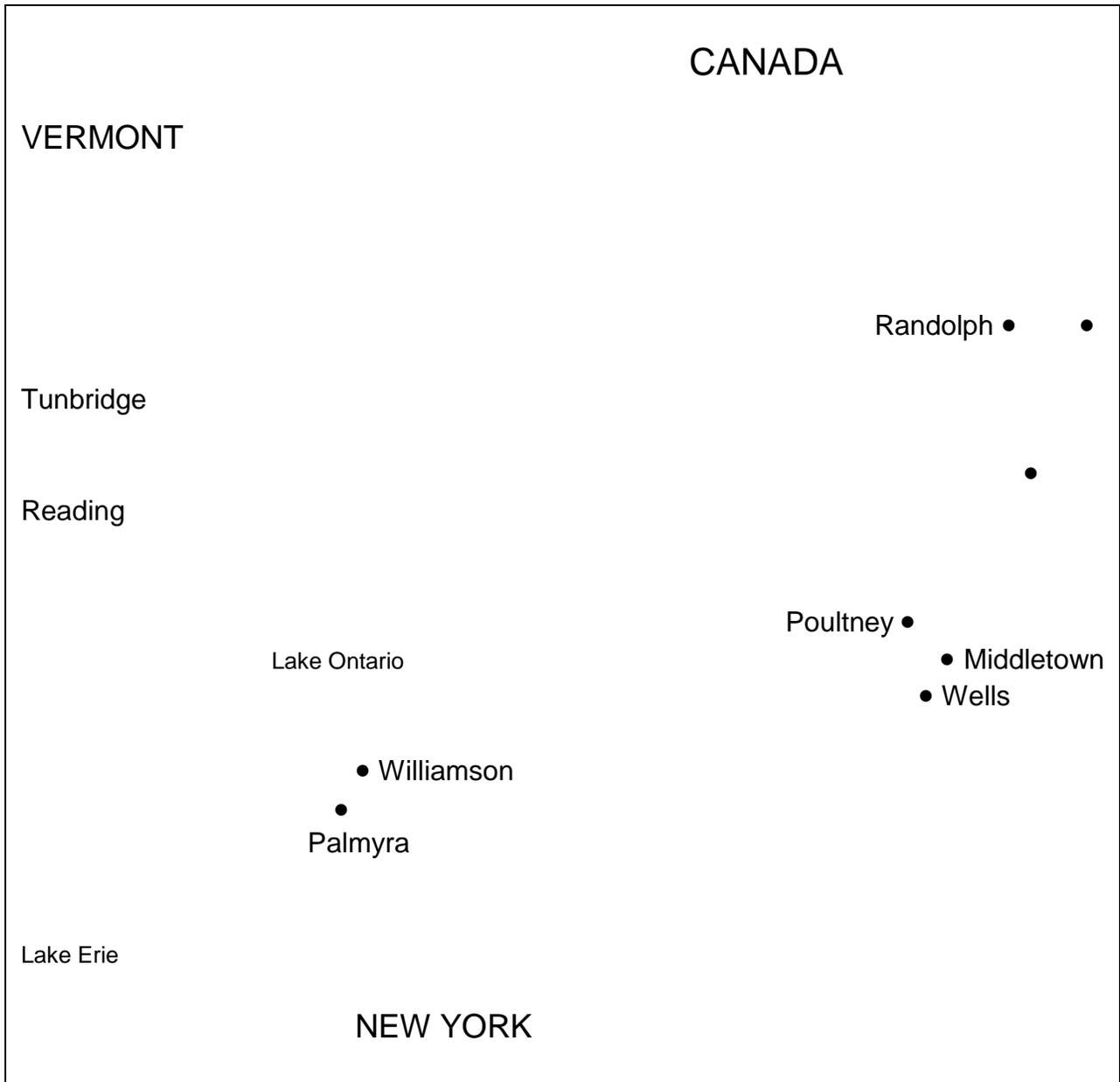
The spirit of conviction in Oliver Cowdery's own language was reiterated in an 1846 letter to Oliver's brother-in-law, Phineas Young. This was written prior to Oliver's return to the Church. Speaking privately and spontaneously, Oliver tied his personal integrity to his priesthood restoration testimony, one that stands on the same ground as his similar Book of Mormon testimony. In pleading that the printed record be set straight before his return to the Church, Oliver spoke pointed words applicable to anyone repeating the unsubstantiated libels to which he refers:

And that I may not be misunderstood, let me here say that I have only sought and only asked that my character might stand exonerated from those charges which imputed to me the crimes of theft, forgery, etc.—those which all my former associates knew to be false. I do not, I have never asked to be excused or exempted from an acknowledgment of any actual fault or wrong, for of these there are many, which it always was my pleasure to confess. I have cherished a hope, and that one of my fondest, that I might leave such a character, as to those who might believe in my testimony after I should be called hence, might do so, not only for the sake of the truth, but might not blush for the private character of the man who bore that testimony. I have been sensitive on this subject I admit, but I ought to be so. You would be under the circumstances, had you stood in the presence of John, with our departed Brother Joseph, to receive the Lesser Priesthood, and in the presence of Peter, to receive the Greater, and looked down through time, and witnessed the effects these two must produce. You would feel what you have never felt, were wicked men conspiring to lessen the effects of your testimony on man after you should have gone to your long sought rest (Oliver Cowdery to Phineas Young, Mar. 23, 1846, Tiffin, Ohio. The letter is transcribed quite accurately in Stanley R. Gunn, *Oliver Cowdery* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962], 250-51).

## **Oliver Cowdery's Excommunication**

## **Oliver Cowdery's Rebaptism**

## **Conclusions**



Locations in Vermont and New York pertinent to the early life of Oliver Cowdery



## Politics and Spiritual Principles

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Today, we live in an era of intense and rancorous political debate and controversy. A pitched battle rages constantly between the personalities, strategies, and philosophies of the liberals and those of the conservatives. The liberals accuse the conservatives of being heartless, materialistic, inconsiderate, intolerant, and even non-Christian. The conservatives return the criticism by accusing the liberals of being meddlesome, illogical, and foolish. Conservatives claim that liberals promote a political agenda that has never succeeded anywhere in the world and regularly has proved oppressive to the culture—particularly its economic well-being.

The Church has generally avoided inserting itself in this ongoing debate. It is true, in general terms, there is an inclination among the majority saints for conservative leanings. This may be due to a spirit of fierce independence born of our history of being persecuted. It is also true that the Church has occasionally become invested in certain pointed issues such as the legalizing of gay marriage or the uses in our society of elective medical abortions. But most all other political issues are avoided in the interest of separation of church and state. Every church member is left to choose his own political party and platform. Does the church's reluctance to become involved in politics mean that there exists no spiritual truth that applies to political questions? Are we to suppose that there are simply no absolute truths that apply here? Perhaps there exists an unbridgeable gap between spiritual principles and political positions. The purpose of this brief chapter is to examine the relationship between today's politics and sound spiritual principle.

**The Lord's "political system."** I will outline the Lord's own system as it was evidenced among the saints when they were commanded to practice the law of consecration and stewardship in the 1830s. I will not describe the system as it actually happened. Rather, I will briefly outline a hypothetical, idealized version of the "united order" as it was *intended* to function.

Those individuals desiring to enter the united order varied widely in their material possessions, their education, their occupational skills, and their needs. Some were wealthy and had ample material possessions. Others were economically challenged and had struggled to eke out a living. Some were educated or highly skilled in some particular occupation. Others were less educated and less skilled. Most of this latter group had previously made their living as common laborers or farmers. Their individual needs depended largely on the size of their family. All were honest and righteous and willing and eager to contribute what they could.

The individuals who joined the saints in practicing this system, regardless of their background or work history, possessed a genuinely strong work ethic. Each was anxious that his work—regardless of his education or skills—benefit the whole of the

community. He was also completely selfless. He desired that his own needs and the needs of his family be met, but only as required. He had no taste for abundance or luxury. He had no desire for material possessions over and above those necessary to live modestly and carry on his labors. His main concern was for the material and spiritual welfare of his fellow saints.

The individual entering the order first gave over or “consecrated” all his portable material possessions to the bishop who placed them in the storehouse. Those possessions that could not be moved were sold and the money delivered to the Bishop. The bishop then carefully evaluated the individual and his needs and the needs of his family and gave back materials as he saw fit from the store house. This behest was the individual’s stewardship. This stewardship included the supplies and resources he needed to perform his work. Each participant met periodically with the bishop, and the stewardships were reevaluated and reallocated if necessary. Those who produced more goods than they needed contributed the excess to the storehouse.

This system thrived with each worker diligently contributing to the good of the whole. There was plenty of work to do, and the work was productive of all the food, material products, and monetary resources the group needed to thrive and be comfortable. All were happy and fulfilled in their work and in their social interactions with one another.

Inevitably there were those among the participants who fell on hard times. Due to changes produced by age or illness some became unable to work and contribute their share. These were happily supported by the bishop using the materials in his storehouse. None was forced to live a life of deprivation.

**People of celestial ilk.** The Lord’s system can only succeed when its participants possess much in the way of divine attributes. They must be honest, independent, conscientious, hard working, modest in their tastes and life style, and completely self effacing. The needs of others must come before their own. They must willingly and happily submit to the divine being, or his inspired prophet, who leads them. They must conform their lives in all aspects to the laws of God. These are celestial people who manifest those qualities here on earth, and will surely thrive eternally in that heavenly setting following this life.

Ultimately the actual experience in the Church with the law of consecration and stewardship in the early nineteenth century was a failure. The participants were not sufficiently prepared and qualified. Many lacked the necessary attributes to ensure success in that system. Efforts to perpetuate the united order among the Mormons were eventually suspended. The law of tithing was given by the Lord in place of the law of consecration and stewardship.

**Application of these principles to modern day politics.** So we may assume it should be possible to design a philosophy of government that would coincide with the Lord’s “politics.” One only need ask: what governmental policies and platforms would

provide for each of the governed the ideal way of life described above? If none would, then what system of government would come closest to achieving that goal?

Before we attempt to answer these questions, let us bring forward into the light an observation that is obvious to all. The world does not consist of only people of celestial ilk. Many people, in fact perhaps most, lack the necessary attributes to guarantee success of the Lord's system. The early nineteenth century experiment in the Church demonstrated that clearly. Many are insufficiently honest, not adequately independent, and not consistently conscientious and hard working. Many yearn for material things over and above what is necessary. Many are more concerned about themselves than they are about the needs of others. And many are inadequately humble and obedient. In short, many people were too often takers, and not enough givers. These would be uncomfortable and unhappy in a truly celestial environment.

**Liberal or "left wing" politics.** The honest goals of left-wing politicians are frankly laudable. It would seem they truly yearn for the ideal existence for all people. They want every person to have the opportunity to work and to have enough food and supplies to live comfortably. They desire that each head of household and his or her family have all the necessities of life including adequate housing, food, clothing, medical care, and education. They feel these same advantages should be made available to all people—even to those who are not able to help provide these same things to others. A government that could guarantee all of these to each individual should be the ideal government.

It *is* actually possible for a government to guarantee all these advantages, at least some semblance of them, to the governed. But that government, in order to accomplish this, must maintain absolute and totalitarian control over its subjects. It must be, in today's parlance, "big government." It must be a socialistic or communistic government. The political history of this earth's existence has provided abundant empirical evidence as to the results of this type of control—this type of government. Each totalitarian government has been oppressive. It has inevitably had to deny its people the freedoms necessary to govern their own lives as they wish. Also the socioeconomic level of the masses of people living in such a system has invariably sunk to a low level.

The problem with such a system seems reasonably simple enough to discern. The masses of people on the earth are not celestial. They are not all predictably hard working and selfless. When people are guaranteed the benefits of life without having to contribute anything to earn them, they tend to come to yearn for more and more free benefits. They tend to become addicted to "entitlements." They learn that the necessary things of life do not always require hard work. Their work ethic always suffers. Many people also come to be focused on themselves and not on others. These tend to "look out for number one" and become less solicitous of their neighbors.

The necessities needed for all the masses of people do cost significant money. That money must come from those in the society that are productive. Since the totalitarian government negatively enforces the motivation of its people to be productive and hard working, the required resources for purchasing the guaranteed necessities are usually at a premium, and it is only the relatively few that produce them.

**Conservative or “right wing” politics.** A conservative government is a smaller government. It provides less regulation. It is therefore apt to spend less money. It leaves people more to fend for themselves. That would seem to be risky, particularly for those of less education or less skill or less physical ability. This governmental philosophy would seem to encourage self-interest. It allows those to work hard and earn more money to keep it. It does not force those with money to give it to those who do not have money. Is this not selfishness? Might it then be that the rich will become richer and the poor poorer?

Is this type of government good or evil? One bit of evidence is that the Lord had a hand in the creating of the Constitution of the democratic republic or representative type of government of the United States of America. Section 101 of the Doctrine and Covenants makes it clear that the Lord deliberately raised up men prepared to create our Constitution (see verse 80). Most would agree that the government originally created shortly following the Revolutionary War and outlined in the Constitution is a more limited government than we have today.

If a more limited government is not evil, but in fact is the government the Lord would choose for us, how does it actually work? When a people are left alone to enjoy the material benefits of their labors, they are encouraged to work harder. If these people are heavily taxed, then may become resentful and less motivated. When the more productive among us are working hard, they employ many others to help in their work. The entire culture then thrives.

Do the disabled and dispossessed suffer under such a government? It has always been that during a thriving economy, the people manage to care for those that are truly deserving of help.

It is both ironic and important to note that the very lifestyle the Lord would most favor us to live here on earth is not mandated by his favored governmental system. It is, in fact, because then it would be *mandated*. During mortality men must be allowed to exercise their agency. They must have the freedom to choose on their own. If they then choose the course of hard work and charity for others, it will be for their eternal benefit. Forcing men to obey the Lord’s commands is not productive of spiritual growth. It is easily recognized as the system Satan advocated in the premortal existence.

Only celestial people will be invited to live forever the celestial life in the presence of their heavenly parents. Becoming a celestial individual can only occur incrementally, line upon line, and a man must choose his own course each step of the way. He must not be forced to choose. Being forced limits his freedoms and stifles his growth.



## The Character of Joseph Smith

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Have you ever stopped to consider just how much stock you have placed in the character and integrity of Joseph Smith? I, personally, am wholly committed to the idea that he was a prophet of God, and I know that most of you readers are as well. Joseph was visited by the Father and the Son. He was tutored by angels. He found and translated a remarkable ancient record that quite independently confirms the authenticity of Christianity and the existence and ministrations of the Father and the resurrected Christ. He brought forth, again, on earth the doctrine and Church of Jesus Christ to an otherwise misguided, misinformed world in desperate need of the complete truth. Joseph established that Church and prophesied that it would persist until the Lord's Second Coming as the one and only true kingdom of God on the earth. He then guided that much beleaguered Church through its early years, from 1830 to 1844. He was enabled to provide whole collections of new scripture by a process almost akin to heavenly dictation. As he accomplished all of these things he enjoyed the incalculable blessing of directly revealed help from the Lord.

Joseph simply must have been telling the truth about all matters pertaining to the Church and its restoration. All our eternal hopes and dreams depend on it. If we were to learn he was not meticulously truthful, we would be bereft and lost. All our concepts about the purpose of life on this earth would go up in smoke. We can't have it both ways. There is no middle ground in this matter. Joseph was either one of the most vital prophets in the history of this earth or he was a despicable charlatan who has foisted onto us believers a horribly cruel hoax—one that could even render our lives questionably worth living.

It is most important that we become thoroughly acquainted with Joseph Smith, Jr. and his family, even at a distance of over one hundred and fifty years. What was he really like? What were they like—in what kind of a family was he reared? What lessons was he taught in his youth? In what type of family environment was he nurtured? What were his aspirations, his goals, his motivations? We simply must come to trust him. After all, we have literally laid our eternal souls in his hands.

A most positive image of Joseph commonly prevails in the Church. He was a leader of physical prowess and vigorous manhood. He was a profound idealist with spontaneous humor and warmth. He displayed personal courage under tremendous odds. However, the view provided by some books about him is in sharp contrast with this one. There are and have been several among us who would call the integrity of Joseph and his family into question. The image of Joseph Smith, Jr. painted by his enemies is sharply different than that provided us by his sympathetic friends. Joseph was a topic of warm controversy even in his own day and in his own community.

Our initial inclination is to angrily dismiss all negative charges against him out of hand and pay them no further attention. In this chapter, however, I will not. I will give the detractors their say. The purpose of this chapter is to examine carefully and discuss thoroughly the pros and cons of all of the accusations, derogatory claims, and bitter diatribes of the anti-Mormons. Do they have any merit? Is there any truth at all to them? Why have the negative claims been made in the first place? I believe it's important that if we are to reject their claims, we must be well-informed and not ignorant of the allegations and the motivations and logic of those who made them.

As resources for this chapter, I have drawn heavily upon two helpful articles. The first is "Joseph Smith's New York Reputation Reappraised" by Richard Lloyd Anderson (*BYU Studies*, volume 10, 1969-70, 283-314). Dr. Anderson is professor of history and religion at Brigham Young University. He holds degrees in the fields of law, Greek, and ancient history, and has concentrated his research on New Testament and the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. The second article is "The Joseph Smith, Sr., Family: Farmers of the Genesee" by Donald L. Enders (*Joseph Smith: The Prophet, The Man*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate, Jr., Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993, 213-225). Dr. Enders was senior curator at the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City, Utah, when this article was written and published.

As we discuss the statements and opinions of others regarding Joseph and his family, it would be appropriate and fair to hold these others to a reasonable standard. This standard will include the following: Was the observer the right age to have direct contact with Joseph? Was the contact close or distant? Was the contact direct and first-hand, or is the observer reporting, as his own opinions, second or third-hand contacts? The basic qualification for any historical source is firsthand contact with the person or event described. Yet the anti-Joseph Smith statements of contemporaries show a distinct tendency to report community rumor, not personal experience. Finally, what is the bias of the source? Historians today recognize that no observer is free from bias, but intense prejudice tends to exaggeration. One must therefore be rigorous in examining the factual basis of the conclusions of Joseph Smith's contemporaries, particularly those who were bitterly antagonistic.

## **The Accusations**

Perhaps the major source of negative comments about Joseph Smith and his family by his contemporaries can be traced to the book, *Mormonism Unveiled* [sic], published in 1834 by the Painesville, Ohio, editor Eber D. Howe. He published several affidavits gathered by D. Philastrus Hurbut from villagers in Palmyra and Manchester.

This book has become the virtual cornerstone of anti-Mormon historiography. Howe himself reported, forty-four years after publication of his book in his memoirs, that his book "has been the basis of all the histories which have appeared from time to time

since that period touching that people” (Eber D. Howe, *Autobiography and Recollections of a Pioneer Printer*, Painesville, Ohio, 1878, 45). The Palmyra-Manchester affidavits published in Howe’s book have introduced Joseph Smith in every major non-Mormon study from 1834 to the present. Curiously absent, from Howe’s book and all subsequent references to it, is any investigation of the individuals behind the Hurlbut affidavits.

The affidavits in *Mormonism Unveiled* uniformly paint a negative picture of Joseph and his family. The following charges are leveled against them: They are (1) “money diggers,” (2) liars, (3) lazy and indolent, (4) intemperate, and (5) immoral. What of these charges? Were they the fabrications of a dedicated anti-Mormon with intent to defame? Was there any truth to them? Were the signers (if they were not the authors of the affidavits, at least they were the ratifiers) tricked into signing? Or, did they have sincere misgivings about the Smiths? Did the affidavits accurately reflect their true opinions?

Our approach to this discussion will be as follows. We will first consider the individual who collected the affidavits and some particulars about those documents he gathered. He is well-known to have had a decidedly anti-Mormon bias, and it is only fair that this be pointed out. We will then consider each of the specific complaints in turn to determine any merit or absence of merit in them.

#### **D. Philastrus Hurlbut**

Hurlbut was excommunicated twice by LDS tribunals for immorality. He became so personally vindictive that he was put under a court order restraining him from doing harm to the person or property of Joseph Smith (For a more complete discussion of Hurlbut’s personal vindictiveness, see Richard Lloyd Anderson, “The Reliability of the Early History of Lucy and Joseph Smith”, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, volume 4, Summer 1969, 15). He was “employed” by an anti-Mormon public committee to gather evidence to “completely divest Joseph Smith of all claims to the character of an honest man. . .” (“To the Public,” official committee statement published in the *Painesville Telegraph*, January 31, 1834). To achieve this goal he traveled to New York and procured signed statements at Palmyra Village, the largest business center adjacent to the Smith farm and also at Manchester Village.

**Hurlbut’s general affidavits.** Hurlbut prepared two general, or community, affidavits and invited signatures upon them. One was signed by eleven residents of Manchester. The other was signed by fifty-one residents of Palmyra. Again, we are reminded that the signers of these affidavits were not authors, but merely ratifiers.

When Hurlbut appeared in the Manchester schoolhouse, he undoubtedly had penned the statement that eleven rather nonliterary farmers signed. One would envision basically the same procedure as inevitable for the fifty-one signers from Palmyra.

**Hurlbut’s individual affidavits.** Hurlbut also gathered thirteen individual affidavits, each signed by an individual. They included: Joseph Capron, Parley Chase,

Willard Chase, Abigail Harris, Henry Harris, Lucy Harris, Peter Ingersoll, Roswell Nichols, Barton Stafford, David Stafford, Joshua Stafford, William Stafford, and G. W. Stoddard. Only ten of these, however, are pertinent. The following three are excluded from consideration: Lucy Harris talks only of her husband, Martin Harris. G. W. Stoddard's single sentence on the Smiths is merely a gratuitous comment: "The Smith family never made any pretensions to respectability." And Abigail Harris reports a single conversation with Lucy Smith that is strictly not relevant to the character of Joseph Smith. For Abigail's evident tendency to maliciousness, see Hugh Nibley, *The Myth Makers*, Salt Lake City, 1961, 20-22.

One fact about the details of the affidavits pointed out in some detail by Richard Lloyd Anderson in his article references above is that there exists evidence that Hurlbut heavily influenced the wording of some of the individual affidavits. Ideally, we might expect the individual affidavits to have been composed by each of the individual signers. If Hurlbut had a role in the writing of these individual affidavits, that might lessen their significance. This evidence is found in the fact that the wording in some of the individual affidavits shows specific similarities to the wording in the two general affidavits. These latter two were composed by Hurlbut himself. It appears that Hurlbut "put words into the mouths" of those individuals who signed personal affidavits.

Dr. Anderson points out that the affidavits not only contained similar shared phrases, but more importantly the basic structures of the affidavits were similar even though they purportedly originated from different authors.

I desire to provide the reader with an example of these similarities. Hence, I will reproduce here two documents, the general Palmyra affidavit and the individual affidavit of Parley Chase.

**General Palmyra affidavit:**

We, the undersigned, have been *acquainted with the Smith family*, for a number of years, while they resided near this place, and we have no hesitation in saying, that we consider them destitute of that moral character, which ought to *entitle* them to the confidence of any community. They were particularly famous for visionary projects, spent much of their time in *digging for money* which they pretended was hid in the earth; and to this day, large excavations may be seen in the earth, not far from their residence, where they used to spend their time in digging for hidden treasures. Joseph Smith, Senior, and his son, Joseph, were in particular, considered entirely destitute of moral character and *addicted* to vicious habits. . . .

It was not supposed that any of them were possessed of sufficient character or influence to make any one believe their book or their sentiments, and we know not of a single individual in this vicinity that puts the least confidence in their pretended revelations.

### **Parley Chase affidavit:**

I was *acquainted with the family* of Joseph Smith, Sen. both before and since they became Mormons, and feel free to state that not one of the male members of the Smith family were *entitled* to any credit whatsoever. . . . *Digging for money* was their principal employment. . . . They were lazy, intemperate and worthless men, very much *addicted* to lying. In this they frequently boasted of their skill.

In regard to their Gold Bible speculation they scarcely ever told two stories alike. The Mormon Bible is said to be a revelation from God, through Joseph Smith, Jr., his Prophet, and this same Joseph Smith, Jr. to my knowledge, bore the reputation among his neighbors of being a liar.

The foregoing statement can be corroborated by all his former neighbors.

The words italicized in the above comparisons illustrate equivalent portions of the two affidavits. Both documents progress formally through a recital of an acquaintance with the Smiths, their disreputability in the community, money digging, and being “addicted to” evil practices. Both close with application of general character to religious claims and the assertion that no one in that area takes them seriously. It is highly unlikely that Parley Chase would write following the identical outline of Hurlbut’s Palmyra affidavit—rather Hurlbut composed both. For further details of these similarities, please see Dr. Anderson’s article, referenced above.

### **The Specific Complaints**

The crucial issue here is not signatures or even affidavits. The real issue is the honest individual feelings of these individuals about Joseph Smith and his family. Also, if they harbored ill feelings, were there valid reasons for those feelings? The obvious anti-Mormon biases of Philastus Hurlbut and probably also the signers of the affidavits does not necessarily negate the validity of their statements. Those affidavits could still contain verifiable facts about Joseph and his family.

I will examine each of the major complaints against the Smiths in turn. Are the allegations fabricated and false, or do they contain true facts? If they are false they deserve no further attention and require no defense. If the allegations contain elements of truth, an explanation is required. We will learn that each true factual element is placed by individuals in a certain context depending upon their biases. We have determined that the complaints under consideration originated with people with strong anti-Mormon biases. Those biases determine the context into which the facts are placed.

**“Money diggers.”** We have carefully considered the Smith family’s experience with divination. See chapter , *The Role of Divination (“Magic”) in Joseph Smith’s Early Life*. We know that the Smiths, particularly Joseph, Sr. and Joseph Jr. were, in fact

involved in divining and “money digging.” The claim in the affidavits is true. In chapter , we determine that contempt for treasure seeking (“money digging”) was universal among the genteel or upper class by the early nineteenth century as part of their wider criticism of the common folk for inadequate ambition, lackluster work discipline, and attachment to unsupported traditions. Many of those involved in signing Hurlbut’s affidavits could hardly be classed among the “gentility” of the area. It is therefore likely that the negative context into which they placed the “money diggers” was more the result of their anti-Mormon prejudices and less due to their socioeconomic biases.

Those believers in Mormonism were less inclined to speak negatively of the Joseph and his family whom they surely loved and respected. Surely they knew of the Smiths’ predilection for divination, but they regarded it as a part of Joseph’s role of prophet. I see Joseph’s involvement in divination as divinely orchestrated and part of his step-wise preparation and transition from a young and gifted treasure seeker to his becoming a true prophet of God.

**Liar.** This issue is simple. Joseph claimed to have visions and interactions with heavenly beings. He claimed to have been divinely enabled to find and translate an important ancient American record on gold plates. Was he lying, or was he telling the truth? It is a pure matter of belief. To adapt and coin an old aphorism—The “lie” is in the ear of the hearer.

The accusation of “liar,” when directed at Joseph Smith, Sr., seems usually related to his known belief in the Book of Mormon.

**Lazy and indolent.** After the Smiths moved away from their farm in 1830, some neighbors went on record with accusations that the Smiths had done little to improve the farm, had cleared only a small acreage (Arthur B. Deming, *Naked Truths About Mormonism*. Oakland, CA: Deming, 1888) and were “lazy,” and “indolent” ( E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 262). One neighbor claimed that the Smiths’ “great objective appeared to be to live without work” (*Ibid.*, 260), while another said, “It was a mystery to their neighbors how [the Smiths] got their living” (*Ibid.*, 249). Some even claimed that the Smiths had no legal claim to the property, but were merely “squatters” (Pomeroy Tucker, *Origins, Rise and Progress of Mormonism*. New York: D. Appleton, 1867, 12-13. See also Thomas L. Cook, *Palmyra and Vicinity*, Palmyra, NY: *Palmyra Courier-Journal*, 1930, 219).

Of all the charges leveled against the Smiths this is the most ludicrous and obviously false. In fact, its inclusion among the other charges in the affidavits raises questions of the credibility of the person or persons making all of the charges.

Donald L Enders, in his article referenced above has provided abundant evidence of the fact that members of the Smith family were anything but lazy. Brother Enders writes:

In just ten years . . . the Smiths turned their heavily forested hundred acres into a productive farm “admired for its good order and

industry” (Lucy Mack Smith, “Manuscript History of Her Son Joseph Smith, Jr.,” 1). They cleared 60 acres (thirty in the first year alone), cultivated approximately 35 acres, fenced the farm, planted a large apple orchard, and tapped 1,200 to 1,500 sugar maples, producing 1,000 pounds of sugar annually. They also built a log home, a frame home, a barn, a cooper’s shop, and other outbuildings. By fall 1823, the season of Alvin’s death, the Smiths “enjoyed their third harvest,” and within five years they had completed the clearing and fencing. The Smith reminiscences recall with pride that every able family member cooperated fully, showing the “the strictest kind of economy and labor” (*Ibid.*, 49. See also J. W. Peterson, “William Smith Interview.” *Deseret Evening News* [20 January 1894] 28:11). . . .

Which version is correct [that of the Smiths or that of their antagonistic neighbors]? Land and tax records, farm account books, and correspondence, soil surveys, archaeological reports, historic building surveys, and interviews with agricultural historians and specialists of early nineteenth-century New York suggest that the Smith version is an honest one. These sources, which generally have not been part of the scholarly reconstructions of the origin period of Mormon history, yield data about the process of buying and developing land, farm labor, crops and markets, farm values, farm building construction, and agricultural knowledge and practices. Some of these sources specifically mention the Joseph Smith, Sr., family. Used in conjunction with traditional sources, these new sources permit a much clearer view about the Smiths’ work ethics and habits and of their accomplishments and failures as farm people.

I will here provide several notes of evidence taken, and largely quoted, from Brother Enders’ article:

On 2 November 1825, a “Squire” Stoddard signed a deed purchasing 150 acres immediately south of the Smith farm. The deed described Stoddard’s north boundary as “the south line of lands heretofore *articled* to Joseph and Alvin Smith” (Deed Book 44:219-21, italics mine). *Articled* means that the property was under contract and being paid for in yearly installments. Articling allowed possession but not title.

It seems probable that the Smiths looked for land that met specific criteria based not only on their practical experience in working the land, but also on established agricultural models. For example, Tench Coxe, Supervisor of the Revenue during the presidency of George Washington, published widely read recommendations about the agricultural settlement models during the years following the Revolution. Coxe suggested that emigrants to Western New York settle “on hundred acres of sugar maple land.” If these acres were developed to standards of “ordinary American improvement,” “two thirds” should be cleared for the “culture of grass and grain,” and “one third” should

be left in “wood and timber.” The timber should include about 1,200 maple trees, which, when tapped, would “make one thousand pounds of weight of sugar” (Tench Coxe, *A View of the United States of America*. Dublin: P. Wogan, 1795, 69). The Smith family followed Coxe’s recommendation in almost exact detail. They obviously selected the land for their farm carefully and intelligently and were responsible and skilled farmers.

In 1820, when the Smiths purchased their hundred acres of heavily forested “undeveloped” land, it was valued at \$700 (Assessment Rolls, Manchester Township, NY, 1830. Ontario County Archives, Canandaigua, NY, 17). The 1830 tax records assessed its value at \$1,300. The \$600 increase represents considerable development by standards of that time. The Smiths’ 60 acres of cleared land, divided into 30-35 acres of cultivated fields, 10 to 15 acres of meadow, an orchard of 200 apple trees, and the woodlot and fencing, represented about \$250 to \$275 of the \$600 increase. The Smith barn, which historical sources suggest was of common design, would have been valued at \$150 to \$175; the cooper’s shop, with “wood floor and loft” at \$50, animal enclosures at \$25, and the “unfinished” but inhabited frame home at \$75 to \$125 (*Ibid.*; See also John Mott, Director of Old Sturbridge Village Agricultural Program. Interviews. August 2, 1985 and January 20, 1992; see also William H. Siles, Director of Historical Research Genesee Country Village, Mumford, New York. Interview. May 2, 1985). The value of the buildings (about \$325), when added to the value of the improved land (\$250-\$275), agrees very closely with the \$600 increase in the value during the decade of the 1820s. This data must be viewed as verification of the accuracy of the Smiths’ memory of their improvements.

Consider what those developments represent. Based on horticultural studies, approximately 100 trees per acre grew in that area. To clear the 60 acres, the Smiths cut down about 6,000 trees (Dr. Dan Marion, Horticulturalist and Tree Pathologist, State College of New York. Interview. Canandaigua, NY. August 10, 1985 and January 24, 1992). A large percentage measured from four to six feet in diameter, and grew to heights of one hundred feet or more (J. W. Peterson, “William Smith Interview.” *Deseret Evening News*, January 20, 1984, 28:11). These figures help us to better appreciate William Smith’s statement: “If you will figure up how much work it should take to clear sixty acres of heavy timber land . . . trees you could not conveniently cut down, you can tell whether we were lazy or not (*Ibid.*, 11).

The Smith farm had a perimeter of one and 2/3 miles. To fence that distance with a standard stone and singer fence required moving tons of stone from fields to the farm perimeter, then cutting and placing about 4,000 ten-foot rails. This does not include the labor and materials involved in fencing the barnyard, garden, pastures, and orchard, which, at a conservative estimate, required an additional 2,000 to 3,000 cut wooden rails (Neil Adams McNall. *An Agricultural History of the Genesee Valley, 1790-1860*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1952, 59, 84, 87, 91, 110-11, and

144). Clearly, this work alone—all of it separate from the actual labor of farming—represents a prodigious amount of concerted planning and labor.

The average size of Manchester Township's 253 farms was 85 acres. . . . Sixty-two of the 253 farms were larger than the Smith farm. They ranged from 105 to just over 300 acres. Twenty-two farms were the same size as the Smiths'. One hundred and sixty-eight were smaller and decreased in size from 98 to 10 Acres (*Ibid.*). The 1830 tax records for Manchester Township contain the evaluations of 176 farms of more than 50 acres in size. The average value per acre for those farms was \$13. . . . The Smith farm was appraised at the average value per acre. Seventy-one farms were valued at a higher rate per acre than the Smith farm; 90 were valued below theirs; and 14 were valued at the same level. The farms rating higher than the Smiths' ranged from \$13.10 to \$18 per acre, while those of lesser value were appraised at \$12.90 to \$8.

The Staffords, Stoddards, Chases, and Caprons were neighborhood residents who spoke against the Smiths in the affidavits. Only one of the ten families in this four-family group had property assessed more valuable than the Smiths'. Abraham Stafford's 162 acres was valued at \$12.96, William Stafford's 100 acres at \$12.50 per acre, Joshua Stafford's 123 acres at \$12.20 per acre, David Stafford's 20 acres at \$11 per acre, and John Stafford's 60 acres at \$10 per acre (Assessment Rolls 21-22). Only Edmund Chase of the Chase family group was still farming in Manchester in 1830. His 29-acre farm, bordering east on the Smith farm, was valued at \$10 per acre (*Ibid.*, 6). Russell Stoddard, the man who, according to Lucy Smith, cheated them out of their farm, lived a mile and a half south of the Smiths in a frame home with a barn, outbuildings, an orchard, a cedar grove, and a small sawmill. His 98-acre farm was considered "number one quality" and was valued at \$16 per acre (*Ibid.*, 21). Stoddard owned other farms, speculated in land, and built houses. After Alvin's death, he contracted with the Smiths to compete their frame home enough to allow them to move into it. [For identification of Russell Stoddard as the carpenter who finished building the Smith's frame home after Alvin's death, see George Albert Smith Diary.] When fully "enclosed" after the Smiths moved away, it was comparable in size to Stoddard's home (Research File. Joseph Smith, Sr. Family. Palmyra-Manchester, NY, 1816-30. Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake City, UT). The 150 acre farm of Squire Stoddard, Russell's brother, lay immediately south of the Smith farm and was valued at \$12 per acre. Joseph Capron's land, a five-acre parcel situated within 200 yards of the Smith home, was valued at \$10 per acre (Assessment Rolls, 5, 22).

It would seem that another reason the Smiths were accused of being "lazy and indolent" is that they had to work at day-labor to provide for themselves and pay for their farm. In that day, day-laboring implied low work. People who were employed for short term, often at menial tasks, were considered "lowfolk," unrefined and socially undesirable. In addition to the divining—already mentioned above—they performed many types of labor including: digging and rocking up wells, mowing, coopering

(making barrels), constructing cisterns, hunting and trapping, teaching school, providing domestic services, making chairs and baskets, harvesting, carpentry, digging for salt, constructing stone walls and fireplaces, flailing grain, cutting and selling cordwood, hauling, and making cider. They sold garden produce, washed clothes, painted oil-cloth coverings, butchered, dug coal, painted chairs, and made maple syrup and sugar (Research File. Joseph Smith, Sr. Family. Palmyra-Manchester, NY, 1816-30. Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake City, UT).

Joseph Jr.'s account suggests honest industry in the face of difficult conditions: "Being in indigent circumstances," he says, "[we] were obliged to labour hard for the support of [our] large family and . . . it required exertions of all [family members] that were able to render any assistances" (Dean C. Jessee, ed. and comp. *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984, 4). The Smith men had a reputation as skilled and diligent workers. William Smith asserted that "whenever the neighbors wanted a good day's work done they knew where they could get a good hand" (J. W. Peterson. "William Smith Interview." *Deseret Evening News* [January 20, 1894] 28:11). Eight wells in three townships are attributed to the Smiths (Research File). They likely dug and rocked others, including some of the eleven wells dug on the farm of Lemuel Durfee, the kindly old Quaker who lived a little east of Martin Harris. Durfee also allowed them to labor in return for rent (or "mortgage" payments) on their farm after it passed into his ownership in December 1825. Father Joseph, Hyrum, and Joseph, Jr. were coopers. Coopering was an exacting trade, particularly if the barrel was designed to hold liquid. Dye tubs, barrels, and water and sap buckets were products of the Smiths' cooper shop. They also repaired leaky barrels for neighbors at ciding time (Research File).

Sugaring was another labor-intensive work. William Smith recalls, "To gather the sap and make sugar and molasses from trees was no lazy job" (J. W. Peterson. "William Smith Interview." *Deseret Evening News* [January 20, 1894] 28:11). Lucy said they produced an average of "one thousand pounds" of sugar a year (*Ibid.*, 50). One neighbor reportedly said that the Smiths made 7,000 pounds of sugar one season and won a premium for their effort at the county fair (Fawn M. Brodie. *No Man Knows My History*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979, 10-11). Many people could make maple syrup, but it required considerable skill to make sugar and particularly good skill, dexterity, and commitment to make high quality sugar.

The Smiths' labors indicate a strong work ethic. They were hardly a lazy or indolent family.

**Intemperate.** Barton Stafford was a few years younger than Joseph. In his personal affidavit he accuses the young Prophet of undignified conduct. Sometime in 1827 or afterward Joseph was allegedly intoxicated on cider, scuffled with a fellow-worker, tore his shirt, and was escorted home by Emma. David Stafford, in his affidavit, also describes a personal experience, most probably the same as described by Barton.

David claimed that Joseph had “drunked a little too freely,” and while working together a dispute led to “hard words,” which led to a fight, and “he got the advantage of me in the scuffle.” A friend of the Staffords who also was involved in the scuffle, referring to himself and one of the Staffords, said, “We both entered a complaint against him, and he was fined for the breach of the peace.”

Joseph Smith’s only known response to a particular Hurlbut affidavit reports another version of the Stafford incident. It appears in Willard Richards’ memo entries of 1843 conversations of the Prophet: “While supper was preparing Joseph related an anecdote. While young, his father had a fine large watch dog, which bit off an ear from David Stafford’s hog, which Stafford had turned into the Smith corn field. Stafford shot the dog, and with six other fellows pitched upon him (Joseph, Jr.) unawares. And Joseph whipped the whole of them and escaped unhurt, which they swore to as recorded in Hurlbut or Howe’s book (*Joseph Smith’s Journal*, kept by Willard Richards, Jan. 1, 1843).

Since the above incident takes on such a different context in being told by Stafford or Smith, it is a striking reminder that controversial events cannot be settled by hearing only one side.

I find something a bit comical about the descriptions of this incident in the life of the young Prophet. He was surely a physically capable young man and well-able to take care of himself and his interests. I’m also convinced that any scuffles with other men were taken up in the interest of justice and fairness. If this is intemperance, then so be it!

**Immoral.** A common theme in Hurlbut’s affidavits is that Joseph and his family were dishonest and even thieves. One of the more absurd stories contained in the affidavit of William Stafford, the father of Barton and David, accuses the Smiths of being sheep stealers. In fairness, it may well be pointed out that William Stafford was a former sailor without education. This considerably heightens the possibility that Hurlbut composed Stafford’s affidavit and merely had him sign it (Pomeroy Tucker, *The Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism*. New York, 1867, 24, note). As noted previously, there is wording in William Stafford’s affidavit known to have been used before by Hurlbut. Two examples include:

1. In William Stafford’s affidavit we read: “They would say, also, that nearly all the hills in this part of New York, were thrown up by human hands. . . .” (William Stafford). This wording is similar to wording found in the affidavit of Roswell Nichols: “. . . for he had often said, that the hills in our neighborhood were nearly all erected by human hands.”

2. Stafford refers to the Smiths as “a worthless gang” which is a typical Hurlbut phrase.

3. The closing comment of the affidavit almost quotes the close of the general Palmyra affidavit: "No one apprehended any danger from a book, originating with individuals who had neither influence, honesty or honor."

According to the William Stafford affidavit version of this the story:

The Smiths "devised a scheme" to cheat their neighbor out of "a large, fat, black wether" (a sheep). Stafford lived about a mile from the Smith residence. Joseph had discovered a valuable treasure which could be procured in only one way. A black sheep had to be taken to where the treasure was concealed and its throat cut. While bleeding, the animal had to be led around in a circle. After this action was taken the supposed wrath of an evil spirit would be appeased and the treasure could be obtained. Hearing the Smiths represent that the sacrifice of such a sheep must appease the spirit guarding a treasure, Stafford himself contributed the sheep "to gratify my curiosity." Stafford later learned that the animal was killed, but the death did not "have the desired effect." And the Smiths got away with the dead sheep. In the affidavit, Stafford is quoted as saying, "I believe, this is the only time they ever made money-digging a profitable business."

Two authoritative accounts of this supposed episode have been told since its occurrence:

1. William Stafford died in 1863. At the time of his death, an acquaintance in Palmyra, Wallace Miner was twenty years old. Some time before Stafford's death, Wallace Miner had a conversation with him regarding this episode. Some seventy years later, in 1932, M. Wilford Poulson took notes as Wallace Miner recalled this conversation. Poulson reported Miner's statement: "I once asked Stafford if Smith did steal a sheep from him. He said no, not exactly. He said, he did miss a black sheep, but soon Joseph came and admitted he took it for sacrifice but he was willing to work for it. He made wooden sap buckets to fully pay for it" (M. Wilford Poulson, Notebook of 1932 interviews, Brigham Young University Archives). A more elaborate version of the Miner-Stafford conversation was reported in 1930 in the village history of Thomas Cook, which agrees that Joseph took the initiative to admit the taking and that he did the work to repay Stafford for the sheep (Thomas L. Cook, *Palmyra and Vicinity, Palmyra, New York*, 1930, 221-222).

Admittedly, this account is based on Miner's recollections some seventy years after the conversation, but it does exonerate the Smiths of dishonest motivations in the episode. It is logical to conclude that the affidavit version of the episode was the idea of Hurlbut himself.

2. An earlier insight into William Stafford's perceptions of the Smiths is available. It gives quite a different perception. Stafford's second son was born the same year as Joseph Smith (1805), had the personal ambition to gain a good education for the day, and he became a physician. He practiced until about 1870 in the general area of Manchester and thereafter at Rochester. There Dr. John Stafford was interviewed by

the Reorganized Latter Day Saint apostle William H. Kelley in 1881. The Kelley question-answer notes on this point read as follows:

What about that black sheep your father let them have?

"I have heard that story, but don't think my father was there at the time they say Smith got the sheep. I don't know anything about it."

You were living at home at the time, and it seems you ought to know if they got a sheep, or stole one, from your father?

"They never stole one, I am sure; they may have got one sometime."

Well, Doctor, you know pretty well whether that story is true or not, that Tucker tells. What do you think of it? [Pomeroy Tucker was a printer in Palmyra in the days of the prophet Joseph. He wrote an antagonistic book about the Church, *Mormonism its Origin Rise and Progress*, New York, 1867, 85.]

I don't think it is true. I would have heard more about it, that is true. . . ." (William H. Kelley, "The Hill Cumorah . . . The Stories of Hurlbut, Howe, Tucker, etc. from Late Interviews," *Saints' Herald*, volume 28, June 1, 1881, 167).

Since the well-informed John Stafford knew nothing of the sheep story, it is plain that William Stafford did not carry the attitude against the Smiths that his Hurlbut affidavit represents. If there was such an event of a borrowed sheep, it had nothing to do with dishonesty. In the Kelley interview, Dr. Stafford also insisted, "What Tucker said about them [the Smiths] was false, absolutely. My father, William Stafford, was never connected with them in any way," a direct denial of the relationship and episode luridly described in the Hurlbut affidavit. Since Tucker's reference to William Stafford was a reiteration of Hurlbut's sheep story, John Stafford clearly was skeptical that his father was correctly represented in either Hurlbut-Howe or Tucker. The fact that William Stafford's family doubted the authenticity of the Hurlbut account, together with Hurlbut's evident editorializing talents, casts serious doubt upon the William Stafford affidavit as an historical document.

Another affidavit that accuses Joseph Smith of deliberate dishonesty is that of Peter Ingersoll. Little is known about him other than his appearance in the land records around the 1820's as a property holder near Palmyra Village. His land was foreclosed to satisfy a judgment, and he apparently move from Palmyra after sale of his properties in 1836. In 1879 Abel Chase claimed, "He moved west years ago and died about two years ago," (Statement of Abel D. Chase, May 2, 1879, Palmyra, New York, cit. Charles A. Shook, *True Origin of the Book of Mormon*, Cincinnati, 1914, 131). His life after leaving Palmyra is at present a mystery. So is his affidavit. In his affidavit, Ingersoll reports two accounts that Joseph confided in him. The first was that the Smiths milked Ingersoll's missing cows and took the milk while they were supposedly using the

divining rod to locate them. Ingersoll's prize story concerns Joseph's supposedly confiding in him that Joseph brought a quantity of wrapped sand into the Smith home. His family was curious about the nature of the package, and Joseph impulsively identified it as "the golden Bible." The affidavit then goes on to report: "To my surprise, they were credulous enough to believe what I said. Accordingly, I told them that I had received a commandment to let no one see it, for, says I, no man can see it with the naked eye and live. However, I offered to take out the book and show it to them, but they refuse to see it, and left the room. 'Now,' said Jo, 'I have got the damned fools fixed, and will carry out the fun.'"

It is difficult to even consider providing evidence against these absurd and laughable accounts of Joseph's "confiding" in Ingersoll. The Ingersoll affidavit dates the episode at August 1827. But the Willard Chase affidavit maintains that by June 1827 Joseph Smith, Sr. had given Willard Chase full details of the "record on plates of gold," and the family's knowledge of it from "some years ago."

The real issue in the Ingersoll statement is whether the damaging admissions reported from Joseph Smith debunk the Mormon Prophet or the Hurlbut-Ingersoll affidavit. Are we really to believe that any family consists of such a collection of gullibles as to be awed by the ridiculous brashness of the Ingersoll episode.

**Were there good qualities to be found in the Smith family?** Another anti-Mormon author was A. B. Deming. His collected statements about the Mormons were published in a newspaper entitled, *Naked Truths About Mormonism*. The banner lines over the only two issues to appear were, "Read and Laugh as You Never Laughed Before," and "Startling Revelation."

Even though Deming was devoted to condemning the Smiths and the Mormons, his gathered testimonies about the Smiths contained positive comments. His background is most interesting. He was the son of the courageous non-Mormon general, M. R. Deming, who stood for law and order in the civil chaos of western Illinois after the Prophet's martyrdom. The younger Deming was deeply affected by his father's early death. At the same time, he was neurotically resentful at the persecution his father's Mormon sympathies caused him. Deming considered "all my misfortunes through life" to be "the direct or indirect result of his [young Deming's father's] friendship to the Mormons. . ." Although impelled to gather evidence against their faith, Deming was plagued by fears that the Mormons "might kill me, as I have several times been creditably informed they intend to do." Yet he describes in detail his cordial reception in Salt Lake City by Mormon officials in 1882 and 1886. (All this personal data Deming volunteers on the first page of *Naked Truths About Mormonism*, vol. 1, No. 1, January 1888). Deming therefore appears as a pathetic, paranoid, and tortured soul.

Deming apparently did make contact with several who had known the Smiths in Palmyra-Manchester. It is notable that even in his one-sided and obviously biased reporting, he does not totally damn the Smiths as does the Hurlbut-Howe affidavits. For

instance, Christopher Stafford was three years younger than Joseph Smith and despised him, though he admitted he really knew Joseph's brother Samuel Harrison Smith better and considered him "a good, industrious boy" (*Ibid.*, 1. Statement of C. M. Stafford, March 23, 1885, Auburn, Ohio). Caroline Rockwell Smith remembered her family's conversion to Mormonism without bitterness, and the good deeds of Lucy Smith: "Jo Smith's mother doctored many persons in Palmyra." Caroline did not consider Joseph Smith an obvious fraud: "I hope sometime it will be known whether Mormonism is true or not" (*Ibid.*, Statement of Mrs. M. C. R. Smith, March 25, 1885).

### **The Positive Palmyra-Manchester Affidavits**

In the Hurlbut-Howe book the anti-Mormon credo is clear and unqualified. Fifty-one Palmyrans "acquainted with the Smith family for a number of years" found them "destitute of. . . moral character." Not a single good act or redeeming quality was displayed in that time by any one of them. "In short, not one of the family had the least claims to respectability." This obviously biased and negative credo casts a shadow and raises the question of credibility across every affidavit. The book fails to include even one favorable recollection of the Mormon founders. This book contains diatribes, not objective evaluations. There is no attempt here to gather authentic information. The only intent is to discredit. The Hurlbut-Howe book is not history. It is mere propaganda. The book's total lack of any affirmative family tradition contaminates the credibility of every negative story repeated. This general quality of *Mormonism Unveiled* as non-evidence highlights sharply the only two systematic attempts that were later made to gather recollections of non-Mormon associates of the Smiths in New York.

**The Kelley interviews.** The clearest proof that certain neighbors approved of the Smiths comes in the second systematic attempt to preserve Palmyra-Manchester recollections. In 1881 William H. and E. L. Kelley visited there with the express purpose of interviewing all who had firsthand knowledge of the Mormon founders, particularly Joseph Smith. The Kelleys were willing to "hear the worst, let it hurt whom it would." William H. Kelley was then an RLDS apostle and competent leader. He took responsibility for writing up the detailed transcript of conversations, which concluded with a description of his method: "These facts and interviews are presented . . . just as they occurred—the good and bad, side by side; and allowing for a possible mistake, or error, arising from a misapprehension, or mistake in taking notes, it can be relied upon as the opinion and gossip had about the Smith family and others, among their old neighbors. (*The Kelley Interviews* contain William L. Kelley's description of method at 161-162 and 168).

For a test of William H. Kelley's note-taking ability, one should compare his report on David Whitmer the same year. The Kelley-Whitmer interview is detailed and minutely agrees with known writings and comments of and about the Book of Mormon witness. Consequently, the William H. Kelley transcripts from Palmyra-Manchester can

be trusted as the most comprehensive investigations ever made there (For the Kelley-Whitmer interview, see *Saints' Herald*, vol. 29, 1882, 66-69).

The printing of the Kelley Interviews sparked a "skirmish of affidavits," a contest between the Kelley's transcripts and those in *Mormonism Unveiled*. This skirmish is recorded in Charles A. Shook, *True Origin of Mormon Polygamy* (Cincinnati, 1914), 36-38. The only statement that raises a significant issue on the accuracy of the Kelleys' manuscript is that of John H. Gilbert, the printer's assistant who provided all the punctuation for the Book of Mormon. Gilbert alleged a half-dozen mistakes in one interview, apparently in an attempt to discredit all of the Kelley interviews. Gilbert admits the truth of the main direction of conversation, and quarreled only with certain details. Some of Gilbert's "misrepresentations" are trivial. Gilbert claims, in his final analysis, only one change necessary. On final analysis, Gilbert is a source of confirmation of the basic accuracy of the Kelley reports.

The Kelleys' dogged insistence on personal knowledge disqualified several who merely repeated hearsay about the Smiths. One young man who signed the 1833 general Manchester affidavit for Philastus Hurlbut was Abel Chase. Some fifty years later he confessed only a knowledge of "general character." Careful questioning turned up nothing that he really knew about the Smiths. Since he was only thirteen years old when Joseph Smith left Palmyra for a permanent residence in the Harmony and Fayette areas, it is little wonder that Abel Chase could tell the Kelleys nothing definite.

Only two individuals out of nine interviewed by the Kelleys displayed any intimate knowledge. One was the same age as Joseph, John Stafford, the doctor already mentioned in connection with the affidavit attributed to his father William. The Kelleys' questions are not always specific enough to determine which recollections of John Stafford are personal and which recall stories that circulated early. For instance, the only mention of Joseph's drinking is the cider and torn shirt story told Hurlbut by John's brother Barton. But it is not really clear that either of them saw what went on. Personal observation does come to bear, however, in John Stafford's comments on Joseph's physical aggression: I "never saw him fight; [but] have known him to scuffle"—evidently the distinction between brawling and playful wrestling. Regarding accusations of laziness, it appears that he had worked by Joseph's side: "[Joseph] would do a fair day's work if hired out to a man. . ." Questioned regarding Joseph's education, Dr. Stafford replied (omitting intervening queries): Joe was quite illiterate. After they began to have school at their house, he improved greatly. They had school in their house, and studied the Bible. They did not have any teacher; they taught themselves.

His impression of Joseph as a person agrees with the Prophet's known traits and autobiographical comments, and at the same time disagrees with much Palmyra folklore: "He was a real clever, jovial boy."

Dr. Stafford did confirm the Smith family's involvement with divination:

The Smiths, with others, were digging for money before Joe got the plates. My father had a stone, which some thought they could look through, and old Mrs. Smith came there after it one day, but never got it. Saw them digging one time for money (this was three or four years before the Book of Mormon was found), the Smiths and others. The old man and Hyrum were there, I think, but Joseph was not there.

In the Kelley Interviews, the person with the most first-hand knowledge was also the most favorable to the Smith reputation. This was Orlando Saunders, an "old settler" in Palmyra. Anti-Mormon writers of the late nineteenth century preferred to quote his younger brother Lorenzo, who moved to Michigan about 1854 and died there in 1888. But Lorenzo was six years younger than Joseph Smith, whereas Orlando Saunders was two years older than Joseph.

In two preserved statements, Lorenzo Saunders says virtually nothing firsthand about Joseph Smith. After considerable correspondence virtually requesting him to remember seeing Sidney Rigdon at the Smiths before 1830 (so they could claim Rigdon's participation in creating the Book of Mormon), Lorenzo gave some vague recollections claiming to do so. Lorenzo considered Joseph an imposter, and also claimed that Lorenzo's mother did too (Letter of Lorenzo Saunders to Thomas Gregg, January 28, 1885, cit. Shook, *True Origin of the Book of Mormon*, 134-135.)

Orlando is also the more interesting in that he remained all his life on the family farm (within a mile of the Smith farm) and was aware of the various anti-Mormon spokesmen for Palmyra-Manchester until his death in 1889. It is clear that he disagreed with his brother, and on specific grounds of experience.

Fortunately, Orlando Saunders was also interviewed by a non-Mormon author of ability, Frederic G. Mather, a short time before the Kelleys' report. Mather was a journalist and not a historian. Hence his comments are brief and paraphrased. However the two interviews (Mather's and the Kelleys') are remarkably similar. Mather reports Saunders as saying "that the Smith family worked for his father and for himself," (Frederic G. Mather, "The Early Days of Mormonism," *Lippincott's Magazine*, vol. 26. 1880, 198). This contact with the Smith men was not cursory, according to the Kelley interview: "They have all worked for me many a day." Mather also reports specific business dealing, the purchase of a horse and bridle, the latter being paid for by "a Bible" (*Ibid.*, 205).

There is one apparent contradiction in the two interviews, which must be resolved in favor of the Kelleys. After quoting Saunders on Joseph Smith, Mather follows, "By nature he was peaceably disposed, but when he had taken too much liquor he was inclined to fight, with or without provocation." The weakness of this statement is that Mather's article is a synthesis of opinions about Joseph Smith in Mather's own words. The Kelleys asked particularly about this subject, and they quote Saunders

directly: "Everybody drank a little in those days, and the Smiths with the rest; they never got drunk to my knowledge."

The only criticisms reported by either Mather or the Kelleys concerned the Smiths' finances. Mather reported that the Smiths "could save no money," and this is mirrored precisely in the Kelley record: "I did not consider them good managers about business, but they were poor people; the old man had a large family."

In *Mormonism Unveiled*, the Smiths did nothing but exploit their neighbors, but Orlando Saunders' experience was opposite: "They were the best family in the neighborhood in case of sickness; one was at my house nearly all the time when my father died." Neither did he consider them poor credit risks: "I always thought them honest. They were owing me some money when they left here; that is, the old man and Hyrum did, and Martin Harris. One of them came back in about a year and paid me.

The Kelleys found Saunders "a fair type of the intelligent New York farmer," and he was characteristically agnostic in his view of the Book of Mormon. He had seen the book, "but never read it" nor did he "care anything about it." On the practical issue of the Smith reliability, he was solidly favorable. Mather reported, "He gives them the credit of being good workers. . . ."

The Kelleys quoted his words: "They were very good people. Young Joe (as we called him then), has worked for me, and he was a good worker; they all were." Evidently referring to the youthful strength of the Prophet, Saunders told Mather "that Joseph Jr., was 'a greeny,' both large and strong." Pressed by the Kelleys on how well he knew Joseph Smith, Orlando Saunders reiterated: "Oh! Just as well as one could very well; he has worked for me many a time, and been about my place a great deal. He stopped with me many a time, when through here, after they went west to Kirtland; he was always a gentleman when about my place."

The Smith family lived on the line between Palmyra and Manchester Townships. The 1830 census of these townships contains about 2,000 males old enough to know the Smiths in these two localities. From that possible number, Hurlbut procured the signatures of seventy-five individuals who claimed firsthand experience with Joseph Smith. At best, Hurlbut selected one-half of one percent of the males who potentially knew anything about the Smiths. In his book, Howe presented these as representative of the general population of the Palmyra-Manchester area.

The full community of friends and foes is re-created in Lucy Smith's history, where a positive sample appears in the 1825 letter of recommendation to the land agent when the Smith purchase contract was endangered through misrepresentation. Their respected physician was contacted, and Dr. Gain Robinson "wrote the character of my family, our industry . . . with many commendations calculated to beget confidence in us as to business transactions." In an hour this testimonial had 60 signatures "in the village." Oliver Cowdery taught school in the Smith neighborhood and is generally favorably remembered in later statements of the families of his district. On publication of

the Hurlbut affidavits, he said of Joseph, "I have been told by those for whom he has labored, that he was a young man of truth and industrious habits" (Oliver Cowdery to W. W. Phelps, Letter 8, *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*. October 1835: 200).

### **Non-Mormon Biographies of Joseph Smith**

Most major non-Mormon biographies—published in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—treating Joseph Smith's New York life and reputation are historically sub-standard. They mostly fall into an unsophisticated acceptance of Hurlbut's contrived and slanted statements, without apparent awareness of non-Mormon sources favorable to the Smiths from Palmyra-Manchester.

Anti-Mormon literature is overcrowded with non-witnesses. One reason why more accurate, first-hand, non-Mormon data on Joseph Smith and his family are not available is because the Smiths lived quite sequestered from Palmyra residents. They lived away from any village by two miles or more. Adding to the problem of a villager really coming to know the young prophet, is the fact that within a few months of obtaining the ancient plates, he moved to other neighborhoods (Harmony, Pennsylvania and Fayette, New York). Thereafter he visited the Palmyra-Manchester area only occasionally, particularly during the publication of the Book of Mormon. Even John Gilbert, chief compositor for the Book of Mormon stated in interviews that he saw Joseph Smith only once or twice, even though Gilbert was in public life in Palmyra from 1824 through the Mormon Exodus of 1831. Numerous interviews with Gilbert establish that he dealt mostly with Hyrum Smith and Martin Harris during the Book of Mormon production. Gilbert's letter to James T. Cobb, March 16, 1879, Palmyra, New York is clear: "Hyrum Smith was the only one of the family I had any acquaintance with, and that very slight." Albert Chandler, later a prominent editor in Michigan, worked as a bookbinder's apprentice on the Book of Mormon in 1829-30. Yet he knew Joseph Smith, Jr. "but slightly." "What I know of him was from hearsay, principally from Martin Harris, who believed fully in him" (Letter of Albert Chandler to William Alexander Linn, December 22, 1898, Coldwater, Mich., cit. William Alexander Linn, *Story of the Mormons*. New York, 1902, 48-49). Some of the fifty-one signers of the general Palmyra condemnation probably had no more than this degree of knowledge of the Smiths.

There are even greater problems in taking Palmyra-Manchester statements as definitive on the origin of the Book of Mormon. As Chandler recalled the Palmyra of 1829-30, everyone scoffed at Martin Harris, but no one really knew the events and personalities behind the new religion: "The absolute secrecy of the whole inception and publication of the Mormon Bible stopped positive knowledge. We only knew what Joseph Smith would permit Martin Harris to publish, in reference to the whole thing (Chandler to Linn in *Story of the Mormons*, 48-49). In the study of Joseph Smith's character, it is the distant non-observer of Palmyra-Manchester who tends to be hostile.

The better informed the witness, the more affirmative his views. This tendency or rule requires a careful look at the close-knit Smith family, since they had the most intimate knowledge of young Joseph Smith.

### **The Views of Joseph's Own Family**

The Prophet answered the affidavits in *Mormonism Unveiled* by admitting human weaknesses but denying gross personal transgression and insisting, "I have not . . . been guilty of wronging or injuring any man or society of men" (*Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, vol. 1, December, 1834, 40). The unaffected but detailed history of Lucy Smith throws far more light on the family's early history than all of the Hurlbut-Howe affidavits, but in her artless simplicity she does not respond specifically to the charge of the early affidavits. This is actually an evidential strength. But the last surviving brother of the Prophet met these issues head on.

William Smith was too young to remember the earliest days at Palmyra-Manchester, but his recollections are very specific from about 1823. An individualist who was notably not an organization man, he spent his later years in the obscurity of an Iowa farm. He is known for an occasional speech or interview, but his considered answer to Hurlbut-Howe lay in a manuscript written by William found among the papers of a friend until forwarded to the LDS Church about 1925. In sending Smith's manuscript to the Church, William's friend Charles Knecht described his own interest in the Smith family, which prompted him to loan William a copy of *Chambers' Miscellany*, a book containing a summary of the Hurlbut affidavits. William read the summary and "wanted to reply to it, and wanted me to see it [Williams reply to the affidavits] published. . . ." (Letter of Charles Knecht, 1925, Yakima, Washington).

The manuscript is definitely in William Smith's handwriting and evidently dates from about 1875. This date is confirmed by the last statement in the manuscript: "My father and mother are both dead some 20 years. . . ." Lucy died in May of 1855.

William's manuscript reveals early on (in the third sentence) his frustration at historians who "have no greater foundation for facts to build upon than public rumor. . . ." To the charge that his brother Joseph was "suspected of sheep stealing," William replied vigorously that "at no period of his life" was he guilty, "nor was he ever suspected of committing such an offense" (page 3 of a typescript of the William Smith manuscript). The value of the younger brother's comments go beyond specific denials to details of their home life. The father (absurdly characterized by a noted biographer as possessing "irreligion and cynicism") insisted quietly on hymns and "prayers both night and morning." The tone of "strict piety" in the home is described: "My parents, father and mother, poured out their souls to God, the donor of all blessings, to keep and guard their children, and keep them from sin and from all evil works" (typescript, 18).

The Chambers' summary of Hurlbut goes to the essential issues of this paper: "The reputation of the family (according to the testimony of neighbors) was of the worst

kind. We are told that they avoided honest labour, were intemperate and untruthful, addicted to sheep stealing, digging for hidden treasures, etc. . . ." This quotation corresponds exactly in the Smith manuscript (typescript, 6).

Responding specifically to this quoted statement, William Smith's answer was brief but direct in denial and explanation of the origin of these charges:

My statement on this subject is that the charges are false. My father's family were a peaceable, quiet, and a church going people—and nothing of these calumnies was ever heard of, not until after my brother Joseph Smith came out with his profession as a prophet. . . (typescript, 6).

William Smith, supported by informed non-Mormon testimony, gives specific recollections of daily life designed to reveal Hurlbut's charges as malicious defamation:

The improvements made on this farm was first commenced by building a log house at no small expense, and at a later date a frame house at a cost of several hundred dollars. After noticing these facts we crave the reader of this article to judge whether there was much time for indolence or for indulgence in immoral or intemperate habits. Here I wish to remark that I never knew my father Joseph Smith to be intoxicated or the worse for liquor, nor was my brother Joseph Smith in the habit of drinking spirituous liquors. Neither did my father's family spend their time, or any portion of their time, in idle habits. Such was the prevailing circumstances of the family, connected with the want of money and the scarcity of provisions, that necessity made an imperative demand upon every energy, nerve, or member of the family for both economy and labor, which this demand had to be met with the strictest kind of industry, and no persons speaking the truth can say to the contrary (typescript, 17-18).

# The Kirtland Safety Society

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## Some Basics of Economics in 1837 America

Prior to embarking on a review of the history of the Kirtland Safety Society, it will be useful to provide you with some basic economic concepts applicable to Joseph Smith's era in America. These concepts will enable you to better understand what went on. For this section, I will draw heavily on R. McKay White's article, "The Kirtland Safety Society: The Myths, the Facts, and the Prophet's Good Name" (2009). Brother White is an attorney and an economist. This background seems ideal for enabling him to provide the necessary background and then critically analyze the Kirtland Safety Society Bank.

**Transactions and transaction costs.** Every person is often in need of certain goods and services. When the appropriate goods and services are allocated to that person in need, we refer to it as a "transaction." Transactions are generally beneficial. The reason is that the person in need receives the desired goods and services. And the individual that supplies them receives, in return, other goods and services he desires. Transactions thus improve the overall welfare of those involved in the transactions.

There are things that impede the conducting of transactions. These are called "transaction costs." They include the time and effort required to complete a transaction. Let us take an example pertinent today. Let us say you desire to obtain some groceries. You have to make a list, travel to the grocery store, walk up and down the aisles looking for the things you want, wait in line until the cashier scans your items, and then pay. Then the transaction is complete. All of those things you had to do prior to its completion are "transaction costs."

Transaction costs are undesirable. To best make an economy work and satisfy the needs of the people, it is ideal to keep the transaction costs low. When transaction costs are high, the flow of goods and services may become impeded. This reduces the welfare of the people. It is possible that high transaction costs may prevent a good from being transferred to someone who desires it. An important part of economics is to figure out how to minimize transaction costs.

**The importance of money.** Money helps reduce transaction costs. When there is no money, the people are left with a barter system or barter economy. Transactions occur by barter. Goods and services cannot be bought and sold. Instead, goods and services must be traded. There are major problems associated with a barter system. First, there is confusion and uncertainty over the value of a good or service. Its value depends upon what the "shopper" is willing to trade for it. The lack of clear valuation results in higher transaction costs. Another problem is the necessity of "coincidence of wants." It is not enough for the shopper to find someone selling an item he wants. He must also have something the seller is willing to trade for. This also requires much time

and effort. It also results in high transaction costs. Because of these costs associated with barter, barter economies are inefficient and hamper economic progress.

Money provides a helpful solution. It can act as a medium of exchange. It eliminates some of the problems associated with a barter economy. In a system involving money, the value of a good or service can be easily valued. Also price comparisons can be made. There is no necessity for a “coincidence of wants.” There is no need for negotiation.

**The banking system in 1837.** In 1837 America the economic system was much different than it is today. The banking system was in its infancy. There was no central bank in the country—no Federal Reserve producing and controlling the flow of dollar bills. There was no national currency. The only national medium of exchange was specie—gold, silver, and copper coins minted by the government. Each coin was worth what the metal it was composed of was worth.

Specie eliminates the problems of a barter economy, but only so long as there is enough specie to go around. If the supply of specie does not grow fast enough (which was often the case), transaction costs rise sharply and economic growth is retarded. Given the difficulty and cost of minting new specie, it is clear that a specie-only economy is not satisfactory.

The problems with specie were ameliorated by bank notes issued by local banks. A bank note was a piece of paper issued by the local bank. It was, in essence, a debt instrument. A one dollar bank note was an obligation of the issuing bank to pay one dollar in specie to the bearer if turned in for redemption. This gave the notes value. A bank note was usually honored only in the area of the local bank.

The three main purposes of banks, both in 1837 and now, were:

1. Increase the money supply. Banks increased the money supply by operating on a “fractional reserve” basis. As stated, bank notes could be redeemed for specie. For the most part, they weren’t. There was no reason to. What banks did, then, was issue notes beyond the amount of specie held in their vaults. They only had to maintain the amount of specie necessary to meet day-to-day demands. By increasing the money supply and providing flexibility to that supply, banks eliminated the short-comings of specie.

2. Make loans. Another way for the bank to increase the money supply was to give bank notes to an individual in exchange for a promissory note—in other words, to lend the individual money. The bank’s note (actually, the bank’s debt) had general acceptability as a medium of exchange. The promissory note of an individual had less acceptability as a medium of exchange. This is referred to as the bank’s “monetizing private debt.” In other words, it is the turning of a private individual’s promissory note into bank notes—an acceptable medium of exchange. By this means a growing demand for money can be met.

It is rare for businesses and individuals to carry enough money for large economic projects like business expansion or start-up. Banks provided loans to enable economic expansion. By 1837 the United States had been experiencing a long period of economic prosperity. This was accompanied by an explosion in the number of banks. The banks met the urgent need for credit created by business expansion.

3. Provide liquidity. *Liquidity* is a measure of how easily something can be used as a medium of exchange—how easily something can be used to make transactions. Debts have varying degrees of liquidity. Bank notes (money) are obviously the most liquid “asset.” While we may refer to bank notes as an asset, it must be kept in mind that a bank note is simply evidence of the bank’s debt.

Farmers in 1837 were not poor, but their assets were in the form of land and equipment. These assets were very illiquid. This made the buying and selling of goods difficult. In that day, it was common for sales to be made on an “open book account” basis. The closing of the books would occur only once a year. Business of this sort was and is risky. When the day of reckoning comes at the end of the year, the debtor may be unable to pay. Banks resolved this problem by enabling farmers to borrow cash with their assets as collateral.

An illustration may be helpful in understanding the importance of banks in 1837. Consider someone looking to buy land for a farm. He has little money, but a speculator is willing to sell him good land for an obligation to pay at some time in the future. The new farmer works hard. He builds a house, plants crops, and makes other improvements. He has an excellent harvest and sells it all. The buyers don’t have enough specie, so they give promissory notes. This isn’t a problem. It was common to do business by promissory note, because of the lack of specie. The farmer is pleased. He’s earned enough money to pay back the speculator. It comes time to pay. The farmer offers the promissory notes, but the speculator refuses. He demands specie. The farmer doesn’t have specie. Those who owe him based on the promissory notes don’t have specie. The farmer defaults on his debt obligation. He loses the farm, and all the improvements he made to the land. The speculator moves in and enjoys the fruits of the farmer’s efforts. This scenario was common. It could be avoided by a bank. Rather than being paid by promissory note, the farmer could be paid with bank notes. If the speculator refused the bank notes, the farmer could redeem them at the bank for specie. He thus paid his debt in specie and kept the farm and all the work he put into it.

For all these advantages, there were also risks. Banks solved the problems of a specie-only economy, but introduced other potential problems. The first is the risk of a run on the bank. In 1837, there were two types of bank runs that could occur. The first had to do with the redemption of bank notes for specie. As stated above, banks operated on a “fractional reserve” basis. That is, they issued bank notes in excess of the actual amount of specie they held. Usually this wasn’t a problem. It happened now and then, however, that for whatever reason a large number of customers would seek to

redeem their notes. In this way, the bank's specie reserve could be severely depleted or even exhausted. Unless the bank stopped redemption, the bank would be ruined. By stopping redemption, however, confidence in the bank's notes would decrease. The usual consequence was that the notes would trade for a discount, if at all. The second type of bank run is one that can still occur today. Like today, people made deposits of money in banks. Periodically, they would add to or withdraw from their bank account. Banks did not, and do not, simply keep the deposited money in the safe. They only needed to keep a reserve sufficient to meet day-to-day demand. The rest was loaned out to others or otherwise invested. This is how banks make money. But just as customers could make a run on the bank's specie reserve, they could also make a run on its deposit reserve. If enough customers try to withdraw their money, the bank's reserves run out and it fails.

Another potential problem with banks was inflation. There were two means by which inflation could occur. The first type of inflation is the same as occurs today. If banks printed too much money, there would be an oversupply. The value of a dollar decreased. The result was that prices increased—there was inflation. Also, if an individual bank printed too many bank notes, that excess in number of bank notes would decrease confidence in the bank's ability to redeem them for specie. As a result, a one dollar note from that bank decreased in value. But other banks' notes and specie were still as valuable. Therefore, instead of the general price level rising, that bank's notes would trade at a discount. Instead of being accepted as one dollar, a one dollar note would be accepted as 75 cents, or even less.

It should be noted that there are other possible cause of inflation. Inflation isn't always because of an oversupply of money. Inflation can be demand driven. If demand for goods increases faster than supply, you have more people vying for the same goods. As a result, the price is bid up. If prices are bid up, you have inflation. The solution to this type of inflation is to either increase supply or find a way to reduce demand.

## **The History of the Kirtland Safety Society**

The period of time between the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in March 1836 and the summer of 1838 was a period of unparalleled adversity, contention, and apostasy in the Church. It was the period of the establishment and failure of the Kirtland Safety Society, the church's bank in Kirtland. Perhaps no event in the early church's history was the source of as much criticism of the Prophet. As a result of failure of the Kirtland Safety Society, critics accused Joseph Smith using poor judgment and of being a false prophet. They used the demise of the bank as an argument against the divinity of Mormonism.

Joseph summarized this period of time by saying, "It seemed as though all the powers of earth and hell were combining their influence in an especial manner to

overthrow the Church.” Joseph then added a most interesting observation: “Many became disaffected toward me as though I were the sole cause of those very evils . . . which were actually brought upon us by the brethren not giving heed to my counsel” (*HC*, 2:487-89). Let us look carefully at this troubled time to help us better understand just what happened.

As a resource for the basic history of this period, we will borrow from Milton V. Backman, Jr.'s, book *The Heaven's Resound* (310-66). Some materials will be quoted and some paraphrased.

The year following the dedication of the Kirtland Temple saw a spirit of pride, selfishness, disaffection, and apostasy sweep through the quorums of the Church. In the summer of 1837, members of the Quorum of the Twelve, witnesses to the Book of Mormon, and other priesthood leaders met in the upper room of the Kirtland Temple. Throughout the preceding year many of these same individuals had witnessed, in that same building, some of the most remarkable spiritual manifestations ever experienced in the history of the restoration movement. Now they were meeting to oppose the leadership of Joseph Smith. At this assembly, some persons who had once been faithful supporters of the Prophet recommended that he be replaced as president of the Church by David Whitmer. Others vehemently opposed this motion, including Brigham Young. The brethren in attendance barely avoided coming to blows. According to Brigham Young, at this time “the knees of many of the strongest men in the Church faltered” (Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, 17).

The historical roots of apostasy among Kirtland saints reached back to the establishment of a policy of community improvement and expansion. There followed a period of improved economic conditions. Then, the saints experienced a year of economic disaster. Following the temple dedication, many of the saints developed the desire to enlarge their homes, erect new dwellings and shops, and beautify their community. A master plan for the improvement of Kirtland was drafted by Joseph in 1836. According to this plan, Kirtland was to be divided into rectangular plots and square blocks, with streets bisecting each other at right angles. In the fall and early winter of 1836, the saints became involved in various construction projects. They seemed happy and, by all accounts, they felt they were participating in a vibrant program of community growth.

During this era of rapid growth, church leaders and other members were acquiring additional property in Kirtland. Property held by the members in 1836 was not considered sufficient to meet current needs and future plans. Additional land was needed, not only for those who had settled in Kirtland, but also for others who would be immigrating there. Joseph and other leaders of the Church undoubtedly viewed the future optimistically.

While members of the Church were increasing their property holdings in Kirtland, land prices rose sharply, and it seemed that inflationary conditions would continue.

According to an editorial appearing in the June 1837 issue of the *Messenger and Advocate*, the price of land in Kirtland during the preceding year had increased some eight hundred percent!

To secure the money needed for economic expansion, many of the saints were forced to borrow. Lenders were willing to extend credit to the saints seeking financial assistance, since the land they pledged for security could be reclaimed if need be. Since Kirtland was expected to continue growing, with land values increasing at a normal inflationary rate, creditors assumed that the Mormons could manage all the debts they had accumulated.

Another factor contributed to the looming financial problems of the saints. During construction of the Kirtland temple, members of the Church in the East and other areas of North America had sent contributions to Kirtland. These funds had temporarily bolstered the town's economy. These donations decreased after the temple was dedicated, and this decrease in cash inflow occurred at a time when the debts of the Kirtland saints were at a maximum. Because of the consequent cash flow deficiency, church leaders sought a means to transform into cash some of the assets they and other members possessed in land. One means to which they now gave consideration was the establishment of a bank in Kirtland. This would allow them to borrow against their now valuable land holdings.

Banks provided loans, a medium of exchange, and a safe depository for money. To meet public demand of a readily acceptable medium of exchange, banks would provide notes or currency in exchange for promissory notes of individuals and businesses. This currency was initially backed by, and could be redeemed for, specie (precious metal coin). Also, the currency was secured by real estate. This bank currency could be used quite readily to secure goods and services. Local bank currency was generally accepted only within a small geographical area served by that bank, and it was heavily discounted by banks outside that particular area.

On November 2, 1836, leaders of the Church in Kirtland, probably with the help of a non-Mormon attorney, drafted an article of agreement providing for the organization of a banking institution to be called the Kirtland Safety Society Bank. Orson Hyde was dispatched to Columbus with a petition directed to the Ohio legislature, requesting approval for the incorporation of a banking institution. Church leaders, assuming that the legislature would grant the request, also sent Oliver Cowdery to Philadelphia to secure plates for the printing of currency. On January 2, 1837, both men returned to Kirtland. Oliver Cowdery returned with the plates, but Orson Hyde returned with discouraging news. The legislature had refused to consider the Mormons' petition.

The saints, disappointed by the rejection of their request to incorporate a bank in Kirtland, decided to reorganize and create a private joint-stock company. Since they could not call it a bank, they named it the Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company. They apparently assumed that individuals had a legal right to organize a

private company that engaged in banking activities, since other unchartered or unauthorized banks were organized in Ohio before and after the Kirtland Safety Society was constituted. There were, however, laws against the formation of such unauthorized banks.

Many persons in the Kirtland area initially supported the formation of the Kirtland Safety Society. Church leaders served as officers—Joseph Smith as treasurer and Sidney Rigdon as secretary. Both members and non-members bought stock in the company. Most of the stock was purchased during the last three months of 1836, before the company was constituted. Two hundred investors purchased (primarily with gold and silver) shares in the company, with subscriptions totaling about twenty thousand dollars.

On January 3, 1837, the Kirtland Safety Society opened its doors for business. Using the plates that Oliver had secured, the company issued its first notes during the first week of January, stamping on some of the currency words that changed “Bank” to “anti-Bank-ing Co.” This first issue consisted of \$1, \$2, and \$3 denominations and amounted to about ten thousand dollars. Additional notes of denominations ranging from \$1 to \$100 were issued in February and March, bringing the total to perhaps one hundred thousand dollars. This amount far exceeded the amount of gold and silver coin placed on deposit in the bank. Thus, it was impossible to redeem all of the currency or bank notes for specie. This one hundred thousand dollars in currency was felt to be adequately backed by real estate, however.

Shortly after the Kirtland Safety Society began to function, serious problems interfered with its successful operation. The success of any banking institution depended upon public support, and anti-Mormon newspapers delighted in branding its currency as “worthless rags.” Banks typically did not possess sufficient specie to satisfy large demands for redemption of their currency. Since the capital backing the Kirtland Safety Society was primarily in the form of land, in order for the society to continue as a successful business enterprise, supporters had to prevent individuals from securing large amounts of the Safety Society notes. Enemies of the church, however, managed to obtain sufficient quantities of the notes to initiate a run on the institution. On January 23, only a few weeks after the first notes were issued, Sidney Rigdon announced that the Society could no longer redeem its notes with specie. Thereafter, its notes were subject to heavy discounts.

Another reason for the failure of the company was the fact that the operations of the Kirtland Safety Society were in violation of the laws of Ohio. When church leaders decided in January 1837 to charter a bank in Kirtland, they and their legal advisers had not understood that forming a company with banking powers would be considered illegal. In February, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and other leaders of this company were charged with violating an 1816 Ohio statute that prohibited the issue and circulation of unauthorized bank notes or currency and fixed a penalty of one thousand

dollars for each of the company officers of institutions that violated this law. In June Joseph resigned as an officer in the company and withdrew his support of the institution. In August Warren Parrish was caught defrauding the bank of funds by counterfeiting or indiscriminately printing currency that had no backing. In October a jury found Joseph and Sidney guilty of violating the law, and a judgment amounting to one thousand dollars was assessed them. Finally, in November the company closed its doors.

As the Prophet had struggled to prevent the Kirtland Safety Society from collapsing, he produced serious financial difficulties for himself. He had invested more than any other single investor except John Greene. In February and March, when the company was experiencing financial difficulties, he increased his subscriptions. To obtain money to invest, he made three loans and sold some property. He accumulated personal debts amounting to approximately one hundred thousand dollars. Although he had assets in land and goods that were of greater value, he was unable to immediately transform these assets into a form that could be used to pay his creditors.

The demise of the Kirtland Safety Society intensified the economic problems of the Kirtland saints. The two hundred individuals who invested in the bank lost nearly everything they subscribed. As the months passed, many still held bills that had no redeemable value. When the company failed, many persons lost their savings, and a few were ruined financially. It has been estimated that the financial losses approached \$40,000—almost the total cost of building the Kirtland Temple. This loss was sustained by persons whose income averaged about four hundred dollars annually. In the spring of 1837, the Church also found itself heavily in debt, and many creditors were unable to extend credit or postpone dates when debts were due. Joseph and other church leaders were in an awkward and embarrassing position. While the Prophet's creditors pressured him to pay for supplies he had purchased, he was unable to apply this same pressure on members of the Church who had purchased goods from him on credit.

In the summer of 1837, in the midst of financial reversals, Joseph was involved in what he called "malicious and vexatious lawsuits." Enemies of the Church continually harassed him, indicting him on one charge after another. Most of the legal proceedings against Joseph were cases involving debts. During 1837, seventeen lawsuits were filed against Joseph for debts involving claims of more than thirty thousand dollars.

On July 27, 1837, Joseph set out on a trip to visit the saints in Canada, accompanied by Sidney Rigdon, Brigham Young and others. They got only as far as Painesville, Ohio, where the Prophet was arrested. After a preliminary hearing, he was released by the court for lack of evidence. Within a short time he was again arrested by the sheriff, and again he was released. In fact, on that day he was arrested six times, charged with various offenses, and each time the case was dismissed for lack of evidence. After spending all day in Painesville, Joseph and his companions returned to Kirtland. They commenced their mission again the next day.

As he returned from Canada, Joseph was again detained in Painesville. According to an account by Mary Fielding, based on information she learned from the Prophet, he and Brigham Young were seized by a mob when they were about four miles from home. Taken to a tavern in Painesville, they escaped through the kitchen door, aided by a house keeper who was a member of the Church. The mob, upon learning of their disappearance, took up the chase. Joseph and Brigham fled through dense woods and along muddy roads, hiding in swamps and behind trees and logs. At times their pursuers, carrying blazing torches, were so close that the two men feared their own heavy breathing might be heard. At dawn they finally reached Kirtland.

During this period of economic distress and increasing opposition against the Church, many converts apostatized. Eliza R. Snow observed that even many of the saints who had received marvelous spiritual blessings during the period of the temple dedication left the Church. Sister Snow attempted to explain the sequence of events that led to this tragic apostasy. She commented that following the temple dedication, the saints found that “prosperity was dawning upon them.” As economic conditions improved, some became “haughty in their spirits” and were lifted up in pride. As individuals “drank in the love and spirit of the world,” she added, “the Spirit of the Lord withdrew,” and “they were filled with pride and hatred toward those who maintained their integrity” (*Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, Snow, 20).

At the same time pride was being manifest among the saints, a spirit of selfishness emerged. As the saints were anticipating the commencement of an era of prosperity, some developed an inordinate desire to become suddenly and vastly wealthy. In an article in the *Messenger and Advocate* in May 1837, editor Warren Cowdery suggested that the unbridled desire to accumulate worldly wealth led some of the saints into mercenary and deceptive business practices in Kirtland. He wrote of unscrupulous brethren who were taking advantage of others and, after obtaining their money, deserting them. Cowdery particularly warned church members who were planning to immigrate to Kirtland to beware of individuals who approached them shortly after their arrival and inquired concerning their financial status. Some persons were reportedly taking advantage of newcomers by describing unusual investment opportunities that would lead to financial gain and abundant blessings from the Lord, but actually would eventually deprive the investors of their savings.

In addition to pride and selfishness, a third major force leading to an apostasy in Kirtland was criticism of the prophet Joseph. He was criticized for his business transactions, for excessive borrowing, for speculation in land, and for supporting a banking institution that was experiencing serious problems. Some critics blamed the Prophet for the economic reversals of 1837, failing to recognize that Joseph was a mortal, subject to the weaknesses of the flesh, and was not directed in all of his personal affairs by the Lord. He became a scapegoat upon which many tried to unload their problems. A rumor was circulated that the Kirtland Safety Society had come about

through revelation and Joseph Smith had predicted the company would never fail, so some persons claimed the demise of that institution was evidence he was a fallen prophet. Recognizing that he had been misrepresented, Joseph testified before the Kirtland high council that he had never uttered nor authorized a statement concerning the infallibility of the banking company. He declared, in September 1837, that he had always maintained that “unless an institution was conducted on righteous principles, it would not stand” (*HC*, 2:510).

In mid-1837 many members living in Kirtland, including some who had been called to serve in the highest positions of responsibility, rejected the leadership of Joseph Smith, declaring that he was no longer a true prophet. While Joseph was lying in bed with a debilitating illness during the month of June, apostates circulated a rumor that he was suffering because of his transgressions in leading the Church into a desperate financial situation. When Heber C. Kimball began his mission that same month to England, he said that John F. Boynton, one of the Twelve, called him a fool for leaving home at the call of a “fallen prophet.”

Parley P. Pratt was among those who censured the Prophet and Sidney for their “business transactions.” He admitted that “under feelings of excitement, and during the most peculiar trials,” he wrote a letter condemning the actions of his two brethren. After the letter was published by a non-Mormon in what Elder Pratt called a garbled form, he recognized his mistake and sought forgiveness from the Church and those whom he had offended (*Elders’ Journal* 1 [August 1838], 50).

Another factor that precipitated an apostasy of members in Kirtland was immorality. Referring to the priesthood leaders who left the Church in the fall of 1837, George A. Smith observed that after the “spirit of adultery or covetousness” had seized control “of their hearts . . . the Spirit of the Lord left them” (George A. Smith, *JD*, 7:115). A few members in Kirtland entered into the practice of plural marriage without the authorization of church leaders. They justifying their actions by asserting that Joseph Smith had taken plural wives. Indeed, the Prophet had received revelation relative to eternal and plural marriage in the early 1830s and may have been practicing plural marriage before 1835 (see *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy*, page ). It was also asserted that Joseph Smith’s practicing of plural marriage was harming the Church. Joseph’s critics asserted that it provided members with an excuse to justify their transgressions. They claimed it also caused others to leave the Church because they did not understand the eternal principles involved in this marital law and found the idea of polygamy abhorrent.

In the fall of 1837, while Joseph was visiting the saints in Missouri, criticism of him was rampant and reached an ugly schismatic dimension. The selfishness, murmuring, lust, and contention that had been manifest among the saints in Kirtland led to a “great apostasy.” Repudiating the Prophet’s leadership, about thirty priesthood bearers renounced the Church and organized a new church in Kirtland under the

leadership of Warren Parrish. They adopted the name "Church of Christ" and tried to seize control of the temple.

Between November 1837 and June 1838, possibly two or three hundred Kirtland saints withdrew from the Church, representing from ten to fifteen percent of the membership there. Many of the apostates had served in major positions of responsibility. During a nine-month period, almost one-third of the General Authorities were excommunicated, disfellowshipped, or removed from their Church callings. Among those who left the Church during this stormy period were the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon (Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris), four apostles (John F. Boynton, Lyman E. Johnson, Luke S. Johnson, and William E. McLellin), three of the original presidents of the First Quorum of Seventy, and two of the presidents of Seventy who were serving in 1837. One member of the First Presidency, Frederick G. Williams, was released from his calling. Although some of these leaders were not excommunicated until after they had moved to Missouri, the roots of their apostasy stem back to transgressions that occurred in Kirtland. Almost half of those who were excommunicated, disfellowshipped, or dropped from their position of responsibility in 1837 or 1838 later repented and returned to the Church.

Some of the apostates became bitter enemies of the saints and organized to expel them from Kirtland. Dissidents tried to seize the property of the saints and threatened to kill members of the Church. Enemies outside the Church were also involved in oppressive actions. Extreme security measures became necessary. While some members guarded the temple twenty-four hours a day, others slept near the Prophet, to preserve his life from his enemies.

When Brigham Young described conditions existing in Kirtland on December 22, 1837, the day of his departure from that community, he claimed that he fled for his life because of the fury of the mob. After making hasty preparations for a journey of more than eight hundred miles, he left his wife and his three-year-old son and one-year-old twins, mounted his horse, and galloped southward. His flight was the beginning of a mass exodus from Kirtland. Between the end of December 1837 and the middle of July 1838, probably more than sixteen hundred members of the Kirtland branch migrated west, abandoning their homes and beginning a new colonizing adventure in the wilderness of western America.

Three weeks after the first saints left Kirtland, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon also fled. "Persecution became so violent," Lucy Mack Smith observed, that "Joseph regarded it as unsafe to remain any longer in Kirtland" (*History of Joseph Smith*, Lucy Mack Smith, 247). He and Sidney rode from Kirtland on the night of January 12, 1838, fleeing from disgruntled creditors, angry apostates, and civil authorities. They rode southward under cover of darkness and arrived the next morning in New Portage, about sixty miles from Kirtland. Three days later, after the Prophet's wife, Emma, and their children arrived in Norton, the group continued their journey in covered wagons.

Though the weather was bitterly cold, the Prophet wrote that a mob, armed with pistols and guns, followed him for about two hundred miles. During the pursuit, his enemies once stayed in a home where the saints were sleeping, with only a partition separating the Smith family from their pursuers. That night, the Smiths listened to “their oaths and imprecations, and threats” concerning actions they would take if they seized the Mormon leader. On other occasions, members of the mob passed Joseph and his family but failed to recognize them.

Joseph and his family and traveling companions traveled through Indiana and Illinois, crossed the Mississippi River, and headed across the state of Missouri toward Far West. When they were within 120 miles of their destination, they were met by some saints from Far West who had brought wagons, money, and provisions for them. When they were eight miles from the city, they were met by another escort group, and on March 14, as they reached the outskirts of Far West, a large number gathered to welcome them.

Although most of the saints went west in small groups of less than fifty, one company of more than five hundred persons traveled in a body that was called “Kirtland Camp,” and sometimes the “Kirtland Poor Camp” as they were, for the most part, the poorest of Kirtland’s inhabitants. On July 5, participants in the Kirtland Camp party gathered in a clover field about one hundred rods south of the temple. That day many pitched their tents, and at night they slept near their wagons and teams. The next day, about noon, a stream of about fifty-nine wagons began rolling from Kirtland. Included in this first company and those who followed shortly thereafter were about 515 pioneers with twenty-seven tents, ninety-seven horses, twenty-two oxen, sixty-nine cows, and one bull. After the company left, only a few Latter-day Saints remained in Kirtland.

Throughout the journey to Missouri, the presidents of the First Council of Seventy served as the governing council of Kirtland Camp. This journey, as documented in the journals of participants, was an arduous yet colorful one. Roughly half of the Kirtland Camp actually made the entire journey to Far West. The other half dropped out along the way, mostly due to illness. Most who dropped out remained at Springfield, Illinois, and later gathered at Nauvoo after the main body of saints had been driven from Missouri.

On October 2, the wagons of Kirtland Camp rolled into Far West, having traveled eight hundred and seventy miles from Kirtland. As they neared the end of their journey, they were met by Joseph Smith, his brother Hyrum, Sidney Rigdon, and a few other church leaders who escorted them during the last five miles. At the request of the Prophet, members of Kirtland Camp resumed their travels on October 3, and the next day they settled twenty-two miles north of Far West at the place Joseph Smith had identified, through revelation, as the location where Adam blessed his children and predicted what would befall his posterity. The Lord named this place, “Adam-ondi-Ahman.” It is ironic that Kirtland Camp had arrived in Far West less than a month

before Missouri governor Lilburn Boggs' Extermination Order resulted in their being driven out of the state.

Doctor Davis Bitton chronicled the decline of the Church in Kirtland after the great body of saints had left in the summer of 1838 ("The Waning of Mormon Kirtland," *BYU Studies* 12:4 [1972]). He notes: "It is surprising how long it took for Mormonism in Kirtland to fade away." In November 1839 Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball stopped in the village of Kirtland on their return from their mission in England. They found "a good many friends and brethren who were glad to see [them]." The Kirtland Temple was still being used, and Brigham Young preached a sermon there. Brigham Young noted that many of those church members who remained in Kirtland lacked the "energy" or "disposition" to move west to join the saints. In October 1840, Almon W. Babbitt was named to preside over the Kirtland saints which were said at that time to be between 300 and 400 strong. Under his leadership this number grew to about 500 by October 1841. But in the October 1841 conference in Nauvoo, Brother Babbitt was disfellowshipped for teaching false doctrine. Still Mormonism did not disappear quickly. Justin Brooks succeeded brother Babbitt and in the conference of October 1842 there were still "500 to 700" in attendance. By April 1843 the Kirtland saints were strongly encouraged to move to Nauvoo. Apparently many did move, and from the spring of 1845 it becomes difficult to document the activities of any saints left in Kirtland. At the end of 1845, it was reported that a group of "rioters" seized control of the Kirtland Temple. The temple was later used as a Kirtland community hall. From that time on it would seem that only a very few committed saints, several partly committed members, many apostates, and a few splinter groups remained.

The trials of the Kirtland saints did not end when they reached the Missouri frontier. On October 27, 1838, less than one month after the Kirtland Camp arrived there, Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued one of the most intolerant decrees uttered by an executive in the history of the United States. After telling General John B. Clark of the Missouri militia that the "Mormons must be treated as enemies," the governor ordered him to exterminate or drive members of the faith from that state (*HC*, 3:175). Some of the participants in the Kirtland Camp had settled in a community called Haun's Mill, and on October 30, Missouri militiamen suddenly attacked the saints living there. The threats of death they had heard while crossing Missouri became a reality. Seventeen saints were killed, and thirteen others were wounded.

Throughout the long winter of 1838-39, hundreds of Latter-day Saints fled again from persecutors. Many had been forced to abandon Kirtland in 1838, and now they were being driven from the state of Missouri. Fortified by their faith, many of the former Kirtland saints settled in Iowa and Illinois and helped build a new city, Nauvoo, on the banks of the Mississippi River. Within a few years, they would once again have to abandon their homes, cross a vast wilderness, and begin a new life in the great basin of western America.

## **Criticisms Leveled Against Joseph Regarding the Kirtland Safety Society**

The prophet Joseph has been much criticized for his role in the Kirtland Safety Society. The remainder of this chapter will examine closely these charges and claims. I will consider several specific accusations.

**Kirtland's economy did not justify a bank.** One author noted: "Looked at from the dispassionate ground of a business view alone, one can hardly criticize the Mormon leaders for many of the ventures into which they were led" (Kennedy, J. H., *Early Days of Mormonism*, [Charles Scribner's Sons: 1888]). The Kirtland Safety Society was one such venture. No criticism can justly be made, because the Safety Society was both feasible and necessary.

The United States experienced tremendous economic expansion in the 1830s. This expansion increased the demand for money and credit. The increase in the number of banks met this demand. Kirtland was no exception,. Just like many other parts of the United States, a bank was necessary. Economic conditions made it so. Given Kirtland's abundance of raw materials, labor, and entrepreneurial talent, and its rapidly expanding economy, the only limit on productive growth was a shortage of money. There was a need for the services a bank provides: liquidity, an increased money supply, and a source of loans.

Hill, Rooker, and Wimmer ("The Kirtland Economy Revisited: A Market Critique of Sectarian Economics," *BYU Studies*, 17, 1976) provide a thorough analysis of Kirtland's economy. They conclude conditions were very prosperous. It's easy to see how that conclusion can be drawn. The Kirtland area produced dairy products, sheep, maple sugar, grain, cattle, iron castings, ash, and bricks. It also had a tannery. When the extension of the Ohio canal to Cleveland was completed in 1833, trade drastically increased for the area. For example, trade in wheat and flour increased tenfold (*Ibid.*). When an economy is booming, there is demand for financial services. Businesses need money to expand production to meet increasing demand. Banks provide that money in the form of loans. Without a bank, businesses in the Kirtland area would find it very difficult to expand. The increase in demand would not be met, and inflation would become severe.

Inflation was, in fact, a problem in Kirtland. The mid-1830s saw a general increase in the price level (Ludlow, Daniel H. "Kirtland Economy," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 4 [New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992]). Land prices increased 500% from 1830 to 1837 (Hill et al, 1976) and food prices increased by almost 100 % from 1836 to 1837 (Anderson, Karl Ricks, *Joseph Smith's Kirtland: Eyewitness Accounts*. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1989]). This inflation was due, in part, to the inability of firms to increase production to meet demand. A bank was needed to fund expansion projects.

Kirtland clearly had a money shortage. We do not know how much specie was in the area, nor do we have any data from which to estimate the amount. But we can look at some circumstantial evidence and draw conclusions from that. Firstly, there were no banks nearby. Money could not be transferred electronically. Bank notes could not be redeemed just anywhere. Banks had a limited effective area of service. There were no banks close enough to Kirtland to supply significant amounts of money. Secondly, specie was limited. This was true over most of the United States, but particularly true in the west and in Kirtland (Firmage, Edwin Brown and Richard Collin Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts* [Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2001]).

The final cause of a money shortage was that demand for money was increasing. Three factors were causing the increase in demand. Firstly, the population was growing (Hill et. al., 1976). More people in an area increases the number of transactions being made. With more transactions, more money is needed. Secondly, incomes were rising (*Ibid.*). Wages were not paid by direct deposit. They were paid with money. If more must be paid out in incomes, more money is needed. Thirdly, there was inflation, as explained. Because prices were increasing, each transaction required more money. Again, the demand for money increases.

Given no bank in the vicinity, a limited supply of specie, and increasing demand for money, we can conclude there was a shortage of money in the Kirtland area. There is evidence this conclusion is correct. In the *Painesville Republican* (vol. 1, no. 10, Thursday, January 19, 1837), the editor expressed the following in an announcement of the formation of the Kirtland Safety Society:

It is said they have a large amount of specie on hand and have the means of obtaining much more, if necessary. If these facts be so, its circulation in some shape would be beneficial to community, and sensibly relieve the pressure in the market so much complained of.

That pressure in the market was the shortage of money.

Finally, while the Safety Society's notes were accepted, the commercial health of Kirtland was improved (Fielding, Robert Kent [1957] "The Growth of the Mormon Church in Kirtland, Ohio," Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University)).

**The Safety Society was infeasible and unnecessary from the outset.** Having established that a bank was necessary in Kirtland, it is a simple matter to establish its feasibility. Kirtland was prospering, and given economic knowledge at the time, no one could have foreseen that that would change. An economy as prosperous as Kirtland's, with as much production and diversity of products as Kirtland, could support a bank.

There was also demand for the services a bank offers. There was demand for an increase in the money supply. There was a demand for loans to expand production. There was a demand for increased liquidity—for farmers trying to keep their farms and the improvements they had made. If there is demand for a service, provision of that service is feasible.

Finally, the Safety Society had significant assets (Dudley, Dean A. [1970] "Bank Born of Revelation: The Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company," *The Journal of Economic History* 30). Most of the assets were in land (*Ibid.*), but that was true of most banks (Kroos, Herman E., *American Economic Development* [Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1955]). There weren't really any alternatives. There was no stock market as there is today, or global market in commodities. Banks were very limited in the types of assets they could hold. They were, for the most part, quite illiquid. But in this, the Safety Society was no exception.

**The Safety Society was too risky because Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon didn't know how to run a bank.** Linked to the issue of feasibility is the issue of risk. Was the Safety Society's risk acceptable? Were Joseph's and Sidney's bank management skills simply inadequate. It was common for banks in the west to be started by people without experience (Partridge, Scott H. [1971-72] "The Failure of the Kirtland Safety Society." *BYU Studies* 12). Anyone who knew how to run a bank was already doing so. There were no educational institutions at which people could earn a degree in bank management. The people emigrating to the western frontier weren't established eastern businessmen. So, in view of the fact that starting a bank without experience was typical, this criticism is insignificant.

Other organizations exhibited much riskier behavior. It was common for states, municipalities, and businesses to undertake economic projects beyond their ability to pay (*Ibid.*). Many defaulted on their financial obligations. The Safety Society, therefore, did not exceed any expected level of risk. In the social and economic context, its risk was acceptable.

**Joseph Smith intended to use the Safety Society to defraud people of their money.** The church's financial affairs and Joseph's personal financial affairs were one and the same. He had to manage the growth and establishment of the Church. He was in charge. He incurred significant debts both personally and in the name of the Church. On the other hand, he also had significant assets. His assets were sufficient to over his debts (Adams, Dale W. [1983] "Chartering the Kirtland Bank." *BYU Studies* 23). He had a major problem, however. Whereas his debts were short term and liquid, his assets were mostly land, which is very illiquid. This created a cash flow problem. He couldn't readily turn his assets into cash to pay his and the church's debts.

Church leaders concluded that a bank in Kirtland would help solve their cash flow problems (Partridge, 1871-72; Hill et. al., 1976-77). A bank would enable them to turn the church's assets, land, into money in order to pay debts. Many of the saints had the same cash flow problems as Joseph and the Church. It was hoped that the bank would help them as well.

Of course, Joseph also hoped that the bank would serve as a mechanism for the Church to earn some money. Anyone starting a bank had that expectation. The

question is whether or not Joseph intended to dishonestly make money. Was he trying to bleed as much money as possible out of the bank before it failed?

There is strong evidence that Joseph had only honest and honorable intentions. Joseph was the second largest shareholder (Backman, Milton V., Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830-1838* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1983]). He paid more per share than 85% of the subscribers (Sampson, D. P., and L. T. Wimmer [1972] "The Kirtland Safety Society: The Stock Ledger Book and the Bank Failure." *BYU Studies*, 12). This means he had more at stake in the success or failure of the Safety Society than almost everyone else. Failure would incur great losses for him.

Joseph increased his subscription when the Safety Society was in serious trouble (Sampson, 1972). In March and April, when a dishonest speculator would have taken what he could and jumped ship, Joseph increased his financial investment in an effort to help support the Safety Society. Furthermore, he took out three loans on behalf of the Safety Society (Backman, 1983) and sold personal property for \$5000 for further support (*Ibid.*). Joseph lost a significant amount of money during the failure of the bank. This is not consistent with a dishonest business endeavor. On the contrary, it suggests an interested investor trying to make his enterprise succeed.

**Joseph Smith deceived people about the amount of specie the Safety Society held.** One example of such a salacious accusation:

Lining the shelves of the [Kirtland Safety Society] bank vault . . . were many boxes, each marked \$1000. Actually these boxes were filled with "sand, lead, old iron, stone, and combustibles" but each had a top layer of bright fifty-cent silver coins. Anyone suspicious of the bank's stability was allowed to lift and count the boxes. "The effect of these boxes was like magic," said C. G. Webb. "They created general confidence in the solidity of the bank, and that beautiful paper money went like hot cakes. For about a month, it was the best money in the country (Wyl, Wilhelm, *Mormon Portraits Volume First: Joseph Smith the Prophet, His Family and Friends* [Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Co., 1886]).

This claim can be easily discounted. Firstly, Safety Society notes started trading at significant discounts within two weeks of opening day, not a month as Webb said. Secondly, if Webb was aware of this fraudulent behavior, why did he wait until after the Safety Society failed to say anything? Finally, the claim is impossible. The bank "vault" was a safe measuring 25 inches by 24 inches by 29 inches (Anderson, 1989). There was not sufficient room for the number of boxes suggested by Webb's account. The safe was sufficient for the \$21,000 the Safety Society actually had, and little else.

**The Safety Society was illegal, and Joseph Smith knowingly broke the law.** For years, critics of the Church have enjoyed claiming the Safety Society was illegal,

and therefore Joseph Smith broke the law. Church apologists have been able to do little to answer this criticism. The judgment of an Ohio court that Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were guilty of unauthorized banking has seemed to serve as conclusive evidence. It is not.

An almost amusing claim by some critics is that the Safety Society was a wildcat bank. It seems likely this claim is based on the expectation that most readers today don't know what a wildcat bank was, and therefore will be unable to refute the claim. The claim is wholly false. A wildcat bank was an enterprise intended only for defrauding the public. The operators would open for business, accepting deposits of specie and issuing bank notes in return. They would print more notes and they would buy goods as they wished. Their a priori plan was to disappear with their goods and stolen specie. The name "wildcat" came from the fact that the bank offices were often located in out of the way places, difficult to find. Only the wildcats could go there.

The Safety Society office was down the street from the Kirtland Temple, a block from Joseph Smith's house and across the street from Sidney Rigdon's. If Joseph and Sidney were trying to make the office difficult to find, they did a pretty poor job.

In October 1837 Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were found guilty of unauthorized banking and fined \$1000 each. They paid the fines and appealed the verdict. Unfortunately, they were forced to leave Ohio for the safety of their lives before the appeal could be heard. Because of the conviction, however, it is usually concluded the Safety Society was illegal. Critics further charge that Joseph *knowingly* broke the law. This charge is false. The Safety Society was not illegal. It was legal. The court got the law wrong. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were charged and convicted under an Act passed in 1816. It defined a bank as any institution performing banking functions, such as issuing notes for circulation. The Safety Society issued notes for circulation. It was therefore a bank. The 1816 Act makes operating a bank without a bank charter illegal. The Safety Society didn't have a charter, so it was therefore illegal under the 1816 Act.

The key here is that the 1816 Act wasn't in force in 1837. The following argument will establish this fact. On January 1, 1823, the Ohio legislature, by resolution, formed a Committee of Revision. The committee's mandate was to review all laws of Ohio of a general nature, draft revisions and new statutes as necessary, and discard those statutes that ought to be discarded. The 1816 Act was discarded by the committee, and a new statute was drafted in its place. The committee completed its work in 1824. Based on the committee's work, the government published a revised code of Ohio. The 1824 revised code of Ohio would therefore include all statutes in force in Ohio. It did not include the 1816 Act. It did include the replacement drafted by the committee. Legal opinion at the time leaned strongly to the belief that the 1816 Act wasn't in force. Consider these two excerpts from the *Painesville Republican*:

It is doubted however, by good judges, whether the law to which we have alluded, is not in force, or if in force, whether it is not unconstitutional and therefore not binding upon the people (vol. 1 no. 10, Thursday, January 19, 1837).

This second is from a letter to the editor, undoubtedly written by a lawyer:

The law of 1816 . . . has long since become obsolete and inoperative. . . . The law of '16 against private banking . . . was rejected by the [Committee of Revision] and was not republished by the legislature. . . . We must suppose the legislature regarded the law of 1816 as not in force, and hence they did not publish it with their revised code (vol. 1, no. 14, Thursday, February 16, 1837).

The Committee of Revision drafted a statute to replace the 1816 Act, which was adopted by the government in 1824 (1824 Act). This Act did not make banking without a charter illegal. The only legal consequence of circulating notes from a bank without a charter was that such notes were deemed null and void in the courts. There is no prohibition against issuing and circulating these notes and no penalty for officers of unchartered banks. Under the 1824 Act, the Safety Society was legal.

There is further evidence the 1816 Act was not in force. The Kirtland Safety Society was not the first bank to operate without a charter. There were many other institutions in Ohio at the same time issuing bank notes without government authorization (see Backman, 1983; Hill et. al., 1976). These included insurance companies, savings institutions, the rather prominent Ohio Railroad Company, and the Granville Alexandrian Literary Society. This last one even paid taxes levied only on banks. The remarkable point is, however, that none of these were prosecuted. They weren't prosecuted because they were not illegal.

So what happened to the 1816 Act? There was not specific act of the legislature repealing it. This question was answered by the courts. The 1824 Act was repealed in 1839, well after the Safety Society existed. Subsequently, an Ohio court explained that the 1824 Act had suspended the operation of the 1816 Act (Johnson v. Bently 16 Ohio 97, 1847 WL 17 [Ohio]).

In summary, the legal evidence is as follows. A committee formed by the State legislature discarded the 1816 Act and drafted the 1824 Act in its stead. The 1824 Act was accepted by the legislature. The 1824 Revised Code of Ohio included the 1824 Act, but not the 1816 Act. The opinion of many lawyers and judges was that the 1816 Act was not in force. A court explained that the 1824 Act suspended the 1816 Act. Based on this evidence, we may conclude the 1816 Act was not in force in 1837. Therefore, the Safety Society was legal, and Joseph and Sidney should not have been convicted and fined.

**Joseph Smith prophesied the Kirtland Safety Society would succeed, and it didn't. The failure of the Safety Society proves Joseph Smith wasn't a prophet.** These two assertions will be looked at carefully.

1. The first is false. Joseph Smith never made any such prophecy. If there is such a revelation in favor of the Safety Society, no one has ever seen it except for the one man who claimed he heard it once somewhere. He was Warren Parrish, an apostate.

On February 22, 1838, the Painesville Republican published a letter from Warren Parrish, in which he wrote:

I have listened to him with feelings of no ordinary kind, when he declared that the audible voice of God instructed him to establish a Banking-Anti Banking institution, which like Aaron's rod should swallow up all other Banks . . . and grow and flourish and spread from the rivers to the end of the earth, and survive when all others should be laid in ruins.

This claim is rubbish, and Warren Parrish was obviously a liar. In the same letter, Parrish claimed he had heard Joseph Smith say, "that man has no more agency than a wheelbarrow, and consequently is not accountable, and in the final end of all things no such principle will exist as sin." Anyone familiar with Joseph's teachings knows this is not what Joseph would have taught.

The revelatory experience that Parrish was likely referring to was recorded by Wilford Woodruff in his journal on January 6, 1837:

I also heard President Joseph Smith Jr. declare in the presence of F. Williams, D. Whitmer, S. Smith, W. Parrish & others in the Deposit Office that he had received that morning the Word of the Lord upon the subject of the Kirtland Safety Society. He was alone in a room by himself & he had not only the voice of the spirit upon the subject but even an audible voice. He did not tell us at that time what the LORD said upon the subject but remarked that if we would give heed to the commandments the Lord had given this morning all would be well (Jessee, Dean C., "The Kirtland Diary of Wilford Woodruff." *BYU Studies* 12).

Joseph made reference to this revelation again, in a church conference on September 3, 1837. He remarked how he "had always said that unless the institution was conducted on righteous principles it would not stand" (Roberts, B. H., *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 1 [Salt Lake City: Deseret

Book Company, 1930]). That prophecy came true when the Safety Society failed two months later, in November (*Ibid.*).

2. The second assertion indicates a basic misunderstanding of the calling of a prophet. While we may expect that the prophet is entitled the Lord's inspiration in many of the prophet's undertakings, the Lord does not provide direct revelation on every matter that comes before the prophet. The Safety Society wasn't based on revelation. There was no direction from the Lord to establish it. Joseph Smith did not organize the Kirtland Safety Society in his capacity as a prophet. The Safety Society was therefore like any other business venture in Kirtland. It was certainly capable of failure. We Latter-day Saints should not ever regard our leaders as infallible, and this includes the prophet Joseph. The failure of the bank has no bearing on Joseph's calling as prophet. Furthermore, as will be established, the failure had nothing to do with Joseph Smith or Sidney Rigdon. The Safety Society failed because of the poor use of the agency of others.

**Joseph Smith caused the failure of the Safety Society through his reckless printing of bank notes.** Critics have claimed that Joseph Smith printed exorbitant amounts of bank notes, far in excess of what the Safety Society could reasonably support. This claim is also false.

While we do not know for certain the total amount of money printed in notes, Hill et. al. used the serial numbers on surviving notes with statistical techniques to estimate the amount. By their estimate, about \$100,000 (face value) of notes was printed. That number alone does not tell us whether the amount was unreasonable. What matters is the reserve ratio. The Safety Society had a reserve of hard money of about \$21,000 (Sampson, D. P., and L. T. Wimmer, "The Kirtland Safety Society: The Stock Ledger Book and the Bank Failure." *BYU Studies* 12). This means the Safety Society had a reserve ratio of 21%. For comparison, we can use the largest bank in Canada, the Royal Bank of Canada. At the end of 2008, it had a reserve ratio of 3%. It should be noted that these were during a time of severe economic uncertainty, which the Royal Bank has weathered very well. That the Royal Bank functions that well with a reserve ratio that low is suggestive that the Safety Society's reserve ratio of 21% is reasonable. Furthermore, the Safety Society's notes traded at a sizeable discount. By the time the full \$100,000 was put in circulation, their market value would have been about \$15,000. This means that in real terms the reserve ratio was 140%. I conclude that Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon managed the printing of bank notes well, and this did not contribute to the Safety Society's failure.

### **The Actual Causes of the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society**

One suggestion has been the 1837 banking panic and depression. This cannot be the direct cause. The banking panic began in May in the eastern states. It reached Ohio some time after May (Partridge, 1971-72). The Safety Society's troubles began in

January, months before the banking panic. Although the Safety Society likely would have failed in the banking panic regardless of other circumstances (as did a great many banks), the banking panic is not the direct cause of the Safety Society's failure.

Another common suggestion is that the Safety Society's lack of a charter resulted in people's having no confidence in the Society's bank notes so that they would not circulate them. This conclusion can also be discarded. The notes did circulate much better than would be expected. Also there were many other institutions in Ohio, contemporary to the Safety Society that were operating successfully without a charter. Why should this factor be fatal to the Safety Society and not to the other banks? One may well argue that this cannot be the cause.

There are two valid causes of failure:

1. The first was a bank run. Soon after the Safety Society began operation, antagonists of the Church collected as many of its bank notes as they could and attempted to redeem them for specie (Backman, Milton V., Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830-1838* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1983]). The Safety Society was unable to do it. To have done so would have depleted its reserves and destroyed its viability. It therefore had to stop redemption of notes for specie. This should not be attributed to mismanagement by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon. Banks in smaller communities such as Kirtland had a weakness—their assets were illiquid. Their loans were long-term and their debts, bank notes, were short-term. When attempts were made to redeem the notes, the average state bank couldn't turn its assets into cash fast enough to meet demand (Kroos, Herman E., *American Economic Development* [Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1955]).

The refusal to redeem notes severely sapped confidence in the notes. Bank notes derived their value from the ability to turn them into specie. Bank notes will circulate only so long as people are confident in their continued circulation. Without the ability to redeem them, there would be significant doubt that others would accept them as money. Safety Society bank notes quickly began circulating at significant discounts.

2. Warren Parrish was the second cause of the failure of the Safety Society. Parrish was a teller, secretary, and cashier of the Safety Society. He had participated in Zion's Camp and was a member of the first quorum of the seventy (Smith, Joseph, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, vol. 2 [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1930]). Joseph Smith noticed that money went missing when only Parrish had access to it (Roberts, B. H., *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 1 [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1930]). Joseph was confident that Parrish was keeping it in a certain trunk. Joseph sought a warrant to search the trunk, but by the time the warrant was granted, Parrish had moved the trunk to an unknown location. We do not know whether the money was in the trunk or not. Heber C. Kimball recorded, however, that Parrish later

admitted to embezzling \$20,000 (Sampson, D. P., and L. T. Wimmer, "The Kirtland Safety Society: The Stock Ledger Book and the Bank Failure." *BYU Studies* 12). This would have been disastrous for the Safety Society. With \$20,000 in stolen notes, Parrish could theoretically have drained all but \$1000 of the Safety Society's reserves. That theft, by itself, could have brought down the Safety Society.

Embezzlement was not the only indiscretion by Warren Parrish. As recorded by George A. Smith (*Ibid.*):

Warren Parrish was the teller of the bank, and a number of other men who apostatized were officers. They took out of its vault, unknown to the President or cashier, a hundred thousand dollars, and sent their agents around among the brethren to purchase their farms, wagons, cattle, horses, and every thing they could get hold of. The brethren would gather up this money and put it into the bank, and those traitors would steal it and sent it out to buy again, and they continued to do so until the plot was discovered and payment stopped.

Joseph Smith warned that if the Safety Society was not conducted on the basis of righteous principles, it would not stand. Given the dishonest and fraudulent behavior of Warren Parrish and others, it could not have survived.

Warren Parrish apostatized. He was a member of the group that, during Sunday Service in the temple, rose up with pistols and bowie knives and attempted to drive the saints from the temple.

In a thoughtful article ("The Failure of the Kirtland Safety Society," *BYU Studies* 12:4 [1972]), Scott H. Partridge has pointed out that opening a bank in the United States in the 1830s was risky business because of the difficult economic climate, and half of them eventually failed. He wrote:

Even a casual student of Mormon history must admit that the early leaders of the Church undertook tasks that "good judgment" would have cautioned them not to undertake. The sending of missionaries to England during the darkest hour of persecution; the building of the Kirtland Temple; the establishment of Nauvoo and the construction of its temple; the long

trek west to the Rocky Mountains; the establishment of a viable independent economy in the isolation of Utah Territory—all were actions that more timid souls would not have undertaken. [The] . . . willingness to take great risks in the hopes of great gains was a characteristic pragmatic philosophy. . . [The saints] . . . tried new things and . . . turned to other programs when failures occurred. The historian can logically judge that the establishment of the Kirtland Safety Society was the result of poor judgment, but at the same time should acknowledge that given more favorable economic conditions it might well have succeeded—as did other even more difficult undertakings attempted by the early Mormon leaders. The establishment of the Kirtland Safety Society was one of many activities undertaken with the goal of establishing Mormonism on a solid footing in Western America. That it [the Kirtland Safety Society] should fail given the circumstances is not particularly surprising. What is important is that after its failure, those responsible recognized their failure and tried again in other ways.

## God Revealed the Doctrine of Polygamy to the Prophet Joseph

**Concern** Aren't you Mormons the ones who practice polygamy?

**Discussion** Between the late 1830s and 1890, plural marriage or polygamy was practiced on a limited basis in the Church.<sup>1</sup> It has not been practiced in the Church since 1890.

My companion and I are in our early twenties, and therefore the practice of polygamy seems just as foreign to us as it does to you, yet we know that it was practiced because the Lord commanded it. The will of the Lord was unmistakable and was revealed to his modern-day prophets beginning with Joseph Smith and extending through Wilford Woodruff.

You may well ask why polygamy was practiced? Why did the Lord so direct his saints? The pattern of marriage commanded by the Lord in his earthly kingdom is generally monogamous – one husband and one wife. It is clear from the biblical record, however, that plural marriage has been practiced for short periods of time throughout the ages when the Lord has commanded it for his purposes, as in the cases of Abraham, Jacob, David, and others. In 2 Samuel 12:8 Nathan the prophet, speaking in the name of the Lord, said “Thus saith the Lord God . . . [speaking to David], I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives.” The God of Israel was the one who gave David his wives. The Lord regarded polygamy in the Old Testament as an abomination only when it was unauthorized and practiced without righteousness (2 Samuel 12:9; 1 Kings 9:11; 15:5).

While we may not know all of the reasons, why the Lord commands it, an important clue is found in modern-day scripture, the Book of Mormon. The prophet Jacob taught his people that monogamy was the general rule commanded of the Lord, but then he pointed out that there are circumstances when the Lord may direct his people otherwise. Jacob also stressed that *unauthorized* plural marriage constituted the sin of adultery. Jacob taught: “Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none. . . . Wherefore, this people shall keep my commandments, saith the Lord of Hosts, or cursed be the land for their sakes. For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things” (Jacob 2:27-30). Jacob teaches here that at certain times the Lord may wish to “raise up seed” unto himself. In such cases, he may command his people to begin the practice of plural marriage. The prophet Joseph Smith taught: “I have constantly said no man shall have but one wife at a time, unless the Lord directs otherwise” (*TPJS*, 324). In the first half-century after the restoration of the Church, the Lord, in his wisdom, commanded that plural marriage be practiced – apparently to “raise up seed” to his earthly kingdom.

Joseph Smith knew full well that the introduction of plural marriage would inevitably invite severe criticism – from without the Church, from within the Church, and even from within his own family. Still, he felt obligated to move ahead. “The object with

me is to obey and teach others to obey God in just what he tells us to do," he taught several months before his death. "It mattereth not whether the principle is popular or unpopular. I will always maintain a true principle even if I stand alone in it" (*TPJS*, 332).

President Lorenzo Snow taught that Joseph Smith proceeded to introduce the practice in Nauvoo only after an angel declared that he must, or his calling would be given to another (Bachman, Daniel W. "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith." M. A. thesis, Purdue University, 1975, 74-75). Joseph Smith told Brigham Young that he was determined to press ahead though it would cost him his life, for "it is the work of God, and He has revealed this principle, and it is not my business to control or dictate it" (Brigham Young Discourse, October 8, 1866, Church Archives).

In 1890, President Wilford Woodruff issued an inspired declaration to the Church in which he made clear that the Lord had revealed to him that the practice of polygamy should cease in the Church. Undoubtedly, the political pressures brought upon the Church at that time played a role in the Lord's rescinding his commandment to practice plural marriage. Since the early 1900s, no member-in-good standing in the Church has engaged in plural marriage.

Those who would criticize the practice of polygamy and refuse to acknowledge it as a God-inspired principle would do well to listen to the wisdom imparted by Paul to Titus: "Unto the pure all things *are* pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:15). There has been much written of the practice of polygamy within the Church that has been written with an anti-Mormon spirit. Intelligent and fair-minded people would go to the honest sources rather than to those who would be inclined to distort and lie.

**Concern** Jehovah's Witnesses and others like to point out what they think is a discrepancy or contradiction they believe they've found in our scriptures regarding the doctrine of polygamy: Jacob 2:24-27 says, "Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord. Wherefore, thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph. Wherefore, I the Lord God will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old. Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none." This verse of scripture seems to condemn the practice of polygamy under any circumstances.

D&C 132:39 on the other hand, seems to indicate that under some circumstances, polygamy is allowed by the Lord: "David's wives and concubines were given unto him of me, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife; and, therefore he hath fallen from his exaltation, and received his portion; and he shall not inherit them out of the world, for I gave them unto another, saith the Lord." Why the contradiction?

**Discussion** There is no contradiction here. The answer is found by reading a bit further in the book of Jacob where we learn that while the Lord usually forbids the practice of polygamy, there are some circumstances in which he allows it. Jacob 2:30 reads “For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things.” Thus in those circumstances in which the Lord desires to “raise up seed unto me,” he will allow the practice.

Is it not strange that the Lord did not condemn Abraham and Jacob (Israel) upon whom he founded the house of Israel; nor did he condemn the parents of Samuel, the great prophet, nor others who had plural wives; nor did he condemn others who had plural families. He did not condemn Solomon and David for having wives *which the Lord gave them*.

Now turn to 2 Samuel 12:7-8, and you will find that the Lord gave David wives. David was not condemned by the Lord for the wives given by the Lord, but rather because of Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah (2 Samuel 12:9-14). In your reading of the Old Testament you will also find that Solomon was blessed, and the Lord appeared to him and gave him visions and great blessings when he had plural wives, but later in his life, he took wives that the Lord did not give him. For evidence of this, turn to 1 Kings 11, and read it.

#### Endnotes

1. The exact number of Latter-day Saints who participated in the practice is not known, but studies suggest a maximum, late in the nineteenth century, of from 20 to 25% of LDS adults were members of polygamous households.

## What of the World's Many Churches, Christian and Non-Christian? Are We Really the Only True Church?

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### Bewildering Perspective

I remember—as a young missionary having my first experience with the non-LDS world—being troubled with certain questions. I became overwhelmed with the size of the world, the smallness of the Church, and the obvious reluctance of most people to respond to the gospel message. If the Lord wants all his children home (2 Nephi 26:24), I wondered, why he has allowed so many people here on earth to live in ignorance of knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ? I was a young missionary over forty-five years ago. At that time there were about two million members of the Church. While the Church had made considerable and admirable progress since its organization in 1830, that two million was a mere drop in the bucket of the world's billions. We had a few thousand missionaries in the field then, but we were certainly not blanketing the world with the message of the restoration. Yet we believed and taught that our Church was “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1:30).

I was uncomfortably aware of the billions of people living then on the earth who (1) were living without any religion, (2) belonged to one of the many non-Christian churches, or (3) identified with the so-called Orthodox Christian faiths (Catholic and Protestant). And what about those billions that lived during the Old Testament period of the earth's existence or during the period of apostasy following the Savior's crucifixion? Where was the one true church in all of those peoples' lives? I remember thinking, “Does it make any logical sense that our Church is the only true church on earth when there are so many people, so many churches, so few members of our Church, and so few on the earth that will have the opportunity to learn of the Lord's Church during their lives here?” And why does the chance of any one mortal's finding the Lord's true Church seem so infinitesimally small? To a young missionary, relatively unschooled in the gospel, our Church seemed more like a young upstart than the Lord's very kingdom upon the earth. Our LDS perspective seemed like such a presumption!

Another perplexing issue was why the Lord has had to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth so many times—to each prophet who stands at the head of a dispensation—and yet it has always fallen away? Why don't people generally yearn for the one true Church and flock to it in droves? After all, is it not the very reason they were placed here on earth? Is it not the reason this very earth was created?

In this chapter, we will explore all of the questions that vexed me as a young man. Are we really the only “true and living Church” on earth, and what exactly does that mean? Why doesn't the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints appeal to more people? Why do so few seem to respond to our message? And what is the role of the many other churches in the world, particularly the non-Christian faiths? How

does the Lord see them? What role does he wish them to play in people's lives? Does he approve of them? Does he disapprove? And what about the other *Christian* churches—the so-called orthodox Christian churches? How do they fit into the Lord's scheme? Are they spiritually edifying for their members, or do they tend to lead people away from the fulness of the gospel. In addition, what about those who do not associate with any type of church? Is the earth fulfilling its purpose and providing each mortal with sufficient spiritual truths that he or she may be adequately tested spiritually during his or her mortal sojourn? Is this mortal earth providing the Lord with ample information he may use to judge each individual?

### **The Spiritual Inclinations of Man**

Allow me here at first to raise a most fundamental and essential issue. I warn you in advance that this is a most sensitive topic. I will introduce it by posing a question: Would all of God's children be eternally happy in the celestial kingdom? Most of us church members are aware of being taught that not all of God's children are suited to an eternal celestial environment. But what is the real truth?

I have been teaching a Gospel Doctrine Sunday School class for several years. I frequently tease the members of the class by asking them, referring to the Lord: "What does he want?" They always know what I'm after, and, dutifully, they humor me by answering, "He wants us all home." And they are entirely correct. I have repeatedly had them read 2 Nephi 26:24. Listen to what that verse says: "He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw *all men* unto him. Wherefore, *he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation* (italics mine)." So the Lord clearly desires that each of us mortals here on earth one day returns to him.

But he has divine and perfect insight. Does he know that all will not return to him? He does. Let us also read D&C 88:22-24: "For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory; therefore he is not meet for a kingdom of glory. Therefore he must abide a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory."

So, for those who will truly be able to "abide" his celestial presence, that is what he wants for them, and that is what they will receive. What does it mean that some will not be able to "abide the law of a celestial [or a terrestrial] kingdom"? It means simply that they will not be comfortable or happy there. They will not thrive there. They would be miserable there.

What is it about the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the way of life it advocates that are incompatible with some of God's children? Why doesn't each and every child of our Father in heaven have the potential to be happy living up to that

standard? Could not each one learn and progress to the point where he or she would be comfortable living the celestial life eternally?

We may define a “celestial person” as one who yearns for and will flourish in the totality of the celestial environment. But aren’t we all potentially “celestial people”? Is a desire to “go to heaven after we die” not universal in our world? Let us be assured that most all of God’s children who experience mortality here on earth will live eternally in heaven. But there isn’t just one heaven. There are three. Why wouldn’t each and every mortal thrive in the *celestial* heaven?

**What is required there that would make some people uncomfortable?** It seems clear that each of God’s offspring possesses deep and abiding inclinations that interact intimately with their eternal yearnings. It is not so much a matter of differing views of righteousness and unrighteousness. Rather it is a question of what type of eternal life each kingdom of glory (celestial, terrestrial, or telestial) will require of its inhabitants. Let me suggest three ideas or reasons why the eternal celestial experience might be uncomfortable for some:

1. It is apparent that strong character is required there. I have previously defined character as the strength, courage, and ability to do the truly difficult thing when it is the right and righteous thing to do. Celestial individuals must possess an extraordinary ability to overcome difficulties and challenges. They must possess strong character.

That character is an essential, celestial attribute should be obvious as we observe the “schooling” the Lord requires of us here on earth. Here we must, as we strive to obey each and every commandment, overcome the ever-present and nearly irresistible yearnings of our natural self. And this overcoming is achieved only with significant cost of striving and struggling.

But why is character so essential in celestial beings? Once we have finally achieved the celestial heaven—once we have been admitted through the gate—will it not then be smooth sailing forever after? Have we not then arrived? Have we not completed our striving and overcoming? Have we not proven ourselves? Have we not earned a future of glory, leisure, and pleasure? Many of us have intuitively succumbed to the myth of an eternal future of ease and rest. We harbor, in the background of our minds, the figurative notion of an eternal future spent floating on a cloud while strumming our harp. We are inclined to think we will have, by the time of our admission through the celestial door, overcome all significant challenges. Is not this true?

It is more likely the Lord requires uncommon strength of character in his celestial people because that attribute will be essential there. Real and substantial challenges await those who aspire to the track of becoming like him.

What about God himself? Has he not *arrived*? Has he not reached a state of absolute perfection? He certainly has perfect character! What situation could possibly pose a challenge for him? While we are taught to acknowledge that even God is continuing to grow and will do so for all eternity, we assume it is a growth for which he

has already qualified. It is growth he can accomplish passively. We say he is growing in “dominions” and “eternal offspring.” Surely, there is no more “overcoming” that he must yet achieve. Or is there?

We must first reaffirm that God is indeed continuing to grow and will do so for all eternity. Also, it is important to admit that we have no idea of all the ways in which God is growing. It is highly possible that his eternal growth is anything but a passive endeavor. We should not be surprised to learn that there are truly astounding challenges ahead for him. Very possibly, his own character does not simply lie dormant. We may well learn that eternal growth is a proactive and not a passive endeavor. God himself may well still be encountering increasing challenges and growing even in his own strength of character!

It seems unwise to regard celestial life as easy. Celestially-inclined individuals are likely in for a vigorous, exciting, and challenging ride. It will also be an experience that offers joy beyond compare. Here on earth celestial candidates must demonstrate promise and potential in their ability to thrive on challenges and the need to overcome.

One need only consider the experiences our Father in heaven has had and is having with our own earth to get an idea of what might be required of an earth’s divine administrator. Has the history of events on our earth ever provided the Father with reasons for discouragement? Has he ever had doubts to overcome? Have there been anxieties, worries, and ringing of hands? Then multiply these challenges to accommodate the “worlds without number” that function under the divine supervision of our Father.

Is this type of eternal life the wont of every mortal? Is it a given that all individuals would opt for obligations of this sort? Would all of God’s children thrive in this type of environment? Might there be some that would prefer another, more leisurely—more comfortable—path?

2. Another, closely related characteristic of the celestial individual is a taste for hard work—a good work ethic. Here on earth, the Lord seems to teach that much satisfaction comes from being disciplined and productive. We need not doubt that much will need be done in the eternities. It is obvious that the appetite for and capacity for work varies widely among God’s children here on earth. Even among honorable, righteous, and noble individuals there is a widely ranging work ethic.

Might it be that the celestial environment would be eschewed by some because of what is required of them there? Celestial qualification is certainly a matter of obedience versus disobedience—righteousness versus unrighteousness. But might it also be, importantly, a matter of preference and inclination?

3. Character and an outstanding work ethic alone are not sufficient to qualify one for a celestial reward. Proper motivation is vital. Here on earth we have all seen much character and hard work manifested by various kinds of people. It is the way a man “gets ahead” in this world. Men and woman are busily and vigorously involved in

earning a living, and building upon their own fortunes. Often they are prominently motivated by the desire to benefit themselves.

But in the celestial kingdom, the motivation must be fundamentally different. There, the celestial beings must vigorously face challenges and work hard, but they will have no thought of self aggrandizement. All of their labors will be expended on behalf of others. How many of God's offspring are inclined to give over all of the benefits of their labors for the benefit of others? This is a matter of fundamental priority. It must be deeply rooted—indeed, built into the individual. How many possess this type of motivation? Salvation is not a matter of stated preference. It is what the individual truly is in his heart.

When people are made aware of the celestial kingdom and its requirements for entrance, I believe there will be some who will choose to say “No thank you. I think I will opt for another type of opportunity.” They may even willingly acknowledge that the celestial way is the noblest way, but they would prefer a less complicated eternal life.

What are the numbers? What percentage will truly qualify for and be truly happy and fulfilled with celestial glory? A tenth? A third? A Half? Two-thirds? The fact is, we don't know. Perhaps the “few there be” phrase has applicability here (3 Nephi 27:33, Matthew 7:13-14).

**Might the inhabitants of individual nations share common spiritual inclinations?** Let us first consider a most basic question. Are God's spirit children foreordained to be born to specific nations or races here on earth? Teaching the Athenian intellectuals on Mars' hill, the apostle Paul suggested they were: “God that made the world and all things therein . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:24, 26). Elder Bruce R. McConkie also seemed to teach that men were foreordained to be born among a specific and pre-designated race of people:

All men are the spirit children of the Eternal Father; all dwelt in his presence, awaiting the day of their mortal probation; all have come or will come to earth at an appointed time, in a specified place, to live among a designated people. In all of this there is no chance. A divine providence rules over the nations and governs in the affairs of men. Birth alone determines where and when and among what people his spirit children shall undergo their mortal probations (*A New witness for the Articles of Faith*, 512-13).

What might be the basis of this type of group foreordination? Elder McConkie further suggested there may have been separate groups, boundaries, and preferences in the *premortal* world:

God sends his spirit children to earth on a regular, organized schedule. There is nothing haphazard or accidental about the peopling of

the earth or the assignment of various land areas to the races of men. The race and nation in which men are born in this world is a direct result of their pre-existent life. All the spirit hosts of heaven deemed worthy to receive mortal bodies were foreordained to pass through this earthly probation in the particular race and nation suited to their needs, circumstances, and talents (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:159-60; see also Alvin R. Dyer, *The Meaning of Truth*, 33-36).

There is ample reason in our gospel doctrine to relate the circumstances of one's mortal birth to one's performance in the premortal world. Our first estate, the premortal world, was an important testing period to see if we would "choose good or evil." Those who chose good qualified to become foreordained to receive the higher priesthood and other privileges here on earth. Joseph Smith wrote: "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was." Then, referring to his own leadership role in directing the latter-day restoration of the gospel, he wrote, "I suppose I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council" (*TPJS*, 365). Referring to this statement of the prophet's, J. Reuben Clark, Jr. said:

I do not know whether we have a right to interpret the prophet's statement . . . but I like to think that it does include those of us of lesser calling and lesser stature. . . . I like to think that perhaps in the Grand Council something at least was said to us indicating what would be expected of us, and empowering us, subject to the re-confirmation here, to do certain things in building up the kingdom of God on earth (*CR*, October 1950, 170-71).

Just as our behavior in the mortal and spirit world phase of our existence (our "second estate") influences our condition in the eternities (our "third estate"), so did our behavior in our pre-existent phase (our "first estate") influenced our condition here in mortality.

Mary, the mortal mother of Jesus, is an example of one who was surely fore-designated or foreordained to a significant, sacred mission in life (see 1 Nephi 11:18). This type of foreordination may also apply to many people with vital non-priesthood abilities. I believe Cyrus the Persian, Columbus, other great explorers, the pilgrim founders of America, the framers of the American constitution, John Adams, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, other great national and world governmental leaders, the reformers, inventors, scientists, academicians, philosophers, and musical composers have all been foreordained to important works because of good works and the resultant excellent attributes they acquired in the premortal world.

There is also a precedent in the Church for an individual to be foreordained to a certain ethnic group here on earth. Sometimes an entire nation is foreordained to a

particular work and consequent blessings. An example of the foreordination of a nation is the posterity of Jacob, the house of Israel. President Harold B. Lee wrote:

It would seem very clear . . . that . . . Jacob, who was later to be called Israel, and his posterity, who were known as the children of Israel, were born into the most illustrious lineage of any of those who came upon the earth as mortal beings.

All these rewards were seemingly promised, or foreordained, before the world was. Surely these matters must have been determined by the kind of lives we had lived in that premortal spirit world. Some may question these assumptions, but at the same time they will accept without any question the belief that each one of us will be judged when we leave this earth according to his or her deeds during our lives here in mortality. Isn't it just as reasonable to believe that what we have received here in this earth life was given to each of us according to the merits of our conduct before we came here? ("Understanding Who We Are Brings Self-Respect," *Ensign*, January 1974, 5).

Election of this sort is a type of collective foreordination. It is a selection of spirits to form an entire favored group or lineage. But what of the individuals within that collective group? How does each individual relate to the collective foreordination of the entire nation? Although it is a collective foreordination, the eventual judgment of one's stewardship is nonetheless based on *individual* premortal and mortal faithfulness and spiritual capacity. Through the lineage of Israel were to come the true and tried souls who had demonstrated their righteousness in the premortal world. In spite of this group foreordination, the promised blessings to individuals in this favored lineage depend on each individual's obedience and valiance to the Lord and his gospel here in mortality. Paul taught, "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Romans 9:6). Lineage does not ensure one's salvation.

Is being born into a favored lineage an advantage? It may or may not be. It may afford the individual earthly associations and opportunities that are helpful. But it is important to remember that "of him unto whom much is given much is required" (D&C 82:3). The Lord will surely be more demanding of them in his judgments of them. Those of a less favored lineage may be judged more mercifully. Certainly, those not of the House of Israel also have ample opportunity for exaltation. By accepting the gospel here in mortality, they are received, as Paul taught, "by adoption" into the favored lineage. They thus receive all the blessings and responsibilities to which they are entitled. Their apparent lack of a premortal "favored" foreordination is overcome when they become as though they had been foreordained.

Apparently there are criteria for foreordination other than premortal righteousness and ability. President David O. McKay, in reference to the peopling of the nations of the earth, suggested that another criterion is a spirit's attraction to other spirits or groups of

spirits of “like character.” This view and its relationship to foreordination to specific lineages and nations is based on the principle of “spiritual attraction” (Llewelyn R. McKay, *Home Memories of President David O. McKay*, 229).

Herein lies another, most sensitive, issue. Might it be that some nations on the earth are peopled by those foreordained to live among individuals with less-than-celestial inclinations? And might this foreordination also be based upon premortal performance and the Lord’s intimate knowledge of them? Might we even speculate that some nations are inhabited by people more likely to prefer an eternal terrestrial environment than a celestial one? However, let us hasten to reiterate that individual salvation is ultimately not a group matter. The quality of each individual’s salvation depends not on their race but their individual spiritual responsiveness.

The placement into certain nations, times, or circumstances is done by an infinitely wise and compassionate Father. By the principle of foreordination, he “staffs” the earth for the good of each of his children. Apparently, each spirit child is assigned to such a nation as would be best for his or her own growth and development. Great spirits have come to all nations and races to render service to humanity and contribute to the enlightenment of others. “The great religious leaders of the world,” wrote the First Presidency, “such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others received a portion of God’s light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals” (“God’s Love for All Mankind,” *Statement of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, February 15, 1978, cited in Spencer J. Palmer, *The Expanding Church*, 5).

### **What Else Does He Want?**

Now, let me ask you another question—a truly important one. I have pointed out that the Lord yearns for all of his children to return home to him. But what else does he want? Realistically and practically, what yearning does he have for each and every one of his children? He desires eternal happiness for each. For those who will fit better and be happiest in a terrestrial or telestial environment, that is where they will be placed. The Lord wishes for all of his children to thrive in the eternities. He would have each of his offspring spend eternity where they will be happy, comfortable, accepted, and fulfilled.

Each will be placed in the highest degree of glory suited to the “desires of their hearts” (Alma 29:4). The most important criterion for where you will end up in the eternities is the “desires of [your] heart.” What does this phrase actually mean? Does it mean that you will have the opportunity to state your preference? And does it mean that you will have the final say in the nature of your eternal reward?

It does not. The phrase “desires of [your] heart” means, simply, what you truly are. It has nothing to do with stated preferences. It has everything to do with your very

essence—your true identity according to the Lord's divine and perfect perceptions of you.

Now, you must keep in mind that this mortal experience is no casual walk in the park. There are laws of God—spiritual laws—that must be obeyed. If they are obeyed, they lead to spiritual growth. If they are not obeyed, the “sin” leads to spiritual deterioration and a failure to qualify for a particular state of eternal glory. It's not so much a matter of a divine report card with certain grades or cumulative scores being kept to get you into this or that eternal kingdom of glory. It is more a matter of what you *are* becoming and what you have become. Keeping the Lord's commandments or living according to his spiritual laws actually causes real growth. It changes who you are. Relative to God's law, you can grow (and become more like him) or deteriorate (and become less like him). It's “who you are” and where you will be happiest that determines your eternal reward.

It is possible for any of God's children to fail to live up to their true potential. And that is the real tragedy of mortality. For example, a person with true celestial potential, through his interacting with the world and God's laws, may deteriorate and become more of a terrestrial person. Or, an individual with true terrestrial leanings and potentials may, at the final judgment, may be found to have slipped from that level and may have become a person who will only be happy in a terrestrial environment. Can you even imagine a greater tragedy than a person with celestial or terrestrial potential living a mortal life that causes him to become one who would not even be able to abide a terrestrial glory. He would then be relegated to a kingdom of no glory—outer darkness.

On the other hand, an individual on entering mortality may be inclined toward a terrestrial reward, but he may begin to obey the commandments and thereby grow and become a true celestial person. He will then be welcomed into that kingdom for all eternity.

### **The Purpose of a Church**

Now let us address another important question. From the Lord's perspective, what is the purpose of a church? Why does he not just provide each person with a book of scripture and let each go home and try to live according to the book? It is apparent that, regardless of a man's spiritual inclinations, the Lord is wont to gather him to a church.

What is the purpose of *gathering*, and why does the Lord wish to gather his people together in a church? Perhaps we can best understand his divine yearning by examining an analogous phenomenon. One of the compelling instincts earthly mothers possess is the need to gather their children about them. A mother is happiest when her sons and daughters are gathered near. Then she can reassure herself that they are safe. She can make certain their needs are fulfilled. She can nurture and teach each one personally and individually. By contemplating this powerful maternal drive, we may

come to understand something of the desire the Lord has to gather his children about him. It is clear that the Savior's desire is shared equally by the Father. On one occasion during his mortal ministry, the Savior looked over Jerusalem and wistfully pined: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, [thou] that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under [her] wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37).

A church is intended to teach its members spiritual truths and how they ought to live their lives in accordance with those truths. In a church the Lord provides inspired teachers ("prophets") to teach, administer, succor, and encourage. The Lord's intent is to keep its members united with one another and separated from the sins of the world (spiritual Babylon). It is to gather them to a safe refuge where they can be safely taught and nurtured and where they can grow spiritually. This mortal existence presents to each individual, on a readily-available platter, myriad worldly influences that will try to pull the individual down spiritually. The Lord gathers his people to a church so that the church's members can love, encourage, and succor one another and enjoy some degree of protection against these worldly influences.

Now, let me try to make an important point by considering two hypothetical individuals. Let us first consider a hypothetical individual with genuine celestial potential. The Lord knows this individual's heart and knows that realistically, he is a candidate for celestial glory. If you were in charge of the world, would you think it best if he were gathered to a church? Also, with whom would you like to see him gathered? Do think he would be best served in a church where there are other members who also had real and practical celestial potential? I would hope, as you thoughtfully contemplate these questions, you would agree that each mortal would benefit from being gathered to a church with others with similar eternal inclinations.

Do you suppose these same principles apply to all those not inclined to gather to the Lord's very kingdom—to his one true Church? Let us consider another hypothetical individual. This individual lacks celestial potential but would thrive in terrestrial glory. It would be a tragedy if he did not realize his potential as a terrestrial individual. Should he also be gathered to a church here on earth? And should it be the same church as our first hypothetical individual? Why not simply expose each and every mortal to the fulness of the Lord's gospel in a single church and then let each individual be judged based upon his response to that gospel? Again, you are in charge. What do you think? The obvious danger is that many would blow off religion of any kind if the only standard they were taught was that of the fulness of Christ's gospel. They would become discouraged by and lose interest in church and religion. Those who lack celestial inclinations seem best served by a simpler version of the gospel. The gospel in its simpler or lesser forms will, in part, function to lift its adherents out of wickedness and save them from a terrestrial resurrection. It will also provide them the essential socialization and succoring among people with common spiritual inclinations.

The natural self of the “terrestrial souls” will surely try to pull them down to a terrestrial level or even lower. The Lord desires the highest possible state of glory for these individuals. He yearns for them to receive a terrestrial reward, and not a terrestrial one. How does he hope to achieve this? Has he provided the opportunity for them to be gathered to a church suited particularly for them? We will return to this question in a few moments.

### **Are We Really the “Only True Church”?**

Let us now address the question: What does it mean that we are the only true church on the face of the earth? that we are the very kingdom of God upon the earth? First, is it true, in fact, that we are that one true church? The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is, in fact, the only true celestial church on the earth. I testify to you that this is true. But what exactly does that mean? Practically, it means at least four fundamental things:

1. We are the only church with the proper divine sanction or authorization. We call this authorization the priesthood.

2. It also means that we are the only Church with men called prophets of God. These are also called apostles. They direct us. And that is a unique blessing, since they have a communication link with God that is more direct than any other religious leader on the earth.

3. Members of the Lord’s one true Church have greater access to personal revelation from God. This occurs since we are blessed to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. This supernal gift can only be bestowed by a male holding the proper priesthood authority.

4. Finally, it means that we have available more spiritual truths than any other people or religion on earth. We are blessed to be able to understand our eternal situation better than anyone else. We have access to additional scripture that is a treasure trove of spiritual truths. We are blessed with what the Lord calls the “fulness of the gospel” (1 Nephi 10:14; 15:13; D&C 20:9; 42:12; 76:14; 90:11). We are not given to know all spiritual truth, but, in this regard, we are surely the “truest” Church on earth.

What is the purpose of the celestial church? It is to set the celestial standard, to gather the celestial people, and to allow them to begin to grow more rapidly toward their celestial resurrection. Celestial individuals naturally have a hunger for spiritual truths—not only to learn them but to live them. The Lord mercifully allows this need to be filled by his having restored the fulness of his gospel. Again, that uncomfortable reminder: Being gathered to the celestial church by itself does not guarantee celestial salvation. One must inculcate the fulness of the gospel into one’s life and become, in fact, a true celestial being.

What are our missionaries accomplishing? The Church today appeals to those who are celestial people in their hearts. The missionaries are gathering these to the fold of God's people.

### **What Are the World's Churches?**

We now come to a consideration of the many churches—Christian and non-Christian—on the earth. What is their exact role in the future salvation of each of their members? How should we regard these churches? How can we put them in proper perspective? Are they good? Are they bad? Are they spiritual blessings to their adherents? Or, are they all apostate and a curse to spiritual lives and spiritual progress? What is their net effect in the lives of their members? How does God regard these myriad churches? Does he love them or hate them? Did he have a role in their inception? Or, are they merely the creations of men?

It is not difficult to observe that many in the Lord's Church have an unmistakable bias in this regard. We have a tendency to view all other churches as the enemy of righteousness. Why is this so?

**The First Vision.** In 1820 Joseph Smith asked the Father and the Son in the sacred grove which church he should join. The Savior told him that, “[He] must join none of them, for they [are] all wrong.” Further, the Lord referred to their creeds as “an abomination in his sight” and said of their professors, “[They are] all corrupt” and “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof” (JS-H 1:19).

This First Vision account is canonized scripture. It has resulted in some members' of the Church having a tendency to look down upon other churches and their members. Many, if not most, of us in the Church have a tendency to label all other churches and their members as “apostate.” One Evangelical scholar, Craig L. Blomberg, sensed this and wrote: “The ‘Personage’ who spoke to Joseph Smith told him to join no existing Christian denomination, ‘for they were all wrong’ and ‘all their creeds were an abomination in his sight,’ their ‘professors were all corrupt,’ and their religious worship all a hypocritical pretense (*Joseph Smith History* 2:19 [sic])” (*How Wide the Divide?*, 184). Blomberg also said, “Mormons think we [Evangelicals] belong to a church that is ‘most abominable above all other churches’ . . . They refer to us as part of the ‘great and abominable church’ and the ‘whore of all the earth’ (1 Nephi 13:5-6; D&C 29:21). They interpret their scriptures as prophesying that our church ‘shall be cast down by devouring fire’ (cf. D&C 1; 10:69; 88:94)” (*Ibid.*). Our negative impressions of these churches have been further sharpened by the antagonism that has existed between them and us, both in the early Church and now.

So, just how are we to regard all of the other churches in the world, including the orthodox Christian churches which are the many, many Protestant churches and the

Roman and Greek Catholic Churches? And what about the non Christian churches—Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, and all of the nearly countless other churches in the world? Are they a spiritual force in the world, or an evil one? Do they provide spiritual blessings to their adherents? Or, are they all apostate and a curse to spiritual lives and spiritual progress? What is their net effect in the lives of their members? Do they spiritually nourish? Or, do they actually lead their followers away from the one true Church? Might they satisfy the spiritual hungers of their members to the point where they become dulled to any additional spiritual yearnings or deficiencies that ought to prick their consciences from time to time? How does God regard these myriad churches? Does he love them or hate them? Did he have a role in their inceptions? Or, are they merely the creations of men? Does he take an active role in trying to preserve them, or has he given up on them as irretrievably lost churches of men?

Joseph Smith's experience in the sacred grove has led some to an unfortunate misapprehension. The Lord's condemnation there was directed against some of their incomplete and altered doctrines and not against their lay members or ministers. What the Lord was really saying was that in 1820 there was no celestial church on the earth, and that he intended to restore that church through Joseph. While all of the several world churches might be considered to be "apostate" in the sense they lack the fulness of the gospel, they should not be considered "apostate" (with all the negative trappings we usually attach to the word) in the sense that they are purely corrupt churches of men.

**"Lesser" or "terrestrial" churches.** So, it seems probable there are "lesser" or "terrestrial" churches here on earth. Each is intended by the Lord to lift its members toward the highest possible level of eternal glory they can abide. For many, or even most, this may be the terrestrial glory. Is it possible the Lord actually condones churches in the world that teach righteous principles but not the fulness of the gospel? Do you think he is willing to approve of churches that teach incomplete, and sometimes even flawed, versions of his gospel doctrine?

There is only one truly celestial church. It is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All others are terrestrial churches. There is actually a strong precedent for this idea. For those ancient Israelites under the leadership of Moses, the Lord seems to have decided they were not ready for the complete, "celestial" church version of the gospel. Apparently, they would not abide the fullness of the everlasting gospel. It seems likely he determined that significant numbers of them were not suited to celestial living and that they would not be happy in an eternal celestial setting. They would find a church with celestial standards to be too daunting and discouraging. Some of the sacred truths taught in the celestial church would be lost on them. Hence, he gave them a more "terrestrial" or simpler version of the church and gospel. Might it be that among the several world churches we are simply seeing simplified versions of the

Lord's gospel—each adapted to the setting and culture and spiritual inclinations of its people?

This applies to the many non-Christian churches in the world. But what about the many so-called “orthodox” Christian churches in the world today—the Protestant and Catholic churches? How might we categorize these? I believe these, also, are terrestrial churches.

There also obviously exist “religions” that, in fact are *not* God-inspired. These include atheism, agnosticism, or institutions that are purely organizations of men and variably evil. These include Wicca, Voodoo, Spiritualism, Satanism, and others.

### **The Implications of Terrestrial Churches**

For a few moments, let us consider the implications of this idea. What of the several different aspects of the world's terrestrial churches?

**Their ministers.** Does this mean that those who minister in these churches—their priests, popes, pastors, imams, rabbis, etc.—are God inspired? Or, are they merely dangerous apostates teaching apostate doctrines? They are obviously divinely inspired and have access to the Spirit of God to prompt them in their thoughts, words, and acts. Most of what they teach is valid spiritual truth.

**Their origins.** Another interesting question concerns the origin of these churches. I believe we may postulate two possible explanations or mechanisms for their existence:

1. They are lesser or apostate versions of the gospel in its fulness. We know God first revealed the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness to the man/prophet Adam who established the Lord's Church in his day. Subsequently, due to repeated apostasy, it had to be re-revealed to the heads of each dispensation including Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus Christ.

One possible explanation for all of the world's churches, then, might be that each is simply the result of apostate alteration and adulteration of the Lord's Church and gospel. Each has its origins in one or another of the pure dispensational churches at the onset of the several dispensations. Man, then, altered the fulness of the gospel to suit his own individual and cultural biases. Thus, these “apostate” churches have assumed many different forms.

2. Another—and I believe more likely—explanation is that they are deliberately simplified, lesser versions of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Might it be that in addition to God's revealing his gospel in its fulness to Adam and the other biblical prophets, he also revealed variations of his gospel through inspired men or “prophets” in several different cultures in several different places. Each variation was adapted by God specifically to the particular setting and culture in which it was placed. It was also adapted to the spiritual inclinations of the people in that setting. God loves all his children in all

nations, and it is not surprising that God would call wise men or “prophets” from among several of them and communicate spiritual truths to them.

Again, these several variations of the Lord’s gospel need not include a fulness. Generally, the Lord reveals simpler versions of the gospel as he did with Moses and the Israelites.

Thoughtful church leaders and scholars have addressed this concept. Elder Orson F. Whitney observed that God “is using not only his covenant people, but other peoples as well, to consummate a work, stupendous, magnificent, and altogether too arduous for this little handful of Saints to accomplish by and of themselves” (*CR*, April 1921, 32-33). Elder B. H. Roberts observed: “While the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is established for the instruction of men; and it is one of God’s instrumentalities for making known the truth, yet he is not limited to that institution for such purposes, neither in time nor place. God raises up wise men and prophets here and there among all the children of men, of their own tongue and nationality, speaking to them through means that they can comprehend. . . . All the great teachers are servants of God; among all nations and in all ages. They are inspired men, appointed to instruct God’s children according to the conditions in the midst of which he finds them” (*Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, 2 volumes, 1907, 1:512-13).

A particularly interesting example is the prophet Muhammad. Was he a prophet of God? Several years ago, James A. Toronto, an associate professor of Islamic studies and comparative religion at Brigham Young University, wrote an excellent and thoughtful article on Muhammad and Islam (“A Latter-day Saint Perspective on Muhammad,” *Ensign*, Aug 2000, 51). Brother Toronto pointed out that our church leaders over the years have repeatedly accorded Muhammad the status of “prophet.”

In 1855, at a time when Christian literature generally ridiculed Muhammad as the Antichrist and accused him of being the archenemy of Western civilization, Elders George A. Smith and Parley P. Pratt delivered lengthy sermons demonstrating an accurate and balanced understanding of Islamic history. They spoke highly of Muhammad’s leadership. Elder Smith observed that Muhammad was “descended from Abraham and was no doubt raised up by God on purpose” to preach against idolatry. Elder Pratt expressed his admiration for Muhammad’s teachings, asserting that “upon the whole, [Muslims] have better morals and better institutions than many Christian nations” (*Deseret News*, 10 October 1855, 242, 245). Latter-day Saint appreciation of Muhammad’s role in history can also be found in the 1978 statement of the First Presidency regarding God’s love for all mankind. This declaration specifically mentions Muhammad as one of “the great religious leaders of the world” who received “a portion of God’s light” and affirms that “moral truths were given to [these leaders] by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals” (*Messages of the First Presidency*, 15 February 1978).

**Does God preserve all his churches and guard them against further apostasy?** Why don't the lesser churches drift into complete apostasy? It is a given that in each of the lesser or "terrestrial" churches there exists some inaccurate or false doctrines. There are also spiritual truths. Intuitively, one may suppose, and I think rightly so, that if they were purely "churches of men"—that is, devoid of divine stabilizing influences—they would inevitably drift further and further into apostasy with the passage of time. Without the intervention of God, through his Spirit, what is there to prevent such deterioration? Do you suppose the world's major religions—both Christian and non-Christian—are preserved and prevented from inevitable apostasy by God?

It seems likely that not only did the Lord have a role in the inception of all of the world's major religions, but he intervenes to prevent spiritual deterioration. Those who administer and lead in these religions are generally men blessed with God's inspiration. Most all of them have their own scripture that was God inspired when it was written, and it functions as a spiritual anchor for its adherents. Examples, among others, include the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Talmud, and the Qur'an. All of these afford stabilizing influences that prevent further apostasy. They allow their believers to continue to hold to some false or partially true doctrines, and some true doctrines, and they allow their belief systems to remain stable.

**Will lesser churches lead some of their adherents to celestial glory?** We have discussed previously that at death, each of us is subjected to what Joseph F. Smith taught is a "partial judgment." That is, at death each of us is placed in a state called paradise or in another state in the spiritual world sometimes called "spirit prison." For those privileged to be assigned to paradise, their probationary state is over. This is not to say they are perfect—exactly like the Savior. They will continue to progress both in paradise and in the celestial heaven. "And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow" (Alma 40:12). They will not, however, fall to a lower state. They will inherit a celestial body at the resurrection. It is obvious that the righteous, departed spirits in paradise are free of worldly troubles, the vicissitudes of life, and the shackles of a corrupt and infirm body. These spirits will enjoy the vigor and enthusiasm characteristic of them in their prime of life. Their mortal trial is over. They are sealed up to inherit eternal life in the celestial kingdom. They will not simply rest, however. Rather, they will be involved in the work of the Lord, particularly in bringing succor to those souls in spirit prison.

Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie wrote:

The time of testing and trial is not without its limits and bounds; the day of probation must end. The pre-earth life was a time of schooling, of trials, and of tests. Its inhabitants had agency, and were required to "choose good or evil." Those choosing good found it necessary to

exercise “exceedingly great faith” to survive the challenges of that existence (Alma 13:3-4). It was a probationary estate, one in which “a third part of the hosts of heaven” were cast out and became perdition, or hopelessly lost. These will not be born into mortality, will never clothe their spirits in bodies, and will never obtain any degree of glory.

Those who kept their first estate will be born into mortality, where trials and tests will continue. Of their number, those who have the privilege of accepting the gospel, and who do so—honoring their covenants and enduring in faith—will at death be escorted into the paradise of God, the day of their probation being complete. None such can fall, none such can lose the sure promises of eternal life which are now theirs, the day of their probation being past. They departed “mortal life, firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, through the grace of God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ” (D&C 138:14). Abraham taught these principles in this language: “And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever” (Abraham 3:26) (*The Life Beyond*, 62).

But how is the Lord able to render this “partial judgment” to each and every individual? Most have not had an opportunity to receive the message of Jesus Christ. Many have not even heard mention of his name. By what criteria is the Lord able to adequately judge each individual? Does this mortal experience actually provide the Lord with sufficient “evidence” or information he can use to adequately and fairly judge each person?

Modern scripture provides us a plausible formula by which the Lord may issue the partial judgment to each and every individual with complete fairness. The prophet Joseph Smith was blessed by the Lord with a vision of the celestial kingdom. Joseph was surprised to find there his older brother Alvin who had died prior to the restoration of the Aaronic priesthood, and thus prior to any authorized baptism and prior to having an opportunity to become a member of the Lord’s earthly kingdom:

I saw Father Adam and Abraham; and my father and my mother; my brother Alvin, that has long since slept; And marveled how it was that he had obtained an inheritance in that kingdom, seeing that he had departed this life before the Lord had set his hand to gather Israel the second time, and had not been baptized for the remission of sins. Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me, saying: All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God; Also all

that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom; For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts (D&C 137:5-9).

It is entirely plausible that the Lord may judge all of humankind at the end of their mortal life regardless of their experience, the duration of their stay in mortality, and whether or not they heard or accepted the gospel. He knows all things. In particular he knows each of us intimately. He can judge mankind, because he knows perfectly the thoughts and intentions of the human heart: “Yea, I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart” (D&C 6:16). As stated previously, the phrases “desire of their hearts” and “the intents of thy heart” do not refer to a man’s preferences. Rather, they refer to what the man truly is in his heart.

This mortal life is the probationary state. “For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors” (Alma 34:32). But is this fair? Can each and every mortal really be expected to present to the Lord evidence of his or her inclination to recognize and adhere to spiritual truth? After all, it is not the inclination of any man to act without reason or behave in a certain way without some motive or rationale. Are there influences in this world that might provide each and every individual some motivation to seek spiritual truth? Let me suggest three:

1. The most basic source of motivation is the light or Spirit of Christ (see Moroni 7:16 and D&C 93:2). This small amount of light or responsiveness to the Spirit of God accompanies every man into this world. It is an “entitlement.” It doesn’t have to be earned. The Spirit of Christ engenders, within the breast of each man, a subtle yearning for something beyond this life, something more soul-satisfying than the events and accomplishments of this world. More specifically, the Spirit of Christ produces a longing for and responsiveness to Jesus Christ and his teachings. The Lord’s teachings ring true, though that ringing may be soft and distant. This influence within each of us may be thought of as a small gift of the Spirit given freely, lovingly, and optimistically to every man. It is indeed a free gift of belief. It may serve us as our initial inclination, and perhaps our only inclination, to obey righteous principles.

There is yet another important aspect of the Spirit of Christ within each individual. The Spirit of Christ possessed by each child of God is different from that of all other individuals. The reason is that each person was a unique individual in the pre-existence, primarily because of the differing levels of spiritual progress he achieved there. The Spirit of Christ is a reminder to each child of God who he was and the attributes he came to possess in premortality. It encourages each mortal to remain true to his premortal self. It functions for each soul as a standard of behavior. Each person

here on earth is inclined to seek after the level of spiritual performance we achieved in the pre-existence. Each has a unique inclination toward righteous behavior.

Let us also be reminded that the blessing of the Spirit of Christ is also a potential cursing. The light of Christ is a stewardship for which each individual will be held responsible. If we find ourselves inclined toward spiritual things, then we had better seek for them! “For of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation” (D&C 82:3).

2. To the Spirit of Christ, we may add the testimonies, written or spoken, of the Lord’s inspired servants as they bear witness of spiritual truths. Their testimonies are powerful, potential motivators of others. A particular servant may know all or only part of the Lord’s gospel. He may or may not be associated with the Lord’s earthly kingdom. Spiritual truths may be spoken by leaders of all religious persuasions, Christian or non-Christian. Each will provide leadership and spiritual succor to a segment of earth’s mortals.

3. Testimonies of truth may also come in non-verbal forms. A man’s curiosity and interest may be piqued as he contemplates the universe, as he ponders the unmistakable order found in the nature of things, or as he senses the hand of God in the affairs of men. The Lord said unto Adam, “all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual” (Moses 6:63).

Regardless of their form, testimonies of truth and the associated influence of the Spirit may resonate with the Spirit of Christ within the hearer. We may refer to the subtle promptings available to every man from these three sources as “whispered testimonies,” as they serve as subtle influences on the soul of every man. Collectively, these enable every individual to “hear” the word of God.

Clearly, the Lord expects these whispered testimonies to arouse at least the spiritual curiosity of every man. While their effects may be subtle, the Lord expects them to produce some positive response that can be built upon.

If an individual who reaches the end of his mortal sojourn has accepted Christ and his gospel and has diligently strived to keep the commandments, he will be assigned, at the partial judgment, to paradise. If he would have accepted Christ and his gospel had he been given sufficient opportunity, and if he has made maximum use of the resources available to him, he will also be assigned to paradise. At this vital partial judgment the Lord sees perfectly. He will judge each according to his individual mortal experience. If the Lord judges an individual’s heart and finds him deficient in celestial qualities, he will be assigned to spirit prison. From there, he will eventually receive that eternal reward befitting who he really is. He will spend eternity where he will everlastingly fit in and be comfortable and happy. It is clear, then, that the Lord’s perfect perception of the “heart” and “desires” of each individual allows him to judge each of us with perfect accuracy and fairness, regardless of our experiences here on

earth. For a more complete discussion of the Lord's partial judgment, see "Precisely Who Will Be Found Worthy of Paradise" in *The Spirit World*, volume 2, chapter 13 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

Do you suppose there are some among the many non-Christian churches of the world and among the Protestants or Catholics that are sealed up to eternal life at their deaths? Are there some among them who have lived such dedicated and charitable lives that they will be judged worthy of paradise? Of course there are, and of course there have been. I have no doubt that many individuals in all religions of the world, and perhaps some outside any organized religion, will be judged, at their deaths, worthy of celestial glory. These will have lived out their lives guided only by their own particular religions and by the other spiritual influences, including the spirit of Christ, available to all mankind. The Lord will look into their hearts and judge them as if they had heard the fulness of the gospel. If they are truly celestial individuals, then they will be exalted (D&C 137:5-9).

Now, remember that some of these may never have even heard the name *Jesus Christ*. They will not associate the spiritual truths they espouse with the name Jesus Christ. How, then, could they possibly be exalted? We are judged not so much on how much we have avowed the name of Jesus Christ but on how intimately our hearts, our souls, our very lives align with his. Each of us will be judged on exactly who and what we are, not on who we say we are or think we are. On being exposed to Jesus Christ and his teachings, those who have intuitively espoused his doctrines will immediately recognize him, acknowledge him as God, and fall on their knees and worship him.

It is also logical that most members of the "terrestrial churches" will live true to their deeply ingrained inclinations—their *terrestrial* dispositions. If they diligently obey the commandments they learn in their churches, they will inherit at least the terrestrial glory. There, they will be happy for all eternity. They will live in a magnificent heaven that will exceed that which was taught by their churches. They will be ministered to by one member of the Godhead—even Jesus Christ—the one God they had always imagined would be there.

The prophet Joseph taught:

While one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard; He views them as His offspring, and without any of the contracted feelings that influence the children of men, causes "His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." He holds the reins of judgment in His hands; He is a wise Lawgiver, and will judge all men, not according to the narrow, contracted notions of men, but, "according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil," or whether these deeds were done in England, America, Spain, Turkey, or

India. He will judge them, “not according to what they have not, but according to what they have,” those who have lived without law, will be judged without law, and those who have a law, will be judged by that law. We need not doubt the wisdom and intelligence of the Great Jehovah; He will award judgment or mercy to all nations according to their several deserts, their means of obtaining intelligence, the laws by which they are governed, the facilities afforded them of obtaining correct information, and His inscrutable designs in relation to the human family; and when the designs of God shall be made manifest, and the curtain of futurity be withdrawn, we shall all of us eventually have to confess that the Judge of all the earth has done right” (TPJS, 218).

We all understand the role of apostasy in the establishment of Catholic and Protestant churches. We must also readily acknowledge the influences of the Lord in the past and present of all of these churches including the inspired reformers. There are many good and inspired men who adhere to and lead these religions. It is worth repeating that many good Catholics and Protestants are fully of celestial ilk and will be so judged by the Lord. They will be exalted.

## **Ecumenism**

A substantial faction of religionists in the world today suggests that all churches lead to heaven. These claim that no one church is better than any another. Churches are just different. Eventually all religious paths will converge. Therefore, any one individual is quite as eternally safe in any one church as in any other. We may refer to this philosophy as *ecumenism*. The movement is *ecumenical*. It is also the “parallel-” or “converging-path-to-heaven” philosophy.

The reader is now armed to view and understand this concept in its proper perspective. We may conclude that there is real substance in this belief. Indeed, this religious philosophy is entirely correct when the object of eternal striving is the terrestrial heaven.

Some ecumenicals reject non-Christian religions as qualifying for the “converging-path” concept. They maintain the absolute necessity of acknowledging Jesus Christ and his atoning sacrifice. They hold to such biblical passages as “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). We LDS do acknowledge that each and every individual who qualifies for any degree of salvation—whether they have lived out their mortal life in a Christian or non-Christian church—will, in the spirit world, be taught of Christ and will unqualifiedly accept him, his atonement, and his doctrines. In other words, they will be converted to Jesus Christ and his gospel. Eventually, all will be judged and placed in that eternal glory where they belong and where they will be happy. All those who spend mortality

worshipping in a non-Christian church will participate fully in this process. All God's children will be ultimately judged based upon the same criteria.

The notion that all churches are equal presupposes that the one true church of Jesus Christ actually does not exist anywhere. However, the New Testament teaches of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" and speaks of "[all coming] in the unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:5, 13). Paul also taught in 1 Corinthians 1:10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Peter taught the same principle when he said in 1 Peter 3:8, "Finally, be ye all of one mind." Peter also taught of a "restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

Latter-day Saints have been bitterly persecuted for holding to the doctrine of "only [one] true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30). We did not invent the doctrine of the only true church. It came from the Lord. Whatever perception others have of us, however presumptuous we appear to be, whatever criticism may be directed to us, we must teach it to all who will listen. The position, that our Church is the only true and living Church upon the face of the earth, is fundamental. It is not merely an admission, it is a positive declaration. It is so fundamental that we cannot yield on this point. Perhaps it would be more convenient or palatable or popular to avoid it. Because it is the truth we are under an obligation, a sacred obligation, to hold to it. To those who think us uncharitable, we say that this truth was not devised by us, but declared by him.

### **Need for Mutual Respect in Interfaith Relations**

We in the Church have been repeatedly counseled that kindness and mutual respect ought to characterize all our relationships with people in other churches. There is obviously much spiritual truth in all faiths. President Gordon B. Hinckley has consistently advocated dialogue and mutual respect in interfaith relations. He admonished members of the Church to cultivate "a spirit of affirmative gratitude" for those of differing religious, political, and philosophical persuasions, adding that "we do not in any way have to compromise our theology" in the process. He gave this counsel: "Be respectful of the opinions and feelings of other people. Recognize their virtues; don't look for their faults. Look for their strengths and their virtues, and you will find strength and virtues that will be helpful in your own life" (in Sheri Dew's *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 536, 576). The prophet Joseph exhorted Church members to "gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them" (TPJS, 316).

While we have concluded that we LDS are blessed to possess the most complete version of the gospel of Jesus Christ available on the earth today, it is vital to

keep in mind that most all other religions teach many spiritual truths beneficial to their adherents. They are not evil and can rightly claim divine influences in their origins and current administrations. Doubtless, all of these religions are capable of spiritually lifting their adherents—even some to the celestial heaven.

This conclusion comes with a vital caveat. We must never smugly claim we have the “only true Church” without being reminded that this great blessing comes with a solemn obligation. “For of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation” (D&C 82:3). The “fulness” of the gospel to which we have access can spiritually lift us farther and faster than others. But the Lord will surely expect more of us than he does of others.

## Brief Summary of the World's Major Non-Christian Religions

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Let us briefly consider some of the world's major non-Christian religions that most probably can rightly claim divine origins and divine maintenance in their current leadership. Literally billions of people today accept one of these as their own religion.

**Hinduism.** Its origins can be traced to the Indus River Valley—located just west of India in present-day Pakistan—some time between 4000 and 2500 BC. The basis of Hinduism is that everything, including God, exists in a unity or totality called *Brahman*. According to Hinduism, the purpose of man is to achieve “enlightenment” through repeated reincarnation cycles of birth, life, and death called *samsara*. “Enlightenment,” in terms we can understand, might be defined as being, to some degree, like God. Complete enlightenment consists of a oneness with God which, when achieved, allows the individual to leave this earthly plane and rejoin with God. The measure of a man's spiritual growth (“enlightenment”) is his *karma*. An individual's karma determines his next reincarnation. Greater karma, brought on by selfless acts and devotion to God helps one to be born next time at a higher level. Bad acts and thoughts will cause one to be born at a lower level, as a person or even an animal.

Hindus follow a strict caste system which determines the standing of each person. The caste one is born into is the result of the karma achieved in their previous life. Only members of the highest caste, the Brahmins, may perform the Hindu religious rituals and hold positions of authority within their temples.

**Judaism.** Judaism may be said to have begun with a covenant between Jehovah and Abraham about 2000 BC. The next leader of the Israelites, Moses, led his people out of captivity in Egypt and received the Law of Moses from God. Joshua later led them into the Promised Land where Samuel the prophet established the Israelite kingdom with Saul as its first king. King David established Jerusalem, and King Solomon built the first temple there. In AD 70 the temple was destroyed and the Jews were scattered throughout the world until 1948 when the state of Israel was formed.

Jews believe in one creator who alone is to be worshipped as absolute ruler of the universe. He monitors peoples' activities and rewards good deeds and punishes evil. The capacity to live with God lies with each individual and that eternal privileged can be earned through obedience to God's law. The Torah was revealed to Moses by God and cannot be changed though God does communicate with the Jewish people through prophets. Jews believe in the inherent goodness of the world and its inhabitants as creations of God and do not believe a savior is required to save them from original sin. They believe they are God's chosen people and that the Messiah will arrive in the future and gather them into Israel. They believe the Jerusalem Temple, destroyed in AD 70, will be rebuilt. They also believe in a general resurrection from the dead.

Originally, Jewish scholarship was oral. Rabbis expounded and debated the law (the written law as expressed in the Hebrew Bible or *Tanakh*—pronounced *Ta' nax*). They did so without the benefit of written works (other than the Bible itself). This situation changed drastically, however, mainly as the result of the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth in the year AD 70. As the Rabbis were required to face a new reality—mainly Judaism without a Temple (to serve as the center of teaching and study) and Judea without autonomy—there was a flurry of legal discourse and the old system of oral scholarship could not be maintained. It is during this period that Rabbinic discourse began to be recorded in writing. This collective writing was the Talmud. It is a record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, philosophy, customs and history. The Talmud has two components: the Mishnah (ca. AD 200) and the Gemara (ca. AD 500). The Talmud has various compilations including the Jerusalem or Palestinian Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud (writings following the Babylonian captivity in 586 BC).

**Zoroastrianism.** Zoroastrianism was founded by Zoroaster (also called Zarathustra) in Persia in about 1000 BC. He preached monotheism with a single supreme god—Ahura Mazda. Zoroastrians believe in a dualism between Ahura Mazda and an evil spirit of violence and death. They believe this dualism takes the form of both a cosmic or literal dualism or an ethical dualism—between good and evil thoughts, words, and actions. Zoroaster's teachings are written in the holy book, the Avesta. This book consists of abstract and sacred poetry directed toward the worship of one god, the promotion of social justice, and individual choices between good and evil. A later addition to the Avesta consisted of rituals, practices of worship, and other traditions of the faith.

Zoroastrians worship through prayers and symbolic ceremonies that are conducted before a sacred fire which symbolizes their God. They dedicate their lives to a three-fold path represented by their motto: "Good thoughts, good words, good deeds." The faith does not generally accept converts but this is disputed by some members.

**Buddhism.** Buddhism developed between 560 and 490 BC out of the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama who, in 535 BC, reached "enlightenment" and assumed the title *Buddha*. He promoted "The Middle Way" as the path to enlightenment rather than the extremes of mortification of the flesh or hedonism. Long after his death, the Buddha's teachings were written down. This collection is called the Tripitaka. Buddhists also believe in reincarnation—that one must go through cycles of birth, life, and death. After many such cycles, if a person releases their attachment to desire and the self, they can attain *Nirvana* or heaven.

In general, Buddhists do not believe in any type of God, the need for a savior, prayer, or eternal life after death. However, since the time of the Buddha, Buddhism has assimilated many regional religious rituals, beliefs and customs as it has spread

throughout Asia. So, these generalizations are no longer true for all Buddhists. This has occurred with little conflict due to the philosophical nature of Buddhism.

**Shinto.** Shinto is an ancient Japanese religion that developed about 500 BC. It is closely tied to nature. It recognizes the existence of various “Kami” or nature deities. The first two deities, Izanagi and Izanami, gave birth to the Japanese islands. The children of these two deities became the deities of the various Japanese clans. One of their daughters, Amaterasu (Sun Goddess), is the ancestress of the Imperial Family and is regarded as the chief deity. All the Kami are benign and serve only to sustain and protect. They are not seen as separate from humanity because humanity is “Kami’s Child.”

Followers of Shinto desire peace and believe all human life is sacred. They revere “musuhi,” the Kami’s creative and harmonizing powers, and aspire to have “makoto,” sincerity or true heart. Morality is based upon that which is of benefit to the group. There are “Four Affirmations” in Shinto:

1. Tradition and family: the family is the main mechanism by which traditions are preserved.
2. Love of nature: nature is sacred and natural objects are to be worshipped as sacred spirits.
3. Physical cleanliness: they must take baths, wash their hands, and rinse their mouth often.
4. “Matsuri”: festival which honors the spirits.

**Confucianism.** K’ung Fu Tzu (Confucius) was born in 551 BC in the state of Lu in China. He traveled throughout China giving advice to its rulers and teaching. His teachings and writings dealt with individual morality and ethics, and the proper exercise of political power. Confucianism originated about 500 BC. Confucius stressed the following values:

- Li—ritual, propriety, etiquette, etc.
- Hsiao—love among family members
- Yi—righteousness
- Xin—honesty and trustworthiness
- Jen—benevolence towards others. This is the highest Confucian virtue.
- Chung—loyalty to the state.

Unlike most religions, Confucianism is primarily an ethical system with rituals at important times during one’s lifetime. The most important periods recognized in the Confucian tradition are birth, reaching maturity, marriage, and death.

**Jainism.** The founder of the Jain community in 420 BC was Vardhamana, the last “Jina,” or spiritual leader, in a series of twenty-four who lived in East India. He attained “enlightenment” after thirteen years of deprivation. He then committed the act of *salekhana*—fasting to death—in 420 BC. Jainism has many similarities to Hinduism and Buddhism which developed in the same part of the world. They believe in karma

and reincarnation as do Hindus, but they believe that enlightenment and liberation from this cycle can only be achieved through asceticism. Jains observe the principle of fruititarianism. This is the practice of only eating that which will not kill the plant or animal from which it is taken. They also practice *ahimsa* or non-violence because any act of violence against a living thing creates negative karma which will adversely affect one's next life.

**Taoism.** Taoism was founded by Lao-Tse, a contemporary of Confucius in China. Taoism began as a combination of psychology and philosophy which Lao-Tse hoped would help end the constant feudal warfare and other conflicts of his time. His writings, the *Tao-te-Ching*, describe the nature of life, the way to peace and how a ruler should lead his life. Taoism became a religion in 440 BC when it was adopted as a state religion.

The word *Tao*, roughly translated as "path," is a force that flows through all life and is the first cause of everything. The goal of everyone is to become one with the Tao. Tai Chi, a technique of exercise using slow deliberate movements, is used to balance the flow of energy or "chi" within the body. People should develop virtue and seek compassion, moderation, and humility. One should plan any action in advance and achieve it through minimal action. *Yin* (dark side) and *Yang* (light side) symbolize pairs of opposites which are seen through the universe, such as good and evil, light and dark, male and female. The impact of human civilization upsets the balance of Yin and Yang. Taoists believe that people are by nature, good, and that one should be kind to others simply because such treatment will probably be reciprocated.

**Islam.** Islam was founded in AD 622 by Muhammad (sometimes spelled Mohammed) who lived in Mecca (in Arabia) between AD 570 and 632. He is said to have been a direct descendant of Abraham through Abraham's son Ishmael.

The word *Islam* means submission to God's will. It is likely that Islam owed its impact on the world and its great appeal to its followers to the electrifying announcement that God had again spoken from the heavens after 600 years of silence—since the mortal ministry of Jesus Christ. The voice of a prophet was again heard in the land. As we might expect, in addition to wide acclaim, Muhammad was met with storms of derision and persecution.

Muhammad became not only a charismatic prophet to his people but the ruler of a kingdom, which, in the last two years of his life, encompassed most of the Arabic peninsula. The followers of Muhammad are Muslims (sometimes called Moslems).

The collection of the revelations of Allah (God) to Muhammad are found in the Qur'an (often transliterated as Koran). The Qur'an is revered by Muslims as Islamic scripture. It contains counsel on religious, civil, and criminal matters and is the basis of Islamic law and government.

Muslims believe that Muhammad is the last of the prophets and that there can be no prophet after him. He "closed the long line of Apostles . . . [and] there has been and

will be no prophet after Mohammed” (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur’an*, Lahore, 1938, in his commentary on Qur’an 33:40). In spite of this official doctrine, a large part of the Muslim world looks forward to the coming of other prophets, and has ever been eager to follow leaders claiming divine inspiration.

It is interesting that Muslim scholars describe Muhammad as a man plagued with doubts and misgivings about the nature of his calling and the authenticity of his visions. He did not claim to be a saint, and he deliberately denounced the doing of miracles. He was a prophet who did not prophesy, and therefore the doctrines of Islam are weak in the field of eschatology (the doctrines of the last days and the end of the earth).

Following the death of Muhammad, the principles of law and government in the Qur’an were interpreted by generations of learned theologians and legal scholars. Even though the Qur’an claims to be the complete and final word of God, when facing new legal and political questions not explicitly answered in the Qur’an, judges and rulers would try to formulate scholarly consensus on how to answer a question based on logical extrapolation and analogy. The result was the development of a complex Islamic law code. These later interpretations imposed upon the more “primitive” teachings of the Qur’an render every point of doctrine in Islam a disputed one.

There were enough fundamental differences between differing models of interpretation that eventually five major different legal systems developed in the Islamic world, which agree in fundamentals but often differ on many particulars. For over a thousand years, countries with Muslim majorities, including most of the Middle East, were governed by one of these five schools of Islamic law.

The duties of all Muslims are known as the Five Pillars of Islam and are:

1. Recite the shahadah at least once.
2. Perform the salat (prayer) five times daily while facing Mecca. Muslims are required to declare their faith publicly. They pray, “I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is his messenger.”

The five daily obligatory prayers are: early morning (after dawn and before sunrise); noon (after the sun begins to decline from its zenith until it is about midway on its course to set); mid-afternoon (after the expiration of the noon prayer time until sunset); sunset (immediately after sunset until the red glow in the western horizon disappears); and evening (after the expiration of the sunset prayer until dawn). Other obligatory prayers include the Friday noon congregation prayer and the funeral prayer. Delayed obligatory prayers must be made up if missed.

Prayer is encouraged at other times, though these are optional. This includes at times of childbirth, marriage, going to or rising from bed, leaving and returning home, starting a journey or entering a city, riding or driving, before or after eating or drinking, harvesting, visiting graveyards, and at times of distress and sickness.

3. Obligatory monetary offerings (zakah). Zakah (sometimes spelled zakaat) is referred to as “alms due” or “poor due” and is paid on the net balance after paying

personal expenses, family expenses, bills, taxes, etc. Every Muslim male or female who at the end of the year is in possession of the equivalent of 85 grams of gold (approximately \$1400 in 1990) or more in cash or articles of trade must give zakah at the minimum rate of 2.5% of that excess.

4. Obligatory fasting. Fasting is abstaining completely from eating, drinking, intimate sexual contacts, and smoking from the break of dawn till sunset. Obligatory fasting is done once a year for the period of the month of Ramadan (the month that Muhammad received the Qur'an from Allah), the ninth month of the Islamic year. By the western calendar, Ramadan occurs approximately eleven days earlier than the previous year. Other recommended fastings include Monday and Thursday of every week, three days in the middle of each Islamic month, six days after Ramadan following the Feast Day, and a few days of the two months before Ramadan.

5. The pilgrimage (Hajj). A pilgrimage to Mecca is an obligation of every Muslim male and female at least once in a lifetime if it is economically and physically feasible. It is the largest annual convention of faith on earth (in 1989: 2.5 million). Peace is the dominant theme—peace with Allah, with one's soul, with one another, and with all living creatures. It is also to remember the great assembly of the day of judgment when people will stand equal before Allah.

A visit to the tomb of the prophet Muhammad at Medina is highly recommended but not essential in making the Hajj valid and complete.

Additional Muslim beliefs and practices:

1. Muslims believe that there is one God and Muhammad was his prophet. The oneness of God and the prophetic calling of Muhammad are the two most fundamental articles of their faith. Essential to joining the fold of Islam is believing in and professing faith in these two principles.

Regarding the nature of God, Muslims hold that there is one supreme Lord of the universe—that he is omnipotent, omnipresent, and the sustainer of the world and of mankind. They recite: "There is no God but Allah; Muhammad is his prophet." According to Muslims, God is incomprehensible, absolutely unique, unapproachable, indescribable, and totally unlike any other thing. It is wicked to think of man as having anything whatever in common with God. Still, man is supposed to love him, yearn to be with him, seek the reward of gazing upon his face, and in the end become completely identified with him. It is an outrageous blasphemy to think of a Son (Jesus) as participating in his glory and power. The idea that God might have children is utterly abhorrent to the Muslims. We are not his children but rather only things he has created out of nothing. And he has created us with tragic weaknesses in our nature.

A Muslim believes in *Qadaa* and *Qadar* which relate to the ultimate power of Allah. These words refer to the timeless knowledge of Allah and his power to plan and execute his plans.

2. Islam recognizes all the biblical prophets including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Moses, and Jesus. At one point Muhammad had a famous dream of journeying to heaven from the temple at Jerusalem and there meeting Moses, Christ, Abraham, John the Baptist, Enoch, and Aaron, and seeing Adam presiding as judge over the great assembly.

The Qur'an hails Jesus as a true prophet and a great one, yet Muslim theology rejects all his teachings about his being the Son of God as false. It teaches that Mary was "the woman of truth" who conceived Jesus by the Holy Ghost and bore him when she was still a virgin, yet it deplors the idea that God should have a Son.

3. The Qur'an is regarded by most Muslims to be the very word of God. It has replaced the Bible in the lives of Muslims. The Qur'an is thought to have been sent down to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. It was revealed to Muhammad over a period of twenty-three years in the Arabic language. It contains 114 Surahs (chapters) and over 6000 verses. Today, the Qur'an is regarded as the only authentic and complete book of Allah. And Allah is protecting it from being lost, corrupted, or concealed.

4. A well-known teaching in Islam is that "we come out from God and to him we shall return." This has led to much controversy among Muslim theologians. How can we go from and return to him if he is everywhere? In nothing is a dual tradition of Islam more apparent than in the division of its great teachers into two main schools of thought. One insists on a completely formless and incomprehensible God while the other teaches of a God who has a body just like a man's. The former school of thought reasons: "Can God have any attributes whatever without completely destroying belief in his invisible, omnipresent and unchanging oneness?" Yet a well known teacher in the other school, Abu Amir "would slap on his own thigh and say, 'God has a real thigh, just like this one here!'" (Goldziher, *Vorlesungen uber den Islam*, Heidelberg, 1910, 103, 106).

Actually the ability to live with basic doctrinal contradictions would seem to be a highly developed trait among the Muslims. To an outside observer, it would seem that Islamic doctrine contains several ambiguities and contradictions. The Qur'an can define God in terms of the two schools and then go right on talking about him as a real person. It can tell us that men are lost or saved by his good pleasure alone, and through no act of theirs, and then insist that all men are individually responsible in all things. Muslims swear oaths by the Bible, which it never reads. The Muslims insist that nothing whatever can be known about God and then fill libraries with treatises on his true nature. It is outrageous presumption for anything to exist beside him, they say—yet here we are. He created absolutely everything that is out of his own perfect nature, and yet the world is full of evil. The Muslim sees what he wants to, or as he wants it to be.

5. Muslims claim: "Allah created man and appointed for each human being a fixed period of life that he is to spend upon the earth." They hold to the concept of agency of man: "Allah has prescribed a certain code of life as the correct one for

mankind, but has, at the same time, conferred upon man the freedom of choice as to whether or not he adopts this code as the actual basis of his life.” One who chooses to follow the code revealed by God becomes a Muslim (believer) and one who refuses to follow it becomes a kafir (disbeliever).

6. Muslims believe in the unity of mankind. In Islam, all men are equal, regardless of color, language, race, or nationality. It banishes all “false barriers” of race, status, and wealth. Islam removes all of these impediments to human relationships and proclaims the ideal of the whole of humanity being one family of God.

7. They believe in a life after death. The world, according to Islam, is a place of trial, and man is being judged in the world. One day, he will have to give an account of all that he did during his lifetime. After his death, he will be resurrected in a new world, and it is here that he will be rewarded or punished for his deeds and misdeeds. Those who live a life of obedience to Allah will enjoy eternal bliss in paradise or heaven, and those who disobey his commands will have to face the bitter fruits of their disobedience in hell. The real nature of paradise and hell are known to Allah only.

8. They believe in moderation in eating and drinking. The Qur’an says, “Eat and drink, but do not be extravagant” (7:31). While they acknowledge the “evils of alcohol,” a strict abstinence from alcohol does not appear to be a widespread practice.

9. There has been a limited application and practice of polygamy.

10. Both men and women are obliged to practice high moral standards and modesty of dress and behavior. To the man, the Qur’an commands: “that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that will make for greater purity for them; and Allah is well acquainted with all that they do.” And to the woman: “O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters and the believing women to draw their outer garments around them (when they go out or are among men). That is better in order that they may be known (to be Muslims) and not be annoyed” (Qur’an 33:59). “And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; and that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands” (Qur’an 24:30-31).

There seems to be nothing in Islam to support subordination and oppression of women. The Qur’an declares that men and women are equal, and the rights of women are therein protected. However, some Muslim societies have been found guilty of the oppression of women. There seems to be no doctrinal basis for this.

11. Islam does not believe in asceticism or self denial. It does not ask man to avoid material fulfillment of life. It holds that spiritual elevation is to be achieved by living piously in the rough and tumble of life, not by renouncing the world. The Qur’an states: “Our Lord! Give us something fine in this world as well as something fine in the hereafter” (2:201).

12. Islam does not separate the earthly from the spiritual—the things of God from those of Caesar. It seeks to establish an equilibrium between the material and the spiritual. Islam provides guidance for all aspects of life—individual and personal, social, material, moral, economic, political, legal, and cultural.

13. Muslims believe that angels are purely spiritual entities created by Allah. They require no food or drink or sleep. They have no physical desires or material needs. They spend their time in the service of Allah. Each is charged with a certain duty. Angels cannot be seen by the naked eye.

In the nineteenth century, European imperialists managed either to conquer nearly all Middle Eastern countries or render them tributary (obliged to pay tribute). In the process, the imperial powers brought European ideas about government and law to the region. These ideas contained the concepts of constitutionalism, parliamentary government, equality, and democracy. In reality, however, for over a century Muslims were generally treated by European powers as second-class citizens in their own lands. The usual Muslim experience was, therefore, that the European system of government was a cynical farce, intended only as a means to subdue conquered peoples.

When European colonial domination of the Middle East collapsed following World War II, newly independent Muslim states faced the enormous problems of creating new governments and legal systems from scratch. For practical purposes, most states retained the legal systems of their European colonizers, which had been in force in much of the area for over half a century. Many states retained monarchies—constitutional or otherwise. Other states attempted to formulate some type of democracy. Some flirted with Marxism or socialism. Tragically, most ultimately devolved into military dictatorships.

Today in the Middle East, the “Islamist” movement wants to change this situation, seeking to restore what they feel is the authentic Muslim political and legal system that had been in force before the coming of the Europeans. At the most basic level, Islamists believe that their societies should be based upon, organized, and run according to Islamic law as it is found in the Qur’an and its schools of orthodox interpretations. Another general Islamist goal is the elimination of the moral decadence of the West—immodesty, sexual promiscuity, drinking, drug use, greed, secularism, vulgarity—through strict moral and legal codes.

Whereas all Islamists agree that majority of Muslim countries should reestablish Islamic law as their foundational legal and political system, they often differ as to the best means to attain this goal. The vast majority of Islamists opt for moderate and peaceful means of renovation, via religious revival, education, and legal transformation through legitimate political and legal channels. Thus, many Muslim countries have Islamist political parties advocating peaceful change.

Unfortunately, some governments in the Near East—like Iran under the former shahs—were oppressive and tyrannical military dictatorships that tolerated no

opposition. Some of these tyrannical leaders had the support of powerful western countries (the former Shah of Iran was supported by western powers, including the United States). In this situation, peaceful change is often impossible, leading to radicalization of Islamist groups, who come to see violent revolution as the only means of obtaining their legitimate political aspirations, precisely as happened in the Islamic revolution in Iran. The Hamas movement in Palestine is another example—an Islamist group which, after fifty years of failed negotiations, sees violent revolution as the only means to obtain independence for Arab Palestine.

Today, a large minority of Muslims throughout the Near East are Islamists. While the vast majority of these advocate peaceful and moderate means to obtain their goals, a small but growing minority are increasingly turning to violence and terrorism. For these, *Jihad*, or holy war, has been made obligatory, which means that the individual should, when the occasion arises, be willing to offer his life for the defense and protection of Islam and the Islamic state.

**Sikhism.** The Sikh faith was founded in AD 1500 by Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji in the Punjab area—now Pakistan. He began preaching the way to enlightenment and God after receiving a vision. After his death a series of nine Gurus (regarded as reincarnations of Guru Nanak) led the movement until 1708. At this time these functions passed to the holy text. This text, the *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, was compiled by the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh. It consists of hymns and writings of the first ten Gurus, along with texts from different Muslim and Hindu saints. The holy text is considered the eleventh and final Guru.

Sikhs believe in a single formless God with many names, who can be known through meditation. Sikhs pray many times each day and are prohibited from worshipping idols or icons. They believe in samsara (reincarnation cycles) and karma, as Hindus do but reject the cast system. They believe that everyone has equal status in the eyes of God. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there were a number of attempts to prepare an accurate portrayal of Sikh customs. Sikh scholars and theologians started in 1931 to prepare the *Reht Maryada*—the Sikh code of conduct and conventions. This has successfully achieved a high level of uniformity in the religious and social practices of Sikhism throughout the world. It contains 27 articles. Article 1 defines who is a Sikh: Any human being who faithful believes in:

- One immortal Being.
- Ten Gurus, from Guru Nanak Dev to Guru Gobind Singh.
- The Shri Guru Granth Sahib (their scripture).
- The utterances and teachings of the ten Gurus.
- The baptism bequeathed by the tenth Guru, and who does not owe allegiance to any other religion, is a Sikh.

**Baha'i.** The Baha'i Faith arose from Islam in the 1800s based on the teachings of Baha'u'llah. It was formally founded in AD 1863. It is now a distinct worldwide faith.

The faith's followers believe that God has sent nine great prophets to mankind through whom the Holy Spirit has revealed the "Word of God." The revelations of these prophets have given rise to the major world religions. Although these religions arose from the teachings of the prophets of one God, the separate major churches are quite different. The Baha'is feel these differences are due to the needs of the individual societies the Lord was blessing through his individual prophets.

Baha'i's beliefs promote gender and race equality, freedom of expression and assembly, world peace, and world government. They believe that a single world government led by Baha'is will be established at some point in the future. They believe that every person has an immortal soul which cannot die but is freed to travel through the spirit world after death.

It is important that each of us, as we consider churches other than our own, maintains the capacity for "divine envy." This is the ability to appreciate, admire, and even seek after especially strong characteristics of other churches. For example, we might admire the emphasis given to worldly thought control by the Buddhists, the rigorous study of the scripture by the Jews, or the disciplined daily prayer customs of the Muslims.

## Joseph Smith's Polygamy

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### Present-day Concern over Polygamy

The practice of plural marriage in the Church between 1852 and 1904 is mostly comfortably acknowledged and accepted by the majority of informed and committed members of the Church today. Much has been written about this period—mostly by participants. We know that many were happy and fulfilled living in polygamous relationships, and a few were most unhappy. Many of our contemporaries today are the products of polygamous families. We all readily acknowledge that they are just as normal and productive as those of us who cannot identify any polygamists among our ancestors. We accept the fact that the Lord commanded, and the Church responded for all of those fifty or so years. Finally, and thankfully—in the opinion of many of us today—the Lord rescinded the practice through the prophets Wilford Woodruff (1890) and Joseph F. Smith (1904).

One aspect of the early polygamy practices in the Church, however, continues to engender some apprehension, misgiving, and tension among those who allow themselves to become informed. It is the role of the prophet Joseph himself and his personal, and mostly secretive, practicing of polygamy during the nine or so years prior to his martyrdom. Residual uneasiness of some within the Church centers on the details of Joseph's intentions, motivations, and actions as he introduced the principle and practice of plural marriage. In the view of all of us committed to the Church today, Joseph was and is the prophet of the restoration! We simply must not learn anything about him that is ignoble or reprehensible! Our very spiritual lives depend on his being all he claimed to be!

Several notable controversies and questions arose prior to Joseph's death and in the years that followed. And some of these continue even today. For example:

1. What was Joseph's general reputation during the 1830s and even before? Did it or did it not include licentiousness?

2. What of Joseph Smith's relationship with Fanny Alger in the mid-1830s? Did it constitute his first plural marriage, or was it merely an adulterous union?

3. We know that the Prophet was "sealed" to several plural wives prior to his death. Exactly how many plural wives did Joseph have, and what was the nature of those sealings? Were they all for "time and eternity," that is, for this life and the next, or were some of them for "eternity only," meaning only after death?

4. What does the evidence indicate concerning Joseph's conjugal relations with his plural wives? Was he sexually involved with any, with most, or with all of the women sealed to him?

5. What about Joseph's being sealed to women who were legally married to other men at the time they were sealed to Joseph? Did Joseph Smith have sexual relations with them? Wouldn't that constitute the sin of adultery?

6. What of John C. Bennett, the mayor of Nauvoo in 1841 who claimed to be a polygamy insider and blamed Joseph's plural marriage policies for his own gross infidelities?

7. What of the two fourteen-year-olds to whom Joseph was sealed? What was the nature of his relationship with them? Did he have sexual relations with them?

8. What of the more than two dozen allegations that Joseph Smith was sexually involved with non-wives—women to whom he was not married? Did Joseph ever have sexual relations with a woman to whom he was not married?

9. We all have been taught and most of us fully hold to the notion that the Lord virtually forced a reluctant Joseph to become personally involved in polygamy. It wasn't his idea. It was the Lord's will. Is this formulation really true?

Most of these questions remain on the agenda of some anti-Mormons even today. Their opinions always run counter to Joseph's and to the Church's interests. While their views are usually quickly rejected by loyal Latter-day Saints, it is apparent that some of these same saints live with a subtle disquiet in their hearts over these issues.

It would seem that the most common strategy for dealing with these questions found among devoted members of the Church today is to not bother to become fully informed and to sweep what little they do know under the figurative rug. Some members are not completely certain they *want* to know more. They maintain a subtle fear they will be uncomfortable with what they may learn. Some members also despair over ever being able to learn the complete and unbiased truth about this period. They feel they are at the mercy of anti-Mormons whom they don't trust. It is these "anti's" that seem to have written what is most often quoted about the period.

In this chapter, I will first present a relatively brief summary of the practice of polygamy in the Church. I will then address the issues of that problematic early period between 1835 and 1844 when Joseph secretly instituted the practice. My goal is to provide each student of the gospel the opportunity to understand and feel comfortable with all that happened during those years. I gratefully acknowledge the meticulous and exhaustive research of the physician and church history scholar, Brian C. Hales. I have made abundant use of his website (<http://www.josephsmithpolygamy.com>). This same material will soon be published by Dr. Hales as *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History and Theology* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books). The book's publication is anticipated in 2012. My intent here is to summarize much of his material in abbreviated, and hopefully palatable, form. I have cited many of his references. The serious student of polygamy is strongly recommended to obtain and study his book when it becomes available.

I acknowledge right up front my firmly held biases in approaching this subject. I am immovably committed to the divine calling and complete integrity of the prophet Joseph Smith. This chapter will be written in an apologetic spirit. Nevertheless, I will sincerely attempt to provide an objective look at the role, objectives, intentions, and motivations of the Prophet during these problematic years.

### **Definition of Terms**

“Polygamy” means a man or woman having more than one spouse. Two forms exist. “Polygyny” is defined as one man with more than one wife. In common usage today, we mostly refer to polygyny as “polygamy.” “Polyandry” is one woman having more than one husband. Polyandry is pertinent in our consideration of Joseph Smith’s practices of polygamy. Of the thirty-four plural wives of Joseph, thirteen were allegedly already civilly married to other men, and eight of these other men were active members of the Church. This, of course, resulted in each of these women’s having two husbands—a state of “polyandry.”

Theoretically, there are two types of polyandry:

1. Pseudo or “ceremonial” polyandry. This means having the marriage ritual performed, but never consummating the marriage sexually.
2. “True” or sexual polyandry. This means the woman maintains sexual relationships with more than one man.

We will learn and discuss the fact that Joseph Smith taught that true (sexual) polygyny, when authorized by God, is divinely accepted. In contrast, he declared that “true” or sexual polyandry constituted the sin of adultery (D&C 132:63).

### **Justifications for the Practice of Polygamy**

It was the Lord who initiated the revelation of the principle of plural marriage. We must keep in mind that he is not obliged to provide us with an explanation for his actions. He does not owe us any explanation as to just why he wanted the Church to practice polygamy. We, in mortality, are beholden to adjust our lives to any principle he deems appropriate. However, he has mercifully revealed to us some of his objectives in providing us this principle. Joseph Smith identified three reasons why the Lord revealed the concept of plural marriage to the Church:

**1. The restoration of Old Testament polygamy.** Through his writings and discourses, Orson Pratt produced more teachings concerning plural marriage than any other priesthood authority in the nineteenth century. In 1874 he explained that the restoration of plural marriage was part of the “restitution of all things” prophesied in Acts 3:20-21. He wrote: “Inasmuch then as the Lord has promised to restore all things spoken of by the mouth of all the holy Prophets since the world began, supposing that he should begin this great work of restoration in our day, how are we going to help ourselves? I can’t help it. Brigham Young, our President, can’t help it; Joseph Smith

could not help it. If God sees proper to accomplish this great work of restoration—the restitution of all things, it will include . . . a plurality of wives” (October 7, 1874, *JD*, 17:221).

Joseph Smith taught: “God purposed in himself that there should not be an eternal fulness until every dispensation should be fulfilled and gathered together in one and that all things whatsoever that should be gathered together in one in those dispensations . . . all things had under the authority of the priesthood at any former period shall be had again—bringing to pass the restoration spoken of by the mouth of all the holy prophets” (Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds. *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980, 39, 42).

This view continues to be promoted by Utah church leaders today. While serving as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Gordon B. Hinckley explained: “Mormonism claims to be a restoration of God’s work in all previous dispensations. The Old Testament teaches that the patriarchs—those men favored of God in ancient times—had more than one wife under divine sanction. In the course of the development of the Church in the nineteenth century, it was revealed to the leader of the Church that such a practice of marriage again should be entered into” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997, 457).

Most Bible believers today express discomfiture over observations that Old Testament patriarchs and others practiced plural marriage. Despite their distaste, it is clear the Bible itself does not condemn the practice. The *New Bible Dictionary* concedes: “Polygamy . . . is not forbidden in scripture . . . It is difficult to know how far polygamy was practiced, but on economic grounds it is probable that it was found more among the well-to-do than among the ordinary people.”

Throughout the Old Testament, polygamy is treated with the same level of respect as monogamy. The two options appear to be subject to the individual choices of the men and women involved. These choices carry no inherent level of increased righteousness or wickedness. Men are instructed: “If he take him another wife; her [the first wife’s] food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish” (Exodus 21:10; see also Malachi 2:11-15). At times plural marriages were clearly authorized by God: “And Nathan said to David . . . Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And I gave thee thy master’s house, and thy master’s wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah (2 Samuel 12:7-8; see also Deuteronomy 21:15-16).

Some have pointed to a biblical passage that seems to condemn the practice of polygamy. The Lord Jehovah instructed the Israelites regarding the king who would rule over them in the land of Canaan: “When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set

him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold” (Deuteronomy 17:14-17). When carefully viewed in context, these verses seem to constitute a warning against the potential king’s esteeming things, including plural wives, above the Lord.

Apparently the Lord’s guidelines governing polygamy under the law of Moses were more strict than those governing the early patriarchs. The Israelites were commanded to not marry sisters or a “woman and her daughter” (Leviticus 18:17-18). In contrast, Jacob married sisters, Rachel and Leah.

In one situation under the Law of Moses, polygamy was actually commanded. “If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband’s brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband’s brother unto her” (Deuteronomy 25:5). If the deceased husband’s brother was already married, then marrying his brother’s widow would create a polygamous union. This commandment is called the “levirate” law. The *New Bible Dictionary* states: “The first instance of this custom occurs in the patriarchal period, when Onan is called upon to marry his brother Er’s widow (Genesis 38:8).” The name of this law is derived from the Latin *levir* meaning “husband’s brother. When a married man died without a child his brother was expected to take his wife. Children of the marriage counted as children of the first husband. Apparently the brother could refuse (Deuteronomy 25:6-10) and later directives have been interpreted as contradictory by some interpreters (see Leviticus 18:16; 20:21). However, the levirate law was apparently still valid in Jesus Christ’s day. The Sadducees referred to it as they posed a question to the Savior regarding the resurrection (see Matthew 22:23).

A variety of references to the Old Testament were recruited by Latter-day Saints authors to defend the practice of plural marriage including the observation that within the Savior’s genealogical lines were polygamists. The best known are Abraham, Jacob, and David.

Defending the practice of polygamy in the Bible, Orson Pratt taught:

If plurality is offensive in the sight of God, why was Abraham, who practiced it, called the friend of God, and the father of the faithful? Why did the Lord promise that in him, as well as in his seed, all the families of the earth should be blessed? Why require all the families of the earth, under the Christian dispensation, to be adopted into the family of a polygamist in order to be saved? Why choose a polygamist to be the

father of all saved families? Why require all Christian families in order to be saved, to walk in the steps and do the works of Abraham? Why did God proclaim himself to be "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," and say that this shall be "my name and my memorial to all generations?" (see Exodus 3:15). If polygamy is not to be sanctioned among the generations of Christendom, why did he represent himself to be the God of polygamists, and say that all generations should adopt that memorial of him? Why choose these polygamists to be examples for Christians, and say, that many should come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down with them in the kingdom of God? Will Abraham's wives and concubines, and Jacob's four wives be in the kingdom of God with their husbands? . . .

Did not the Lord greatly bless and prosper Jacob both before and after he became a polygamist? Did he not continue to give him many revelations and visions, and send hosts of angels to converse with him? If polygamy were a crime, would not God have informed him of the fact? If it were sinful, would he have saved him in his kingdom without repentance? As Jacob did not repent, but continued a polygamist until his death, and as he was saved, he must have been saved in his sins; for God does not forgive sins without repentance; or, otherwise, polygamy is not sin . . .

Where was there ever a more holy man than Moses with whom God spake face to face? . . . Did not God himself give laws through Moses to regulate the descent of property in the families of polygamists? Was not Moses, though a polygamist, saved in the kingdom of God? Did not Moses and Elias appear in glory to Peter, James, and John in the holy mount at the time of Christ's transfiguration? . . .

If polygamy was sinful and criminal, why did God command the living brother to marry all the widows of his deceased brothers who died without children? Would God command his people under a heavy penalty to commit sin and then punish them for doing it? It must have been a hard case, if the children of Israel were to be cursed if they did not keep the law, and then again to be cursed if they did keep it! Yet this must have been the case, if they were to be cursed for being polygamists when the law of God compelled them in certain cases to be such. . . .

If polygamy is not a divine institution why did God command the prophet Hosea to marry two wives? . . .

Did our Savior or any of his apostles ever forbid polygamy or condemn it as sinful? If not, why should Christendom now condemn it? Do they think to be more righteous in this respect, than Jesus Christ the great Author of Christianity? (*The Seer*, December 1853, 12:187-91).

**2. To raise up a righteous seed.** Perhaps the second most common explanation advanced by polygamy apologists is based upon the doctrine of the premortal existence—a doctrine unique to the LDS Church. Plural marriage allows faithful men to sire a greater number of children, thus providing more physical bodies for premortal spirits to inhabit on earth where they can be raised under the influence of believing fathers and mothers. It appears that Joseph Smith personally discussed this as a benefit of earthly polygamy. He wrote: “. . . for they [plural wives] are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth . . . for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men” (D&C 132:63).

Nauvooan Charles Lambert recalled: “The Prophet used to hold meetings in a log house of his sometimes. . . . At one of these he said he wished he had a people that he could reveal to them what the Lord had shown to him. But one thing I will say, there are thousands of spirits that have been waiting to come forth in this day and generation. Their proper channel is through the priesthood” (“Autobiography,” Church History Library; quoted in Daniel W. Bachman, “The Authorship of the Manuscript of Doctrine and Covenants Section 132” in *Sidney B. Sperry Symposium: A Sesquicentennial Look at Church History*, January 26, 1980, Provo Utah: Religious Instruction, BYU, 1980, 43-44).

Helen Mar Kimball, a plural wife of Joseph’s, wrote: “It was revealed to the Prophet that there were thousands of spirits, yet unborn, who were anxiously waiting for the privilege of coming down to take tabernacles of flesh, that their glory might be compete” (*Why We Practice Plural Marriage*, Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884, 7).

Brigham Young explained: “This revelation [authorizing plural marriage] which God gave to Joseph, was for the express purpose of providing a channel for the organization of tabernacles, for those spirits to occupy who have been reserved to come forth in the kingdom of God, and that they might not be obliged to take tabernacles out[side] of the kingdom of God” (*JD*, 3:265). Brigham also wrote: “I have told you many times that there are multitudes of pure and holy spirits waiting to take tabernacles, now what is our duty?—to prepare tabernacles for them; to take a course that will not tend to drive those spirits into the families of the wicked, where they will be trained in wickedness, debauchery, and every species of crime. It is the duty of every righteous man and woman to prepare tabernacles for all the spirits they can; hence if my women leave, I will go and search up others who will abide the celestial law . . . This is the reason why the doctrine of plurality of wives was revealed, that the noble spirits which are waiting for tabernacles might be brought forth” (*JD*, 4:56).

Years later Brigham counseled: “If we could make every man upon the earth get him a wife, live righteously and serve God, we would not be under the necessity, perhaps, of taking more than one wife. But they will not do this; the people of God, therefore, have been commanded to take more wives” (*JD*, 16:166).

Orson Pratt taught in 1852 that before mortality, there were spirits in the premortal world who “were called the great and mighty ones, reserved until the dispensation of the fulness of times, to come forth upon the face of the earth, through a noble parentage that shall train their young and tender minds in the truths of eternity, that they may grow up in the Lord, and be strong in the power of His might, be clothed upon with His glory, be filled with exceeding great faith; that the visions of eternity may be opened to their minds; that they may be Prophets, Priests, and Kings to the Most High God” (*JD*, 1:62). Polygamy would increase the possibility that these noble spirits might be born into mortality unto “noble parentage.”

Despite these obvious advantages, it might be observed that the more wives and children in a patriarch’s family, the less personal time he has to spend with each one. Accordingly, his direct influence is paradoxically diluted. However, his beliefs might remain strong as his wives reflect his convictions in their interactions with their own children and his literal fatherhood provides an expanded lineage of the House of Israel through which spirits could be born.

**3. A lesser degree of salvation for all who are not eternally married.** Joseph Smith taught that exaltation into the highest third of the celestial kingdom does not occur to single individuals. No man or woman receives a fulness of the celestial glory alone. Accordingly, all men and women need the ordinance of eternal marriage in order to be exalted in the highest degree of the celestial heaven. “In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]; And if he does not, he cannot obtain it. He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase” (D&C 131:1-4).

Joseph taught that those who are not sealed in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage at the time of the final judgment are not exalted: “Those who keep no eternal law in this life or make no eternal contract are single & alone in the eternal world” (Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds. *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980, 357).

Those who remain unmarried during mortal life will have the opportunity in the spirit world to marry (with proxy ordinances performed on earth). Individuals who are personally righteous, but legally married to disobedient spouses, will have an opportunity for an eternal sealing to a worthy eternal husband or eternal wife. In other words, the only single individuals in the celestial resurrection are those who elect to remain single on earth, in the world of spirits, and for all eternity. Joseph declared such unsealed persons “remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity” (see D&C 132:15-17, 25).

George A. Smith explained: “Without the law of sealing, no man could be exalted to a throne in the celestial kingdom, that is, without he had [sic] a woman by his side;

and that no woman could be exalted in the celestial world, without she was [sic] exalted with a man at her head; that the man is not without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord” (*JD*, 2:216).

Inherent in the doctrine of eternal marriage is the unavoidable inclusion of plural marriage. Why? Because at the end of the world, after all men and women have been judged, the number of worthy men and women will not be exactly equal. If monogamy were the only acceptable form of eternal marriage, at the final judgment, unsealed and unmarried individuals who were worthy would “remain separately and singly, without exaltation” (D&C 132:17) through no fault of their own. The question arises, will there be an excess of worthy men or worthy women? Brigham Young wrote: “The fact is, let the pure principles of the kingdom of God be taught to men and women, and far more of the latter than the former will receive and obey them” (*JD*, 18:249). Brigham also made the obvious observation: “It [plural marriage] would save a good many more women than men” (Scott G. Kenny, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833-1898*, 9 volumes, Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983-85, 6:171-72).

Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton wrote that one of the reasons plural marriage was practiced “might well have been the practical difficulty of providing for all the unmarried females who were attracted to the new religion (*The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*. New York: Vintage Books, 1980, 195).

Despite these observations and assertions, a close review of the number of women and men in Nauvoo and later in Utah shows that it was never a primary driving force in the practice. Historian Donna Hill wrote: “The claim of surplus women is not valid, since the United States census from 1850 to 1940 and all available records of the Utah Church show that men outnumbered women in the Church and in Utah (*Joseph Smith, the First Mormon*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977, 360). John A. Widtsoe observed: “The most common of these conjectures [explaining why polygamy was practiced in the 1800s] is that the Church, through plural marriage, sought to provide husbands for its large surplus of female members. The implied assumption in this theory, that there have been more female than male members in the Church, is not supported by existing evidence. On the contrary, there seem always to have been more males than females in the Church. Families—father, mother, and children—have most commonly joined the Church. Of course, many single women have become converts, but also many single men” (*Evidences and Reconciliations: Aids to Faith in a Modern Day*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1943-51, 390).

Over the decades since Joseph Smith’s death, a few other explanations for the practice of plural marriage have been promoted by church apologists. It is unknown whether the Prophet actually promoted any of these explanations, and these certainly might have arisen as ex post facto justifications. I will number these separately, as they did not originate with Joseph Smith:

**1. Women outnumber men in the world.** Throughout the world's history, the number of living adult women has usually exceeded that of men. Contributing factors creating this disparity include an increase in male deaths as a consequence of war, physical exposure, riskier lifestyles, shorter natural life expectancy, etc.

Some, both in and out of the Church, have assumed that plural marriage was instigated to allow this apparent "surplus" of women to marry. This idea was also discussed by Orson Pratt in "Celestial Marriage," *The Seer*, volume 1, number 2, 28-29. See also Charles W. Penrose in 1867, "Why We Practice Plural Marriage," *The Millennial Star*, (September 14, 1867) 37:577. In a monogamous society, these disparate numbers would relegate some women to earthly spinsterhood. Add to the unfavorable numbers the fact that there is no legal compulsion for every man to marry, and polygamy was considered by some to be a "common sense" approach.

This explanation appears to have been more of an afterthought—a logical but specious justification for the practice of polygamy.

**2. To bring needed trials and challenges to the Church.** Some apologists have advanced the theory that the Lord intended for polygamy to bring to the Church added adversities that would provide opportunities for more spiritual growth. Joseph taught the value of tribulations: "Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation. For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand" (D&C 58:3-4).

Brigham Young wrote: "I foresaw, when Joseph first made known this doctrine, that it would be a trial and a source of great care and anxiety to the brethren, and what of that? We are to gird up our loins and fulfill this, just as we would any other duty" (*JD*, 3:265).

Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, a plural wife of the prophet Joseph, explained: "I did not try to conceal the fact of its having been a trial, but confessed that it had been one of the severest of my life; but that it had also proven one of the greatest of blessings. I could truly say it had done the most towards making me a saint and a free woman, in every sense of the word; and I knew many others who could say the same, and to whom it had proven one of the greatest boons—a 'blessing in disguise'" (*Why We Practice Plural Marriage*, Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884, 8, 23-24). Another of Joseph's plural wives, Lucy Walker, concurred (see statement of Lucy Walker quoted by Lyman Omer Littlefield in *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints: Giving an Account of Much Individual Suffering Endured for Religious Conscience*, Logan, Utah: Utah Journal Co., 1888, 50-51).

Plural wife Martha Cragun Cox (1852-1932) wrote: "I knew the principle of plural marriage to be correct—to be the highest, holiest order of marriage. I knew too, that I might fail to live the holy life required and lose the blessings offered. If I had not learned

before to go to the Lord with my burden, I surely learned to go to him now. . . I found relief only in prayer when the Holy Spirit gave me inspiration” (Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr. *Women’s Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1982, 278).

Harold Bloom observed: “I can accept the notion that the prophet Joseph sought to follow the Jewish pattern, in which a religion becomes a people. Marked by the glory and stigma of plural marriage, the Mormons of 1850 through 1890 indeed became a peculiar people, a nation apart” (*The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992, 278). Non-LDS historian Jan Shipps wrote: “What plural marriage did was make people commit to the church. It drew them in and made them commit. It had a purpose of creating a movement, of creating a tradition. . . Religious traditions come into existence through pain and exhilaration at the same time” (quoted in Heidi S. Swinton, *American Prophet: The Story of Joseph Smith*, Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, 1999, 140).

In spite of the compelling nature of this argument, it does not appear that Joseph Smith ever declared an association between the practice of plural marriage and the beneficial trials it would generate. Whether he would have listed it as a reason for restoring plural marriage is unknown.

**3. Publicity value.** An interesting view was offered by B. H. Roberts, one of the Seven Presidents of the Seventy in the Utah Church in 1930:

A possible reason mentioned as justifying the introduction of plural marriage into the New Dispensation is the publicity value of it. Of course, it would be insufferable to mention such a thing if the principle itself were not true and pure and good and necessary to be established for completeness to the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. But plural marriage being all that is here said of it, I see nothing amiss in referring to it as possessed of a certain publicity value to the whole work of God. And I know of no single thing in the New Dispensation that has done so much to keep that dispensation and its major message before the world as this same principle of plural marriage and the practice of it by the Church. It has kept the message well-nigh constantly before men; through the press, daily, weekly, and monthly. It has been the incentive to the multiplication of books on “Mormonism” ad libitum. It has kept the New Dispensation before state legislatures and congress—house and senate; before successive United States presidents and their cabinets. Before state and territorial courts; and time and again before the Supreme Court of the United States, and through that court has attracted the attention of leaders of thought in all the world (*A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 volumes. Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1930, 6:227-28).

Elder Roberts suggests that negative publicity is better than no publicity. Whether or not this publicity has benefited or injured the missionary work of the Church is unclear.

**4. To solve the world's moral problems.** One reason suggested for the establishment of polygamy was to rid the world of the social ills of prostitution and licentiousness. Orson Pratt asserted that by adopting plural marriage, “whoredom, adultery, and fornication” would “be entirely done away” (*JD*, 1:61-62; see also Belinda Marden Pratt, “Defense of Polygamy by a Lady in Utah In a Letter to Her Sister in New Hampshire,” *Millennial Star*, July 19, 1854, 15:225-229). A writer in an 1853 article in the *Millennial Star* wrote: “I have come to the conclusion . . . that the one-wife system . . . is a lure to temptation, and has always proved a curse to a people” (Anonymous, “Nelly and Abby,” *Millennial Star*, April 9, 1853, 16:225-29).

By allowing men to have more wives than one, it was theorized that mistresses and brothels would no longer be patronized by libido-driven men. One church member wrote in 1854: “In Deseret, there are not libertines, with their paramours, no houses of prostitution, no cases of seduction, or those which disturb the peace of the families in the states under your laws. Here every woman can have what God intended she should—a husband—and every man that wants to may have a wife” (“Advantage of Having Many Wives,” *Millennial Star*, January 20, 1855, 14:213-14).

While plural marriage might have assisted moral men to control their sex drives by allowing additional wives, it is questionable whether it would have had significant influence on men possessing lesser ethical values. The ability of polygamy to stem the evils of prostitution and other sexual abuses remains unproven.

**5. Plural marriage produces healthier parents and offspring.** An almost comical aspect is readily detected in this rationale. In an article in the *Millennial Star* (June 2, 1866, 341), an anonymous author wrote: “Sexual relations during pregnancy robs the future mother of that vigor which should nourish her embryonic offspring, and giv[es] intensified sensual desires to that offspring.” Accordingly, polygamy provides other wives for sexual relations thus assisting the husband in maintaining continence with pregnant wives.

In 1870 Brigham Young argued: “Talk about polygamy! There is no true philosopher on the face of the earth but what will admit that such a system, properly carried out according to the order of heaven, is far superior to monogamy for the raising of healthy, robust children! A person possessing a moderate knowledge of physiology, or who has paid attention to his own nature and the nature of the gentler sex, can readily understand this” (*JD*, 13:317).

Heber C. Kimball suggested an even more novel justification: “I would not be afraid to promise a man who is sixty years of age, if he will take the counsel of brother Brigham and his brethren, that he will renew his age. I have noticed that a man who has but one wife, and is inclined to that doctrine, soon begins to wither and dry up, while

a man who goes into plurality looks fresh, young, and sprightly. Why is this? Because God loves that man, and because he honors His work and word. Some of you may not believe this; but I not only believe it—I also know it. For a man of God to be confined to one woman is small business; for it is as much as we can do now to keep up under the burdens we have to carry; and I do not know what we should do if we had only one wife apiece” (*JD*, 5:22).

While Brother Kimball’s explanation for added youthfulness of the participants of plural marriage relates to God’s “love” and “honor” granted to the obedient, other polygamists have asserted that having more wives made the participants young and more virile.

There is obviously no scientific validation of these suggestions. They also seem to have no relationship to Joseph Smith’s theology of polygamy.

### **Brief History of the Church’s Practice of Plural Marriage (Polygyny)**

In answer to Joseph Smith’s question as to why many of the Old Testament leaders had more than one wife, he received what is now known as Section 132. The date in the heading of section 132 is July 12, 1843, about one year prior to the prophet’s death. This is not the date when the revelation on celestial marriage was given to Joseph. Note that the heading states that the revelation was *recorded*, not received, on that particular date. Joseph learned about plural marriage by revelation probably in early 1831, or even earlier. He received this revelation in connection with his work on his inspired revision of the King James Bible. He started work on the Bible revision in June 1830 and began with the book of Genesis. When he came to the great patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Solomon—who had more than one wife, he was provoked to ask of the Lord, “Why, Lord, didst thou justify thy servants in having many wives and concubines?” (D&C 132:1).

Joseph did inquire of the Lord and received a revelation in 1831. He learned that the Church would one day be required to live the law (D&C 132:1-4, 28-40). It may have been written down in that year, but today we have no such written record, and Joseph was instructed not to teach it to anyone until the time was right. It was thus kept quiet. In 1841, after the saints had settled in Nauvoo, Joseph began to teach the principle of plural marriage to a few of his intimate friends and associates among the Church’s leaders. The principle was practiced to a limited extent by Joseph and some others whom he authorized.

There was also some unauthorized practicing of the principle. John C. Bennett, mayor of Nauvoo and adviser to Joseph Smith, twisted the idea of polygamy to his own advantage. Capitalizing on rumors and lack of understanding among general Church membership, he taught a doctrine of “spiritual wifery.” He and his associates sought to have illicit sexual relationships with women by telling them they were married “spiritually,” even if they had never been married formally, and that the Prophet

approved the arrangement. Bennett was found out and excommunicated for immorality in May of 1842. He then toured the country speaking against the Latter-day Saints and published a bitter anti-Mormon exposé, *The History of the Saints; or, an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842) charging the Saints with licentiousness. Two years later enemies and dissenters, some of whom had been associated with Bennett, published the *Nauvoo Expositor*, to expose, among other things, plural marriage, thus setting in motion events leading to Joseph Smith's death.

As one might suppose, the doctrine of plural marriage was a difficult pill for the saints to swallow. Spiritual descendants of the Puritans and sexually conservative, early participants in plural marriage first wrestled with the prospect and then embraced the principle only after receiving personal spiritual confirmation that they should do so. Nor did others enter into plural marriage blindly or simply because Joseph Smith had spoken, despite biblical precedents. Personal accounts document that most individuals that entered plural marriage in Nauvoo faced a crisis of faith that was resolved only by personal spiritual witness. Those who participated generally did so only after they had obtained divine reassurance and saw it as religious duty. Even those closest to Joseph Smith were challenged by the revelation. After first learning of plural marriage, Brigham Young said he felt to envy the corpse in a funeral cortege and "could hardly get over it for a long time" (*JD*, 3:266). The Prophet's brother Hyrum Smith stubbornly resisted the very possibility until circumstances forced him to go to the Lord for understanding. Both later taught the principle to others. Emma Smith vacillated, one day railing in opposition against it and the next giving her consent for Joseph to be sealed to another wife (see comments by Orson Pratt, *JD* 13:194). President John Taylor said, "When this system [polygamy] was first introduced among this people, it was one of the greatest crosses that was ever taken up by any set of men [and women, of course] since the world stood" (*JD*, 11:221).

One of those for whom the principle was particularly difficult was Emma Smith. Emma and Joseph apparently had serious problems over the principle. Joseph confided some of these problems to his trusted brother Hyrum. Hyrum felt that he could convince Emma of the divine origin of the principle if only Joseph would write down the revelation on the subject and allow Hyrum to take it to Emma. A quote from the Prophet's scribe, William Clayton picks up the story:

On the morning of the 12th of July, 1843, Joseph and Hyrum Smith came into the office of the upper story of the "Brick-Store," on the bank of the Mississippi River. They were talking of the subject of plural marriage, [and] Hyrum said to Joseph, "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." Joseph smiled and remarked, "You do not know Emma as well as I do." Hyrum repeated his opinion, and further remarked, "The doctrine is so plain, I can convince

any reasonable man or woman of its truth, purity, and heavenly origin,” or words to that effect. . . . Joseph and Hyrum then sat down, and Joseph commenced to dictate the revelation on Celestial Marriage, and I wrote it, sentence by sentence, as he dictated. [When he was about to dictate it to William Clayton, Hyrum asked Joseph to use his seerstone, but Joseph declined saying that he had the revelation perfectly memorized.] After the whole was written, Joseph asked me to read it through slowly and carefully, which I did, and he pronounced it correct (Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *D&C Commentary*, 820-21).

Hyrum took the written revelation and went to Emma. She responded by giving Hyrum what he referred to as a “severe talking to” (*HC*, 5:32-33). The tradition in the Church is that some time later she either burned it or persuaded Joseph to burn it, and she rejected the principle and Hyrum’s attempt to convince her. Fortunately, a copy of the revelation (requested by Hyrum Smith) had been made before destruction of the original. One of the brethren particularly interested in obtaining a copy was Bishop Newell K. Whitney, as his daughter was already one of the plural wives of Joseph. Hence, William Clayton had allowed one Joseph Kingsbury to make a copy of the revelation to give to Bishop Whitney. This copy made by Joseph Kingsbury remained with the Church and was taken to Utah by Brigham Young.

Until 1852 the principle was officially kept a secret from the public and even from most of the saints. Emma was opposed to the principle to her death and even denied publicly that her husband was involved in the practice, claiming that Brigham Young was responsible for the doctrine. Even today, the Reorganized LDS Church (now the Community of Christ) denies that Joseph ever practiced polygamy.

Historical data suggests that Joseph was married to some thirty-four women prior to his death. That period will be discussed in some detail later in this chapter. After Joseph’s death many female members were sealed to him.

After the martyrdom, plural marriage continued as a “well-known secret” among many church members. Brigham Young tightly controlled all new sealings. Polygamy was practiced in this manner from 1844 to 1852, only by those who had individual authorization from the president of the Church.

Once the Saints left Nauvoo, though it was officially remained secret, it seems many if not most members had heard rumors and stories. In Winter Quarters, for example, discussion of the principle was an “open secret” and plural families were acknowledged. As early as 1847, non-member visitors to Utah commented on the practice.

With the Saints firmly established in the Great Basin, Brigham Young announced the practice publicly and published the revelation on eternal marriage. Under his direction, on Sunday, August 29, 1852, in a specially-called conference, Elder Orson Pratt read section 132 and discussed and defended the practice of plural marriage.

After examining the biblical precedents (Abraham, Jacob, David, and others), Elder Pratt argued that the Church, as heir of the keys required anciently for plural marriages to be sanctioned by God, was required to perform such marriages as part of the restoration. He offered reasons for the practice and discussed several possible benefits (see *JD* 1:53-66). But such discussions were not really the justifications. Latter-day Saints practiced plural marriage because they believed God commanded them to do so. Polygamy became church policy following that special conference.

At that time the revelation was made available for all of those who were interested in reading it. It was first published in the *Deseret News* in August 1852. Orson Pratt included it in the new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876. Section 132 is not the original revelation received by Joseph in 1831, though undoubtedly parts of the 1831 revelation are contained in this important section. From 1852 until 1890, Mormon Church leaders preached and encouraged members, especially those in leadership positions, to marry additional wives.

The exact percentage of Latter-day Saints who participated in the practice is not known, but studies suggest a maximum of from 20 to 25 percent of LDS adults were members of polygamous households. At its height, plural marriage probably involved only a third of the women reaching marriageable age—though among Church leadership plural marriage was the norm for a time. A majority of the Latter-day Saints never lived the principle. The number of families involved varied by community. For example, 30 percent in St. George in 1870 and 40 percent in 1880 practiced polygamy, while only 5 percent in South Weber practiced the principle in 1880.

Generally plural marriage involved only two wives and seldom more than three. Larger families like those of Brigham Young or Heber C. Kimball were exceptions. Sometimes the wives simply shared homes, each having her own bedroom, or they lived in a “duplex” arrangement, each inhabiting a mirror-image half of the house. In other cases, husbands established separate homes for their wives, sometimes in separate towns. When the wives lived near each other, the husbands usually visited each wife on a daily or weekly basis. Although circumstances and the mechanics of family life varied, in general the living style was simply an adaptation of the nineteenth century American family. Polygamous marriages were similar to national norms in fertility and divorce rates as well. Wives of one husband often developed strong bonds of sisterly love. However, strong antipathies could also arise between wives. While there were the expected troubles between wives and families, polygamy was usually not the only cause, although it certainly could cause greater tension. Since polygamy was openly practiced for only a relatively short time in the Church, there were no established rules about how family members should relate to each other. Instead, each family adapted to their particular circumstances.

As with families generally, some plural families worked better than others. Anecdotal evidence and the healthy children that emerged from many plural households

witness that some worked very well. But some plural wives disliked the arrangement. The most common complaint of second and third wives resulted from a husband displaying too little sensitivity to the needs of plural families or not treating them equally. Not infrequently, wives complained that husbands spent too little time with them. But where husbands provided conscientiously and devoted ample time, husbands and wives developed deep love and respect for each other. Children grew up as members of large, well-adjusted extended families.

Plural marriage helped mold the Church's attitude toward divorce in pioneer Utah. Though Brigham Young disliked divorce and discouraged it, when women sought divorce he generally granted it. He felt that a woman trapped in an unworkable relationship with no alternatives deserved a chance to improve her life. But when a husband sought relief from his familial responsibilities, President Young consistently counseled him to do his duty and not seek divorce from any wife willing to put up with him.

Contrary to the caricatures of a hostile world press, plural marriage did not result in offspring of diminished capacity. Normal men and women came from plural households, and their descendants are prominent throughout the Intermountain West. Some observers feel that the added responsibility that fell early upon some children in such households contributed to their exceptional record of achievement. Plural marriage also aided many wives. The flexibility of plural households contributed to the large number of accomplished LDS women who were pioneers in medicine, politics and other public careers. In fact, plural marriage made it possible for wives to have professional careers that would not otherwise have been available to them.

Reactions from outside the Church to statements about polygamy were immediate and negative. Although polygamy had been practiced for much of history in many parts of the world, to do so in "enlightened" America in the nineteenth century was viewed by most as incomprehensible and unacceptable, making it the Church's most controversial and least understood practice. Though the principle was lived for a relatively brief period, it had profound impact on LDS self-definition, helping to establish the Latter-day Saints as a "people apart." The practice also caused many nonmembers to distance themselves from the Church and see Latter-day Saints more negatively than would otherwise have been the case.

Faced with a national anti-polygamy campaign, LDS women startled their eastern sisters, who equated polygamy with oppression of women, by publicly demonstrating in favor of their right to live plural marriage as a religious principle. Judging from the preaching, women were at least as willing to enter plural marriage as men. Instead of public admonitions urging women to enter plural marriage, one finds many urging worthy men to "do their duty" and undertake to care for a plural wife and additional children. Though some were reluctant to accept such responsibility, many responded and sought another wife. It was not unheard of for a wife to take the lead and insist that

her husband take another wife. Yet, in other cases, a first marriage dissolved over the husband's insistence on marrying again.

In 1854 the Republican Party termed polygamy and slavery the "twin relics of barbarism." In 1862 the United States Congress passed the Morrill Act, which prohibited plural marriage in the territories, dis-incorporated the Church, and restricted the church's ownership of property. The nation was in the midst of the Civil War, however, and the law was not enforced. In 1867 the Utah Territorial Legislature asked Congress to repeal the Morrill Act. Instead of doing that, the House Judiciary Committee asked why the law was not being enforced, and the Cullom Bill, an attempt to strengthen the Morrill Act, was introduced. Although it did not pass, most of its provisions later became law. Out of a number of other bills introduced during the 1870s against polygamy, only the Poland Act passed in 1874. It gave district courts all civil and criminal jurisdiction and limited the probate courts to matters of estate settlement, guardianship, and divorce.

The Mormons continued to practice polygamy despite these laws, since they believed that the practice was protected by the freedom of religion clause in the Bill of Rights. To test the constitutionality of the laws, George Reynolds, Brigham Young's private secretary, agreed to be tried. In 1879 the case reached the Supreme Court, which upheld the Morrill Act: "Laws are made for the government of actions, and while they cannot interfere with mere religious belief and opinion, they may with practices."

In 1882 Congress passed the Edmunds Act, which was actually a series of amendments to the Morrill Act. It restated that polygamy was a felony punishable by five years of imprisonment and a \$500 fine. Unlawful cohabitation, which was easier to establish because the prosecution had to prove only that the couple had lived together rather than that a marriage ceremony had taken place, remained a misdemeanor punishable by six months imprisonment and a \$300 fine. Convicted polygamists were disenfranchised (their right to vote was removed), and they became ineligible to hold political office. Those who practiced polygamy were disqualified from jury service, and those who professed a belief in it could not serve as jurists in a polygamy case. All registration and election officers in Utah Territory were dismissed, and a board of five commissioners was appointed to direct elections.

Because the Edmunds Act was unsuccessful in controlling polygamy in Utah, in 1884 Congress debated legislation to plug the loopholes. Finally, in 1887, the "hodge-podge" Edmunds-Tucker Bill passed. It required plural wives to testify against their husbands, dissolved the Perpetual Emigration Fund Company (a loan institution that helped members of the Church come to Utah from Europe), abolished the Nauvoo Legion militia, and provided a mechanism for acquiring the property of the Church, which already was dis-incorporated by the Morrill Act. The Cullom-Struble Bill with even stricter measures was debated in 1889, but the Mormon Church helped to prevent its passage by promising to do away with polygamy.

All of these pressures had an impact on the Church, even though the leaders did not compel the Latter-day Saints to abolish polygamy. Church leaders as well as many of its members went into hiding—"on the underground" as it was called—either to avoid arrest or to avoid having to testify. Mormon Church President John Taylor died while in hiding. His successor, Wilford Woodruff, initially supported the continued practice of polygamy. A harsh and effective federal antipolygamy campaign known by the Latter-day Saints as "the Raid" occurred. Wives and husbands went "on the underground" and hundreds were arrested and sentenced to jail terms in Utah and several federal prisons. This campaign severely affected the families involved, and the related attack on Church organization and properties greatly inhibited its ability to function. Following a vision showing him that continuing plural marriage endangered the temples and the mission of the Church, not just statehood, President Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto in October 1890, announcing an official end to new plural marriages and facilitating an eventual peaceful resolution of the conflict. The Manifesto was approved at the church's general conference on October 6, 1890.

Rather than resolving the polygamy question, however, according to one historian: "For both the hierarchy and the general membership of the LDS Church, the Manifesto inaugurated an ambiguous era of secret practice of plural marriage rivaled only by the status of polygamy during the lifetime of Joseph Smith." Woodruff's public and private statements contradicted whether the Manifesto applied to existing marriages. As a result of the Manifesto, some men left plural wives. Others interpreted it as applying only to new marriages. All polygamous general authorities (including the First Presidency, Council of the Twelve Apostles, church patriarch, First Council of Seventy, and Presiding Bishopric) continued to cohabit with their wives. Based on impressionistic evidence in family histories and genealogical records, it appears that "most" polygamists followed the general authorities' example.

Neither did all new plural marriages end in 1890. Although technically against the law in Mexico and Canada, polygamous marriages were performed in both countries. Mormon plural families openly practiced polygamy in Mexico. The Canadian government allowed Mormon men to have only one wife in the country, so some men had a legal wife in the United States and one in Canada. In addition, a few plural marriages were performed in the United States.

During the Senate investigation in 1904 concerning the seating of Senator-elect Reed Smoot, a monogamist but a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Mormon Church President Joseph F. Smith presented what historians have called the "Second Manifesto" on April 7, 1904. It included provisions for the Church to take action against those who continued to perform plural marriages and marry plural wives. Matthias Cowley and John W. Taylor, both apostles, continued to be involved in performing or advocating new plural marriages after 1904, and, as a result, Cowley was disfellowshipped and Taylor excommunicated from the Church. In 1909 a committee of

apostles met to investigate post-Manifesto polygamy, and by 1910 the church had a new policy. Those involved in plural marriages after 1904 were excommunicated. Those married between 1890 and 1904 were not to have church callings where other members would have to sustain them. Although the Church officially prohibited new plural marriages after 1904, many plural husbands and wives continued to cohabit until their deaths in the 1940s and 1950s.

For twenty years or so following 1904, scattered individuals within and without the Church attempted to practice plural marriage without permission from the church president. During these years, no polygamous organization existed among these maverick pluralists, nor did they claim special priesthood keys that transcended church authority. However, beginning in 1921, Lorin C. Woolley claimed to possess a previously unheard of priesthood office as a member of an unknown council that ostensibly could authorize new plural marriages. In 1935, Elden Kingston asserted his own unique authority to practice polygamy. Twenty years later, the LeBaron brothers arrived with their own distinctive offices and authorities. During these years and afterwards, dozens of other “Mormon fundamentalist” groups entered the scene with their novel interpretations and priesthood claims.

Fundamentalist groups who believe that the Church discontinued polygamy only because of government pressure continued the practice. As they were discovered by the LDS Church, they were excommunicated. Some of these polygamists have appointed leaders and continue to live in groups, including those in Colorado City (formerly Short Creek), Arizona, and Hildale, Utah. Others, such as Royston Potter, practice polygamy but have no affiliation with an organized group. The phenomenon of “Mormon Fundamentalism” will be discussed later in this chapter.

## **Joseph Smith’s Personal Practice of Plural Marriage**

### **An Overview**

Researchers today seeking to understand the details surrounding Joseph Smith’s personal practice of plural marriage must acknowledge that the only individual who knew personally about his motives, intentions, and practice of polygamy left no record about these central matters. Virtually everything learned about Joseph Smith’s polygamy is second-hand, coming from later recollections and reminiscences, which may suffer from their own credibility problems.

**Joseph’s apprehensions and sense of obligation.** Several original sources testify that Joseph was horrified at the prospects of practicing polygamy. It certainly ran against his grain. He surely knew full well that the introduction of plural marriage would inevitably invite severe criticism—from without the Church, from within the Church, and even from within his own family. Still, he felt obligated to move ahead. Several months before his death, Joseph taught: “The object with me is to obey and teach others to

obey God in just what he tells us to do. It mattereth not whether the principle is popular or unpopular. I will always maintain a true principle even if I stand alone in it" (*TPJS*, 332).

Lorenzo Snow later remembered vividly a conversation in 1843 in which the Prophet described the battle he waged "in overcoming the repugnance of his feelings" regarding plural marriage. He knew the voice of God. He knew the commandment of the Almighty to him was to go forward-to set the example, and establish Celestial plural marriage. He knew he had not only his own prejudices and pre-possessions to combat and to overcome, but those "of the whole Christian world . . . but God . . . had given the commandment" (*The Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, 69-70). Several close confidants later said he proceeded with plural marriage in Nauvoo only after both internal struggles and divine threats. President Snow taught of Joseph Smith's account of an angel "with a drawn sword" who declared that Joseph proceed, or his calling would be given to another (Bachman, Daniel W. "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith." M. A. thesis, Purdue University, 1975, 74-75). Another version of the story suggested that the angel warned him that if he delayed, the angel would slay Joseph (Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review*, Mesa, Arizona: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Printing, 1992, 95-96). Yet another version originated with Erastus Snow. He reported that the angel accused the Prophet of "being neglectful in the discharges of his duties" and spoke "of Joseph's having to plead on his knees before the Angel for his Life" (Erastus Snow quoted in A. Karl Larson and Katherine Miles Larson, *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 2 volumes, Utah State University Press, Logan, Utah, 1980, 2:611, entry for June 17, 1883). According to Mary Elizabeth Rollins, the angel was required to visit Joseph three times between 1834 and 1842 before he fully complied ("Remarks" at Brigham Young University, April 14, 1905, vault MSS 363, fd 6. 2-3).

Joseph Smith told Brigham Young he was determined to press ahead though it would cost him his life, for "it is the work of God, and He has revealed this principle, and it is not my business to control or dictate it" (*Brigham Young Discourse*, October 8, 1866, Church Archives).

Parley P. Pratt doubtless accurately reflected the prophet's Joseph's view of the practice of polygamy when he wrote: "These holy and sacred ordinances have nothing to do with whoredoms, unlawful connections, confusion or crime; but the very reverse. They have laws, limits, and bounds of the strictest kind, and none but the pure in heart, the strictly virtuous, or those who repent and become such, are worthy to partake of them. And . . . [a] dreadful weight of condemnation await those who pervert, or abuse them" (*The Prophet*, May 24, 1845; cf. D&C 132:7). Another safeguard was that authorized plural marriages could be performed only through the sealing power controlled by the presiding authority of the Church (D&C 132:19).

**The initial commandment.** As already mentioned above, historical documents suggest that Joseph received the Lord's command to practice polygamy within a year of the organization of the Church on April 6, 1830. He probably received the original revelation in early 1831. Also as mentioned, the Lord initially included the counsel that the saints, at large, were not yet ready for the practice.

**Polygamy prior to the Nauvoo period.** The only plural marriage practiced by Joseph prior to 1841 was Joseph's marriage in 1835 to a nineteen-year-old domestic in the Smith household named Fanny Alger. That union ended in 1836. The following year, most church members began to leave Ohio to live in Missouri. The saints were driven out of Missouri in late 1838. They would establish themselves in Nauvoo in 1839.

**Nauvoo plural marriage.** Joseph's second polygamous marriage occurred in Nauvoo on April 5, 1841. During the next seventeen months, he was probably sealed to about a dozen plural wives. A few other men (church leaders) and women were also invited to participate in the practice. Records indicate that the principle was not openly practiced during that period. By the end of August 1842, Joseph discontinued plural marriages for a period of five months, undoubtedly due to the influences of dissenter, Joseph C. Bennett. The Prophet resumed his polygamous marrying in February of 1843. He was sealed to nearly two dozen plural spouses during the next ten months. Current evidence supports that after November 2, 1843—during the last eight months of his life—Joseph contracted no new polygamous unions. By the time of Joseph's death on June 27, 1844, evidence shows that twenty-nine other men in the Church had married fifty-one plural wives.

The secret introduction of plural marriage into the Church was probably the one most important factor in Joseph's martyrdom. By the time of his death, Joseph had been sealed to some thirty-four polygamous wives.

**Three types of Joseph's plural marriages.** An examination of the types of plural marriages entered into by Joseph Smith indicates that three forms of unions were contracted. Some were for this life only—called "time only" matrimonyes. Most were "time and eternity" sealings, meaning a marriage for this life that would continue after death and forever. Over a third of the relationships were "eternity only" sealings. Such a sealing is a marriage only for the next life. It permits the woman to be married to a different man on earth. While a few "eternity only" marriages were performed during Joseph Smith's lifetime, evidence indicates the practice of sealing a living male to a living female for "eternity only" was discontinued after Joseph's death.

Joseph Smith instructed that when authorized by the "one" man on earth holding the sealing keys (D&C 132:18), polygynous sealings can occur on earth. They can also be performed by proxy after the unmarried man or women are deceased, and this project will undoubtedly be a focus of temple work during the millennium. When one of the two parties is deceased, the sealing then is obviously for "eternity only" since "time

and eternity” sealings require that both parties are alive on earth when that sealing is performed. Importantly, all sealings for eternity must be performed prior to the resurrection, “For in [after] the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage” (Matthew 22:30; see also Mark 12:24-25). According to the Prophet’s teachings, by the end of the millennium, all worthy men and women who were born on this earth will be bound to an eternal spouse of their choice, either through ordinances for the living or the dead.

**Emotional problems that arise because of polygamy.** Though polygamous arrangements tend to expand the man’s emotional and sexual relationships, they tend to do the opposite for women. The loss of exclusivity in each marriage association and the lessened availability of the husband make it particularly difficult for the woman to share her heart-felt beliefs, dreams, concerns, and expectations. In other words, rich and intimate communication is rendered more difficult for the woman. The husband then secondarily suffers because of the loss of intimacy in each of his relationships.

Joseph Smith apparently became sensitively aware of these relationship problems and frequently counseled and reassured the women involved that the blessings of heaven would eventually be theirs and that “all will be well in the end” (Bathsheba Smith, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent’s testimony (part 3), 291, 313, questions 14, 466).

**Joseph was selective, cautious, and patient in his marriage choices.** John C. Bennett ostensibly quoting Sarah Pratt and Sarah Fuller claimed that Joseph Smith would destroy the reputation of any woman who rejected him (*The History of the Saints: Or an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*. Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842, 231, 253). This was hardly the case as evidenced by the following.

Within the recollections of Joseph Smith’s plural wives are several descriptions of the manner through which he proposed plural marriage. Generally, he cautiously introduced the subject to them, biding his time as they pondered and prayed to either accept or reject the offer.

Emily Partridge recalled in 1892 that Joseph Smith approached her when they were alone “and asked me if I could keep a secret, and I told him I thought I could, and then he told me that he would some time if he had an opportunity—he would tell me something that would be for my benefit, if I would not betray him, and I told him I wouldn’t.” Despite this introduction, nothing happened immediately. Emily continued:

Well it ran along for a good while—I don’t know just how long, and there was no opportunity of saying anything to me more than he had, and one day he sat in the room alone, and I passed through it and he called to me or spoke to me, and called me to him, and then he said that he had intended to tell me something, but he had no opportunity to do so, and so he would write me a letter, if I would agree to burn it as soon as I read it, and with that I looked frightened, for I thought there was something about

it that was not just right, and so I told him that I would rather that he would not write to me—that he would not write me any letter, and then he asked me if I wanted him to say any more, and I said yes, that I did not want to hear anything more about it at all, for I had got a little frightened about it . . . (Emily P. Young, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent's testimony (part 3), page 350, question 22).

Although Emily does not state the reason for her fears, she undoubtedly knew that the subject of the letter was plural marriage. Rumors of Joseph's personal involvement were not widespread at that time, but were likely within range. Over the space of the ensuing months, Emily's feelings changed:

Well it went in that condition and there was not anything more said about it for several months, not until 1843 I think—some time in '43, for he had no other opportunity until then and I did not think he would ever say anything more about it until then, but I had thought a great deal about it in that time, and I had prayed for it to know what it was, and if it was my duty. I thought I ought to have listened to it, that is, to what he was going to tell me or write to me, for I was greatly troubled over it, as I feared I had done wrong in not listening to it—and so I prayed to be enlightened in regard to what I would have done. Well, in time I became convinced that there was nothing wrong about it, and that it would be right for me to hear what he had to say, but there was nothing more said for a good while after I came to that conclusion. I think it was months before there was anything more said about it, but I don't know just how long it was (*Ibid.*, pages 350-52, questions 22-24).

Perhaps sensing Emily's change of heart, the Prophet approached her asking for another opportunity to speak, and she granted it. He explained celestial marriage and proposed to her, and she accepted. Emily recalled that once the sealing was performed, she didn't spend her wedding night with Joseph: "I cannot tell all that Joseph said . . . I was married there and then. Joseph went home his way, and I going my way alone." She added: "A strange way of getting married, wasn't it?" (Emily D. P. Young, autobiographical sketch, "Written Especially for My Children," January 7, 1877, Marrriott Library, manuscript owned by Emily Young Knopp, copy of typescript in possession of the author).

In 1883 Almera W. Johnson, sister of Benjamin F. Johnson, remembered her own personal experience that occurred in 1842/43. She had "many conversations" with Joseph over many months (Almera W. Johnson, affidavit dated August 1, 1883, digital holograph, MS 3423, CHL; typescript published in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1905], 70-71).

Another account from Lucy Walker is important because it is sometimes misquoted to make it appear that Joseph Smith proposed to her and then immediately gave her a twenty-four hour period to either comply or to be condemned. Unfortunately, some authors forget to mention that the time limitation was imposed only after Lucy had wavered for many months, possibly over a year. She related: "In the year 1842, President Joseph Smith sought an interview with me, and said: 'I have a message for you. I have been commanded of God to take another wife, and you are the woman.' My astonishment knew no bounds. This announcement was indeed a thunderbolt to me. He asked me if I believed him to be a prophet of God. 'Most assuredly I do,' I replied. He fully explained to me the principle of plural or celestial marriage" (Lyman Omer Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints: Giving an Account of Much Individual Suffering Endured for Religious Conscience*, Logan, Utah: Utah Journal Co., 1888, 46).

After this initial introduction, Lucy agonized for many months as the Prophet waited. She became increasingly agitated. After witnessing Lucy's agitation, Joseph gave Lucy the twenty-four hour ultimatum mentioned above. She was sealed to Joseph shortly thereafter.

Extant accounts indicate that the usual pre-marriage interactions between the Prophet and his prospective plural wives usually involved multiple instructions concerning the underlying theological principles either from Joseph or an intermediary. Typical "courting" behaviors such as walks, buggy rides, the exchange of physical affection, or flirtatious conversations, whether publicly or privately, did not occur. In no cases is there evidence for a quick sealing in reaction to mounting passions or attractions.

To help his potential plural brides overcome their initial disgust at the thought of polygamy, the Prophet promised at least two of them that they could receive their own "spiritual" confirmation that polygamy was right. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner wrote: "I did not believe. If God told him so, why did he not come and tell me? The angel told him I should have a witness. An angel came to me . . ." ("Statement" signed February 8, 1902 [Vesta Crawford Papers, MS 125, bx1 fd 11]). Similarly, Lucy Walker recalled: "He [Joseph Smith] assured me that this doctrine had been revealed to him of the Lord, and that I was entitled to receive a testimony of its divine origin for myself. He counseled me to pray to the Lord, which I did, and thereupon received from him a powerful and irresistible testimony of the truthfulness and divinity of plural marriage" (Affidavit dated December 17, 1902, MS 3423, CHL).

**Joseph declined several opportunities to marry additional plural wives.** Evidence shows that Joseph had many more opportunities to marry than he actually chose. Doubtless, he was approached by many women. For reasons he never explained, he declined some plural marriage opportunities, accepted others, and even arranged additional polygamous unions for family members and friends (Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* 2:7; George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, Salt Lake City:

Signature Books, 2008, appendix B, 599, no. 92; see Franklin D. Richards' diary, quoted in *Minutes of the Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1894-99, Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2010, 116; see Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945], 323-24).

**Occasionally Joseph sought plural marriage opportunities for others rather than seeking to marry the women himself.** In 1908 Almira, daughter of Martha McBride Knight, was asked if she would consider becoming a plural wife of Hyrum Smith. She said "No." The marriage never took place, and Almira later left the Church (Almira Hanscom statement, 1908 in "Autobiography of Hyrum Belnap," from a compilation by Della Belnap titled "Biographies of the Belnap and Knight Families" copied by BYU library 1958; copy at BYU HBLL Special Collections—Amer BX 8670.1.B41. This statement is found on page 55 of the whole compilation, or page 20 of *Hyrum Belnap Autobiography*).

In another example, Mary Ann Covington recalled an interaction with the Prophet in which Joseph asked her to be the plural wife of his brother William Smith. Mary Ann was sealed to William Smith by the fall of 1843 (George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, appendix B, 623, no. 156).

Joseph also facilitated the plural marriages of Parley P. Pratt to Elizabeth Brotherton (see "Affidavit of Mary Ann Pratt," MS 3423, CHL) and Heber C. Kimball to Sarah Noon (see Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, "Scenes and Incidents In Nauvoo," *Women's Exponent*, 10 [October 15, 1881], 10:74).

**Joseph infrequently used plural marriage as a test for some of his apostles.** Two narratives involving Heber C. Kimball and John Taylor demonstrate that these men were willing to give their legal wives to the Prophet, if that were required. In both cases, Joseph did not marry their wives, but sealed them to their husbands (See Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945, 323-24; John Mills Whitaker, *Autobiography and Journals*, 1883-1960, MS 1356, LDS Church History Library, Reel 1, entry dated November 1, 1890; Samuel W. Taylor, *The Kingdom or Nothing: The Life of John Taylor, Militant Mormon*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1976, 80-83, 87-89). No historical data has been found providing evidence that the Prophet ever demanded a follower to give up his wife so he could marry her.

**Joseph Smith's plural marriage proposals were rejected several times.** Joseph apparently felt that plural wives should not be coerced or manipulated. Joseph Smith's offers of plural marriage were apparently turned down by at least seven women. The historical record indicates that his preferred response to these rebuffs was to quietly let the matter rest. There is no evidence of retaliatory excommunications or other vengeful reactions have been found. Two of these women had second thoughts and were sealed to Joseph following his death. They were Cordelia C. Morley and Rachel Ivins.

On two occasions Joseph sought to counteract allegations he considered untrue. It appears Joseph Smith proposed plural marriage to Nancy Rigdon who declined. She did, however, fail to keep the offer secret. Months later John C. Bennett wrote a letter to the *Sangamo Journal* and portrayed himself as dramatically saving Nancy from being “ensnared” by Joseph. Joseph denied Bennett’s version.

Apparently Joseph also proposed to Sarah Pratt. One story was voiced by John C. Bennett that claimed Joseph had tried to seduce her. Apparently Sarah and Bennett had been sexually involved. Their allegations against Joseph were an attempt to cover up their own immorality. Joseph later confided to Orson Pratt, that Sarah “lied about me.” Orson later acknowledged that Joseph had told the truth (see Sydney Rigdon, “Tour East,” *Messenger and Advocate of the Church of Christ*, [Pittsburgh] 2 December 1845, 2:1).

It is likely that if Nancy Rigdon and Sarah Pratt had kept silent about Joseph’s proposals, the public scandals that followed would have been avoided.

**Joseph Smith considered himself a genuine husband to his plural wives.** Evidence supports that fact that Joseph considered himself married to his plural wives with all the obligations incumbent upon husbands including the revelation that specified: “Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance” (D&C 83:2). While little is known concerning Joseph Smith’s day-to-day interactions with his plural wives, the historical record indicates he treated them as genuine spouses, and they viewed him as their eternal husband.

Historians Newell Linda King and Valeen Tippetts Avery wrote: “No evidence exists that [Joseph] assumed the support of his wives in the traditional sense of providing them with food, clothing, and shelter, except for the young women in his house” ((Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1984, 147). However, King and Avery also note that their material needs were met: “Some remained with their parents; others lived with other plural wives; a few lived with other families where plural marriage was also practiced. Their personal accounts attest that, for the most part, they felt Joseph cared for them deeply, and they felt important to him” (*Ibid.*).

Reportedly, Joseph asked members of the Quorum of the Twelve to marry his widowed wives and to take care of them, should he ever be killed. Apparently, following Joseph’s death, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and the rest of the Quorum of Twelve apostles approached the widows of Joseph Smith and offered themselves as husbands.

**Possible motivations for Joseph Smith’s marrying so many plural wives.** During the thirty-one months between April 1841 and November 1843, Joseph was sealed to thirty-three wives (with Fanny Alger in Kirtland in 1835 the total is thirty-four). One may well wonder why Joseph married so many women when two or three wives

might have fulfilled the reported divine command to enter polygamy. The following reasons have been suggested:

1. We have already mentioned the sword-bearing angel that commanded him to practice plural marriage. The various recollections state that the angel demanded the Prophet to “establish that principle upon the earth,” to be “obedient,” to “proceed to fulfill the law that had been given to him,” to “no longer delay fulfilling that command,” to “move forward and establish plural marriage,” “to have women sealed to him as wives . . . and obey the commandment.” Specific details of what the angel required of him, however, are not known. If details were imparted, the Prophet did not share them. Was there a specific number of wives the Prophet was expected by the angel to marry? Would “eternity only” sealings (effective only in the next life) suffice? Was Joseph expected to have children with his plural wives (or at least try)? Answers to these questions are simply unavailable.

2. Libido—to provide more opportunities for sexual experience. There is evidence he did have sexual relations with nine of his plural wives, and possibly with another five. There is no credible evidence for relations with the other twenty.

There is no evidence that Joseph ever had sexual relations with (1) women to whom he was not married; (2) women sealed for the next life only (“eternity only” sealings); (3) his two fourteen-year-old plural wives; and (4) with women married to and living with their husbands.

Even though Joseph taught that sexual relations were justified and expected in polygamous unions in order “to multiply and replenish the earth” (D&C 132:6), this was not the primary reason for plurality in his theology. Also, it does not appear that conjugal relations were a common occurrence in the Prophet’s life in Nauvoo. Opportunities for Joseph to spend intimate time with his plural wives would have been limited by many factors including his parenting responsibilities, his duties as church president, his obligations as mayor and chief judge of the Nauvoo Municipal Court, his role as Lieutenant General of the Nauvoo Legion, the scrutiny of dissenters and unbelievers, and Emma’s vigilant and mostly intolerant eyes.

Evidence supports that he and Emma lived an outwardly monogamous lifestyle, especially during the last eight months of his life. That sexual relations were uncommon is also evidenced by the observation that only one or two (and possibly three) pregnancies have been documented with any degree of reliability. One child was born to Sylvia Sessions in 1844. She lived out her life as Josephine Lyon in Bountiful, Utah. The second child was born to Olive Frost and did not live long or may have miscarried. The identity of a third child remains unknown, if in fact a third baby was born to one of Joseph’s plural wives.

3. Physical attraction and/or romantic love. The question naturally arises as to whether romantic or physical attraction influenced his decisions regarding to whom to propose. Joseph believed plural marriage had been restored to the earth and was a

legitimate practice, legitimate in the eyes of God. Under such circumstances, he seemed to have experienced no moral qualms about contracting new polygamous unions for the same reasons monogamists choose to marry. It is probable that emotional and physical attraction played a part in some of his plural relationships. If it were a non-issue, then Joseph would have been abnormal. However, one of Joseph's plural wives, Lucy Walker did say, "Men did not take polygamous wives because they loved them or fancied them or because they were voluptuous [sensually pleasing], but because it was a command of God" ("Talks of Polygamy," Salt Lake Tribune, December 24, 1899).

4. An idea sprang up in the early Church that the greater number of women a man married, the greater the man's exaltation. This idea also became prevalent among "Mormon fundamentalists." However, it does not appear that Joseph Smith or other church leaders ever plainly proclaimed this principle to be true. Nor is this idea supported by observing Old Testament polygamists. Noah was a monogamist. Abraham adopted the practice only slowly and reluctantly. And Jacob (Israel) stopped at four plural wives. Joseph saw himself as restoring Old Testament plural marriage (D&C 132:1-2), but available accounts do not seem to support that ancient patriarchs believed that more wives were forever better than fewer.

Another concern stems from the apparent disadvantage the doctrine would place on the righteous monogamist peoples, like those of the Book of Mormon or the New Testament. It would also appear to everlastingly compromise the wives themselves through no fault of their own. For example, would the second wife of a man with three plural spouses receive less eternal reward than a woman who was the fourth wife of a man with four? It is not clear that any such doctrine ever existed.

5. Dynastic connections. Some writers have suggested that another primary motive of Joseph's was to marry a wife to form a "dynastic" connection between him and the family of the woman. They felt Joseph foresaw how his marriages would connect the families of the most faithful in this life and in the next. For some reviewers, the best evidence for the phenomenon is found in the case of Helen Mar Kimball, the daughter of Heber C. Kimball. In her 1881 autobiography, Helen Mar wrote that her father had "a great desire to be connected with the Prophet, Joseph, [so] he offered me to him."

The primary problem with this idea is that no clear teachings of Joseph Smith declare special blessings to extended family members of the described "dynasty."

6. "Proxy husbands." One interesting accusation against Joseph Smith asserts that he sent men on missions so he could marry their wives or possibly assume the role of a "proxy husband" for the missionary while he was away. Despite the accusations, available historical data fail to support that the Prophet deliberately dispatched men as missionaries to create "church widows," whom he could approach with plural marriage proposals. Of Joseph's thirteen "polyandrous" marriages, the husbands of three were

suggested to have been on a mission at the time. These were Orson Hyde, George Harris, and Albert Smith. However, uncertainties about the sealing dates of all three to Joseph render impossible any conclusions. Also Joseph always taught that any form of sexual polyandry was adultery.

It is ludicrous to believe that men called on missions, who faced all the challenges that confronted them as missionaries traveling across the country and perhaps the world enduring persecutions and deprivations, would tolerate being told: “By the way, here’s Brother Jones. He’s going to be sleeping with your wife while you are away as her proxy husband.” There is no record of such a thing ever happening or being mentioned.

7. Premortal promises. A hypothetical concept, popular in recent decades among some Latter-day Saints is that premortal spirits could experience romantic attractions and subsequently make premortal promises to “find each other” during mortality. This idea was popularized in the LDS musical, *Saturday’s Warrior*. The Idea of such premortal marital promises constitutes an unorthodox teaching among LDS Church members today.

The only example of this possible phenomenon among Joseph’s plural wives is found in a recollection from Mary Elizabeth Lightner who remembered Joseph telling her: “I was created for him before the foundation of the earth was laid” (summer 1905 letter to Emmeline Wells. See Mary Elizabeth Lightner collection, CHL. She also recalled her own feelings that potentially could have been a reflection of a premortal promise: “I had been dreaming for a number of years I was his wife” (remarks at Brigham Young University, April 14, 1905).

8. Women may have sought to be sealed to Joseph Smith. Specific evidence supports that at least one woman personally sought to be sealed to Joseph Smith. This was Ruth Vose Sayers. She was probably sealed to Joseph for “eternity only” (see below).

The precise dynamics underlying Joseph’s incentives for being sealed to thirty-four wives remain unclear. To reduce it to a single motivation would probably oversimplify the process. He unfortunately left no record concerning his personal thoughts and feelings regarding plural marriage.

### **Notes on Joseph’s Plural Wives**

It is notable that none of Joseph’s plural wives complained that he had abused or deceived them. None left a record reflecting disdain concerning his treatment of her. In later years, none of the Prophet’s plural wives sought to discredit him in any way. Even seven of his wives that left the Church did not write exposés or other criticisms of Joseph Smith. None accused Joseph of being a seducing imposter. None wrote that Joseph Smith’s polygamy was a sham or a cover-up for illicit sexual relations. If any had been critical of him, numerous anti-Mormon publishers would have been eager to

print their allegations. Even those wives who left the faith seem to have maintained respect for the Prophet. Many exposés were written, but not by any of the actual participants. It appears that Joseph Smith's plural wives viewed his polygamy very differently than cynics do today. Let us consider briefly each of Joseph's plural wives:

**Fanny Alger.** Fanny was born on September 20, 1816. She was one of ten children born to Samuel Alger and Clarissa Hancock Alger. She most likely moved into the Smith home as a domestic to help Emma some time in 1834. Emma accepted and loved Fanny as if she were her own daughter.

Joseph had received the revelation on plural marriage in early 1831. Yet, he was extremely reluctant to enter into the practice of polygamy until commanded to do so by a heavenly messenger. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, who joined the Church in 1830 and was a confidant of the Prophet in some of these matters, quoted him as saying (already alluded to above) that the angel came "three times between the years of [18]34 and [18]42." Joseph endeavored to reason with the heavenly being, stating that the Book of Mormon taught that to take plural wives was "an abomination in the eyes of the Lord, and they were to adhere to these things [monogamy] except the Lord speak." But the angel declared: "Thus saith the Lord, the time has now come that I will raise up seed unto me as I spoke by my servant Jacob, as is recorded in the Book of Mormon [see Jacob 2:27-30]" (Hyrum L. Andrus, *Doctrines of the Kingdom*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973, 471-72). Apparently, on those three occasions the angel of God stood by Joseph with a drawn sword, and told him that, unless he moved forward and established plural marriage, his priesthood would be taken from him and he would be destroyed!

The first of these warning visits came in 1834 while Joseph was procrastinating taking his first plural wife. He finally gave in and decided to enter into a polygamous relationship with Fanny Alger. After he approached Fanny, she expressed her willingness. There is general agreement that Fanny's parents had been informed of the concept of plural marriage and were enthusiastically supportive of the marriage. Joseph had Levi Hancock perform the ceremony in 1835. All indications are that it was a priesthood marriage for "time only." So far as is known, Joseph's only stated justification for entering into this polygamous union was that he was restoring Old Testament polygamy. There was no mention of sealing for eternity. The sealing keys had yet to be restored. They would not be restored by Elijah in the Kirtland Temple until April 3, 1836.

It then seems most likely that Emma, noting that Joseph and Fanny were missing from home one evening sought them out and found them in the Smith barn. It is not clear exactly what she saw, but she became hysterical. In a rage, she drove Fanny out of her home. Emma was so upset that Joseph, in desperation, sent for Oliver Cowdery at midnight to see if Oliver might help him make peace with Emma. What role Oliver may have played, if any, to reduce the emotional mayhem is unclear. To Oliver, Joseph explained he was not having an adulterous affair but said he had taken Fanny as a

plural wife. And his actions were part of the effort to restore the Old Testament practice of polygamy. Oliver did not accept this explanation and remained thereafter disgusted with the situation and dubious about Joseph's proffered justifications. Oliver's critical and refractory attitude about the situation would eventually result in his excommunication from the Church.

Eliza R. Snow was knowledgeable about the truth of the situation since she lived in the Smith home at the time Emma discovered Fanny's pregnancy. She had moved into the Joseph Smith home in 1835. There she taught a school for the Smith children and others. She was personally acquainted with Fanny, and she knew and would later reveal that Fanny was a plural wife of Joseph's. Both Emma and Oliver were told the truth about Joseph's relationship with Fanny Alger. Researcher Don Bradley concluded "Eliza's late, but firsthand and friendly, testimony concurs on this point with Oliver Cowdery's hostile but roughly contemporaneous statements. When intimate friend and intimate foe agree on the basic facts of Joseph Smith behavior, we have reason to trust their accuracy" (Analysis of Documents 1-18. Andrew Jenson Papers MS 17956, Box 49, fd. 16 Church History Library).

When the relationship between Joseph and Fanny first came to light, rumors spread and most of those privy to the rumors assumed Joseph had been having an adulterous affair with her. Joseph was able to defuse this notion by publicly and repeatedly denying he had committed adultery. The Lord had not yet allowed that the practice of plural marriage be vouchsafed to the Church at large, so Joseph was left with the awkward necessity of simply denying any adultery on his part. Apparently the members of the Church who heard his denials were left thinking that Joseph was denying any sexual relationship whatever with Fanny.

On being rejected from the Smith home, Fanny knew she was finished with Joseph. She lived briefly in the home of Chauncy and Eliza Churchill Webb. Soon thereafter Fanny left Kirtland and the Church never to return. Later that same year she moved with her family to Missouri and then to Wayne County, Indiana. There she quickly married a non-member Solomon Custer. She would bear nine children prior to her death. There is no record of her having given birth to Joseph's child which is puzzling. Perhaps the child was born, but its paternity was obscured by being assimilated into the new family.

Fanny's parents and at least one brother, John, followed the body of the saints to Nauvoo in 1839. They also joined the migration west in 1846 and settled in southern Utah where Fanny's parents died in the 1870s. Fanny's parents' continued faithfulness would be less likely had Joseph violated his own publicly declared standards of sexual morality with their daughter. Nothing in Joseph's behavior with their daughter seemed to weaken the Algiers' faith in the restoration.

As for Fanny herself, according to Benjamin Johnson, "She did not turn from the Church nor from her friendship for the Prophet while she lived. Late in life she

reportedly rebuffed questions about her relationship with Joseph Smith: “That is all a matter of my own, and I have nothing to communicate” (Dean R. Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets: An Analysis of the Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to George R. Gibbs, Reporting Doctrinal Views of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young*. Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1976, 33). There is other evidence that Fanny joined the Universalist Church in 1874 and remained a member of that church until her death. She died in 1889, in Indiana.

The marital relationship of Fanny and Joseph was unique in that it was not a part of the knowledge of celestial and plural marriage yet to be revealed in Nauvoo. It is probable that between 1831 and 1835 Joseph knew that Old Testament polygamy was acceptable to God and would need to be restored, but he was unaware of the new and everlasting covenant of marriage with all its associated doctrines and implications. Even when he received the keys of sealing in 1836, he may not have, at that time, realized its full significance. The Prophet would gain more insight into this doctrine over the ensuing years until he was finally able to share the doctrine privately with a few others in Nauvoo in 1841.

One question relates to the ceremony performed by Levi Hancock in marrying Fanny Alger and Joseph. Though several individuals subsequently referred to this ceremony as a “sealing,” that reference is probably anachronistic since the keys of sealing would not be restored until April 1836. Obviously civil law would not ratify a bigamous marriage. Levi was not acting with the authority by which plural marriages were later sealed in Nauvoo. All of this notwithstanding, it is likely that “priesthood authority” was invoked to perform a ceremony that “gentile law” would not allow.

There later developed a belief in Nauvoo that all eternal sealing ceremonies performed outside of a temple, whether monogamous or polygamous, would need to be repeated within temple walls (with the same individuals present or by proxy) at some point. By this logic, the Joseph Smith—Fanny Alger plural marriage would also have needed to be re-performed within a temple in order to have become an eternal marriage. There is no evidence this was ever accomplished for Fanny and Joseph, attesting to the basically different nature of their marriage. It had been for “time only.”

William McLellin caused some confusion when he wrote a letter, in 1872, to Joseph Smith III, wherein he recalled a conversation he had had with Emma in 1847. In the letter he referred to Emma’s catching Joseph in the act of having a sexual relationship with both a “Miss Hill” and Fanny Alger at the Smith home (William E. McLellin in a July 1872 letter to the Smith’s eldest son, Joseph III, Community of Christ Archives, copy in Church History Library). There is no additional evidence that Joseph had a relationship with a woman named “Hill” at Kirtland or at any time in his life. Richard L. Anderson concurs: “I cannot find a possible ‘Miss Hill’ in Kirtland, nor is there any verification of the story” (Richard L. Anderson to Dawn Comfort, May 9-15, 1998, copy of letter in Scott H. Faulring Papers, box 93 fds 1-3, accn 2316, Marriott Library).

More recent research has also failed to find any evidence of a “Miss Hill” in the Smith home at any time or to identify any likely candidate whom McLellin might have been referencing. Three years after his letter was written, McLellin was interviewed by anti-Mormon newspaperman, J. H. Beadle. In that interview McLellin told of only one incident “in which Joseph Smith was ‘sealed’ to the hired girl. The ‘sealing’ took place in a barn on the hay mow, and was witnessed by Mrs. Smith through a crack in the door!” (J. H. Beadle, “Jackson County,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, volume 9, number 147, October 6, 1875, 4). Obviously Beadle would have been elated to include two allegations of Kirtland “sealings.” Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery hypothesized regarding the confusion surrounding the identity of “Miss Hill”: “Perhaps, in his old age, William McLellin confused the hired girl, Fanny Alger, with Fanny Hill of John Cleland’s 1749 novel and came up with the hired girl, Miss Hill” (*Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1984, 66).

In retrospect, the Joseph Smith—Fanny Alger relationship wrought havoc in the lives of several individuals and in the Church. Both Emma and Fanny were traumatized. Oliver Cowdery was also alienated. As already mentioned, his involvement in the situation would contribute to his eventual excommunication. In addition, the Prophet was also traumatized. Accusations of “adultery” required urgent specific damage control efforts by the Prophet to suppress an expanding crisis in the Church.

**Louisa Beaman.** Born February 7, 1815. After Fanny Alger, Joseph did not marry another woman until he was sealed to Louisa Beaman on April 5, 1841, in Nauvoo. She died in 1850, in Utah.

**Zina Diantha Huntington.** Born January 31, 1821. She was sealed to Joseph October 27, 1841. She was married to Henry B. Jacobs March 7, 1841 and was married at the time she was sealed to Joseph. Jacobs was a member of the Church who had been baptized in 1832. Henry stood as a witness as Zina was married to Joseph for eternity and to Brigham Young for “time” on February 2, 1846. She died in 1901, in Utah.

**Presendia Lathrop Huntington.** Born September 7, 1810. She was sealed to Joseph December 11, 1841. She was married to Norman Buell on January 6, 1827, and was married at the time she was sealed to Joseph. Buell was a member of the Church who had been baptized in 1836. He became disaffected and left the Church in 1838. He continued to live with Presendia. He became an avid anti-Mormon and would have persuaded her, if possible, to leave the Church, but she remained firm and steadfast. She died in 1892, in Utah.

**Agnes Moulton Coolbrith.** Born 1811. She was sealed to Joseph January 6, 1842. She died in 1876, in California. She was the widow of Don Carlos Smith. After Joseph’s death, she married a member, William Pickett. Pickett eventually left the Church and transported his family to California. Despite her geographic estrangement

from the Church, Agnes remained in contact with various church members throughout her life.

Agnes's daughter, Ina Coolbrith, was critical of the Church and of polygamy. She wrote to her cousin, Apostle Joseph F. Smith on July 22, 1857 quoting several scriptures and expressing her willingness to gather to Jackson County or Nauvoo, but not to Salt Lake City. Her words reflect a belief in the restoration, but she openly argued: "Is polygamy not spoken of as a crime there." Her mother, Agnes, added a postscript of her own to the letter, but said nothing about Joseph and polygamy.

In 1876, just months before her death, Agnes was visited in California by David and Alexander Smith (two sons of Joseph and Emma) who were on a missionary journey, promoting their anti-polygamist RLDS religion. They were undoubtedly surprised by what "Aunt Agnes" had to say. Lucy Walker visited Agnes eight years later and wrote that Agnes challenged the "boys" testimonies by recalling earlier events in her own life. They pretended not to believe but were clearly moved by her testimony. Reportedly, her last words were "O! what a dupe I have been; what a dupe I have been! Agnes's daughter interpreted this as referring to her association with Mormonism while Agnes's nephew, Apostle Joseph F. Smith, believed it a reference to marriage to William Pickett and her separation from the Church.

**Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner.** Born April 9, 1818. She was sealed to Joseph in February 1842. She was married to Adam Lightner on August 11, 1836 and was married at the time she was sealed to Joseph. He was not a church member and remained a non-member his entire life. She died in 1913, in Utah.

**Patty Bartlett.** Born February 4, 1795. She was sealed to Joseph March 9, 1842. She was married to David Sessions on June 28, 1812, and was married at the time she was sealed to Joseph. He was a member of the Church and had been baptized in 1834. David married two wives polygamously and largely abandoned Patty. She died in 1892, in Utah.

**Marinda Nancy Johnson Hyde.** Born June 28, 1815. There are two sealing dates to Joseph: April 1842 and May 1843. She married Orson Hyde September 4, 1834 and was married at the time she was sealed to Joseph. Orson was a church member and a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. He was dropped from the Quorum of Twelve and disfellowshipped from the Church in early May of 1839 but reinstated just seven weeks later in late June of 1839. When two sealing dates are suggested by historical data, perhaps a first was for "eternity only" and then a later second sealing was for "time and eternity." There is insufficient historical data available in this case to explain why the two sealings were done. Marinda divorced Orson in 1870. She died in 1886, in Utah.

**Elizabeth Davis.** Born March 11, 1791. Her sealing date to Joseph is unknown. She was married to Jabez Durfee March 3, 1834 and was married at the time she was

sealed to Joseph. Jabez was a member of the Church. Jabez and Elizabeth divorced prior to January 1846.

Richard Lloyd Anderson and Scott H. Faulring believe the evidence for Elizabeth Davis's being included on the list of Joseph Smith's list of wives is not compelling. However, her name was added to the list personally by Eliza R. Snow. Elizabeth followed the westward movement as far as Winter Quarters, but then she departed from the migrating saints and turned back to Illinois. During the 1850s she visited Salt Lake City. Elizabeth lived out the remainder of her life with her son. Ironically, in the late 1860s she and her son were baptized into the RLDS Church, despite its official position that Joseph did not practice plural marriage. She died as a member of the RLDS faith, whose president Joseph Smith III vehemently denied that his father had ever practiced polygamy. Perhaps Elizabeth came to believe that polygamy was wrong by the time she became a "Reorganite," or perhaps she simply felt drawn to her old friend Emma Smith and Emma's children (who were associated with the RLDS faith). She remains one of the most interesting of Joseph's wives, a puzzle only partially solved. She died in 1876, in Kansas.

**Sarah Merietta Kingsley Cleveland.** Born October 20, 1788. Her sealing date to Joseph is unknown. She was married to non-Mormon John Cleveland who refused to migrate west. She was married at the time she was sealed to Joseph. A letter from John L. Smith to the First Presidency, March 8, 1895, supports that Sarah was sealed to Joseph for "eternity only." The letter read: "Mother . . . Cleveland by advice, was sealed to the Prophet in Nauvoo but lived with her husband John Cleveland" (D. Michael Quinn Papers). The author of this letter was likely John Lyman Smith (1823-1898), who was both a son-in-law to Sarah Merietta Kingsley Cleveland and a first cousin to Joseph Smith. John Cleveland was friendly to the Church initially but later became embittered. When the Latter-day saints pulled out for the Rocky Mountains, Sarah joined them, leaving her husband behind. However, church leaders Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball counseled her to return to John in Illinois. She obeyed the counsel and stayed with her husband. One biographer wrote that she was faithful and true to her religion and died a faithful member of the Church. Another wrote, however, that prior to her death in 1856 she joined a revivalist religion. Admittedly, it would have been difficult to live as a Latter-day Saint in Illinois without the support of other members of the Church. It is possible that her outward membership in a local Protestant congregation may not have changed her spiritual views significantly. She died in 1856, in Illinois.

**Lucinda Pendleton Morgan Harris.** Born September 7, 1801. Her sealing date to Joseph is unknown. She was married to George Harris on December 3, 1830 and was married at the time she was sealed to Joseph. George Harris was baptized a member of the Church in 1834 and served on Nauvoo High Council. He was divorced from Lucinda by 1853.

A few authors wrote that Lucinda apostatized, joined a Catholic convent in the 1860s, and worked in a hospital during the Civil War. But evidence supporting this is thin. Recently discovered evidence proves that she died at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Lucinda Wesley Smith in Memphis, Tennessee in 1856, thus rendering untenable the theory that she was in any way connected with a convent and with the Civil War.

**Delcena Johnson.** Sealed to Joseph prior to July 1842. She was the former wife of Lyman Sherman, a dedicated member of the Church. Sherman's crowning achievement in the Church was to be designated as a member of the Quorum of Twelve apostles, but he died of an illness in February 1839 in Far West, Missouri, before he could be notified of his call. Delcena died in 1854, in Utah.

**Eliza R. Snow.** Born January 21, 1804. She was sealed to Joseph June 29, 1842. She died in 1887, in Utah.

**Sarah Ann Whitney.** Born March 22, 1825. She was sealed to Joseph July 27, 1842. She was married to Joseph C. Kingsbury on April 29, 1843 several months *after* she was sealed to Joseph.

This is the only polyandrous relationship formed in which the civil marriage occurred following the sealing to Joseph Smith. In this civil marriage, Joseph Kingsbury was simply a "front husband." He married Sarah Ann at the request of Joseph apparently to dispel suspicions then focused on the Prophet. There apparently was a time when law officers were seeking evidence of Joseph's polygamous relationships. A plural wife of Joseph's could feign legal matrimony to someone else in order to shield him from suspicions from those law officers. Kingsbury was a member of the Church. Apparently, it was understood that Sarah Ann and Kingsbury would never consummate the union. She died in 1873, in Utah.

A colorful addendum to this story is that years later in 1880, Kingsbury submitted a bill to the Church for his financial support of Sarah Ann. On November 23, 1880, Kingsbury asked President John Taylor that \$8,000 "be remitted in consideration of services he had rendered in Nauvoo, and after leaving there, to the Prophet Joseph, in keeping one of his wives, Sarah Whitney, daughter of Bishop N. K. Whitney" (L. John Nuttall, Notes for J. Taylor Office Journal, HDC, d1346). It is doubtful that President Taylor ever paid this "debt." There may have been other "front husbands" during Joseph's polygamy experiences.

**Martha McBride.** Born March 17, 1805. She was sealed to Joseph during the summer 1842. She died in 1901, in Utah.

**Sylvia Porter Sessions.** Born July 31, 1818. She was sealed to Joseph between November 29, 1842 and approximately May 18, 1843. She was married to Windsor Lyon April 21, 1838. He was a member of the Church but excommunicated in November 1842. He was rebaptized in January 1846 following Joseph's death. Windsor fathered three children with Sylvia prior to his excommunication and two after

his 1846 rebaptism. The only child conceived while he was out of the Church was Josephine who was probably the daughter of Joseph Smith.

**Ruth Vose Sayers.** She was sealed to Joseph in February 1843. She was married to Edward Sayers on January 23, 1841 and was married at the time she was sealed to Joseph. Her sealing to Joseph was probably an “eternity only” sealing. Sayers was not a church member, but lived among the saints until his death. Edward did not believe in an eternal life hereafter, and there is evidence that Edward conceived the idea that his wife should be sealed to Joseph. She died in 1884, in Utah.

**Flora Ann Woodworth.** She was sealed to Joseph during the spring of 1843. Joseph presented her with a gold watch. A few months later there was a confrontation between Emma and Flora Ann. Emma demanded a return of the gold watch. Flora reacted radically to the quarrel by marrying Carlos Gove, a non-member, the very next day (Andrew Jenson Papers, ca. 1871-1942, MS 17956; LDS Church Archives, Box 49, folder 16, document #14). The prophet gave his consent to this marriage and allowed Flora to separate from (divorce) him without any public repercussions.

Carlos Gove turned out to be an anti-Mormon. She received her endowment in the Nauvoo Temple on January 17, 1846 and a temple sealing to Joseph Smith by proxy on February 4<sup>th</sup>. Despite her husband’s dislike for the Church, Flora convinced him to accompany the migration. They got as far as Winter Quarters where they remained. Flora had confided, prior to her death, that she had never been happy with her husband, and intended to cling to the Prophet. She died in 1850, in Iowa.

**Emily Dow Partridge.** Born February 28, 1824. She was sealed to Joseph March 4 and May 11, 1843. She died in 1899, in Utah.

**Eliza Maria Partridge.** Born April 20, 1820. She was sealed to Joseph March 4 and May 11, 1843. She died in 1886, in Utah.

**Almera Woodard Johnson.** She was sealed to Joseph April 1843. She died in 1896, in Utah.

**Lucy Walker.** Born April 30, 1826. She was sealed to Joseph May 1, 1843. She died in 1910, in Utah.

**Maria Lawrence.** Born December 18, 1823. She was sealed to Joseph May 1843. She died in 1847, in Illinois.

**Sarah Lawrence.** Born May 13, 1826. She was sealed to Joseph in May 1843. She died in 1872, in California. She is the only one of Joseph thirty-four plural wives who appears to have openly denied a relationship with him in later life. She married a dissipated character who initially claimed to be “a Mormon.” She became embittered against the Church and on a visit to Salt Lake City, she denied any prior association with the prophet and became angry when others disputed her word. She returned to California, and died there.

**Helen Mar Kimball.** Born August 25, 1828. Sealed to Joseph May 1843 when she was only fourteen years of age. She died in 1896, in Utah.

**Hannah Ells.** She was sealed to Joseph prior to the summer 1843. She died in 1845, in Illinois.

**Elvira Annie Cowles.** Born November 23, 1813. She was sealed to Joseph June 1, 1843. She was married to Jonathan Holmes on December 1, 1842 and was married at the time she was sealed to Joseph. Jonathan was baptized a member of the Church in 1832. He was a faithful church member, serving as a bodyguard and pallbearer to the Prophet. He stood as proxy when Elvira was sealed to Joseph Smith in the Nauvoo Temple. It is possible Jonathan may have been a “front husband” to Elvira just as Joseph C. Kingsbury was a “front husband” to Sarah Ann Whitney. She died in 1871, in Utah.

**Rhoda Richards.** Born August 8, 1784. She was sealed to Joseph June 12, 1843. She died in 1879, in Utah.

**Desdemona Fullmer.** Born October 6, 1809. She was sealed to Joseph in July 1843. She died in 1886, in Utah.

**Olive G. Frost.** Born 1820-23. She was sealed to Joseph in the summer of 1843. She died in 1845, in Illinois.

**Malissa (Melissa) Lott.** Born January 9, 1824. She was sealed to Joseph September 20, 1843. She died in 1898, in Utah.

**Nancy Maria Winchester.** Born August 10, 1828. Her sealing date to Joseph is unknown. She was sealed to Joseph when she was fourteen (or possibly 15) years of age. She died in 1876, in Utah.

**Esther Dutcher Smith.** Born January 25, 1811. Her sealing date to Joseph is unknown. She was married to Albert Smith on May 17, 1826 and was married to him at the time she was sealed to the Prophet Joseph. She died in 1856, in Utah.

**Fanny Murray Young.** She was sealed to Joseph on November 2, 1843. Fanny was Brigham Young’s widowed older sister. She is thought by some to be Joseph’s last plural wife. She died in 1859, in Utah.

Some historians have included other women as possible wives of the Prophet, though evidence is weak or absent. These include Vienna Jacques, Hannah Ann Dubois, Sarah Bapson, Mrs. G\*\*\*\*\*, Sarah Scott, Mary Houston, Mrs. Tailor, Mary Heron, and Mary Ann Frost.

### **Did Joseph’s Polygamous Marriages Include Sexual Relations?**

The Prophet taught that one reason for polygamy was “to multiply and replenish the earth” (D&C 132:63). Hence, Joseph taught that sexual relations were justified and expected in polygamous unions. Evidence of sexual relations, however, is lacking or unpersuasive in four groups: (1) women to whom Joseph Smith was not married; (2) women sealed for the next life only, that is, “eternity only” sealings; (3) in his sealings to two fourteen-year-old wives; and (4) in situations of polyandry.

Though sexuality was permitted in Joseph Smith's plural marriages, it does not appear that conjugal interactions were a common occurrence. Opportunities for Joseph to spend intimate time with his plural wives would have been limited by many factors including his parenting responsibilities with Emma, his preoccupation with church and civic matters, the constant need for secrecy, the scrutiny of dissenters and unbelievers, and Emma's mostly intolerant watchfulness. Emily Partridge recalled:

We [Emily and Eliza Partridge] were sealed [to Joseph] in her presence with her full and free consent. It was the 11<sup>th</sup> of May, but before the day was over she turned around or repented of what she had done and kept Joseph up till very late in the night talking to him. She kept close watch of us. If we were missing for a few minutes, and Joseph was not at home, the house was searched from top to bottom and from one end to the other, and if we were not found, the neighborhood was searched until we were found (Emily Dow Partridge Young, "Incidents in the Early Life of Emily Dow Partridge," 5, in Marriott Library, Special Collections. See also Emily D. P. Young, autobiographical sketch, "Written Especially for My Children, January 7, 1877," manuscript owned by Emily Young Knopp).

Reliable firsthand accounts in four cases and credible secondhand accounts in another five relationships are available and suggest that Joseph had sexual relations with the following plural wives: Fanny Alger, Louisa Beaman, Emily Dow Partridge, Eliza Maria Partridge, Almera Woodard Johnson, Lucy Walker, Sylvia Sessions, Malissa Lott, and Olive Frost.

In five other relationships there is some historical evidence of sexual relationships, but the evidence suffers from ambiguities or other problems. These include: Eliza R. Snow, Sarah Ann Whitney, Hannah Ells, Maria Lawrence, and Sarah Lawrence.

Evidence regarding any possible physical relationship between Joseph and his other plural wives is lacking.

### **Children of Joseph Smith's Polygamy**

That sexual relations were uncommon is also reflected by the observation that only two or three pregnancies have been mentioned, and only two have been documented with any degree of reliability. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner stated: "I know he [Joseph] had three children. . . . They are not known as his children as they go by other names" ("Remarks" at Brigham Young University, April 14, 1905, Harold B. Lee Library Special Collections). Current research supports the idea that one daughter, Josephine Lyon, was born to Sylvia Sessions in 1845. Also a child was born to Olive Frost that did not live long or may have miscarried.

Most of Joseph Smith's plural wives were fertile and young—capable of conception if the timing was right. The Prophet was virile, having fathered nine children with Emma despite their long periods of time apart and challenging schedules.

Antagonists and tabloids argued that several other children were born to Joseph and his plural wives, but their existence was kept secret. However, decades after the martyrdom when RLDS missionaries were claiming that Joseph was not a polygamist, and Utah Church authorities were aggressively combating their claims, it is probable that if they (the Utah Church) would have known of any children fathered by the Prophet with his plural wives, they would have publicly acknowledged it. No convincing evidence has been found to support a third child born to the Prophet's plural wives, despite intense research by multiple investigators.

### **The “Naturalistic” View of Joseph’s Plural Marriages: “Joseph Was in it for the Sex”**

Much of the controversy surrounding plural marriage centers on the question, “Just what motivated Joseph Smith to teach and practice plural marriage?” It is interesting and revealing to note that the most common answer advanced by critics is that he wanted to expand his sexual opportunities. This cynical view has been proclaimed in the vast majority of publications, early and recent, that have addressed the topic. The number of these is prodigious. For those who do not believe Joseph Smith was a prophet, it would be illogical to conclude otherwise. Richard L. Bushman in his *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005) wrote: “Polygamy is an interesting thing because it serves as a Rorschach test. People project onto Joseph Smith and polygamists their own sense about human nature.” And, I would add that their sense of human nature come from their sense of themselves.

It should be noted that all of these allegations, mostly by anti-Mormons, are not backed by evidence. In the decades following Joseph's death, hundreds of authors accused Joseph and the other men in the Church of immoral and unrestrained behavior in their practice of polygamy. Most are sensationalized, and all go beyond all available evidence. It is interesting to note that there were no such accusations prior to 1842 when John C. Bennett wrote his exposé, *The History of the Saints; or, an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842).

### **Alleged Sexual Involvement of Joseph Smith with Women Who Were Not his Plural Wives**

Twenty-six different individuals have accused Joseph Smith of sexual involvement with women to whom he was not married. By the Prophet's own teachings, such relations would have been considered to be adulterous unions (D&C 42:22-24; 63:14-19; 132:43). Below, I will name and briefly discuss each of these accusers. We claim that Joseph never committed adultery and these accusations are simply anti-

Mormon propaganda raised by the enemies of the Church. The following are reasons why their charges are untenable and false:

1. It is curious that all of the allegations raised are from published accounts rather than from private individual manuscripts such as journals, diaries, or letters from alleged victims or their immediate families. That is, none exist as part of a confidential communication between a victim and her family or her friends. No woman, herself, ever claimed that Joseph Smith tried to seduce her to have sexual relations and succeeded. It appears that each accusation was brought to light as a reiteration of published accusations originating from Joseph's enemies.

2. None of the accusers provide a second witness, even though many of the charges reportedly involved multiple alleged indiscretions that could have easily been witnessed by other interested parties.

3. Joseph's reported brazenness in many of the accounts directly contradicts his well-known patterns of behavior. Available historical accounts suggest that when dealing with his polygamous wives, he always emphasized and maintained confidentiality and discretion. The principle of polygamy prior to his death had not yet been announced to the Church and thus, by instructions from the Lord, was to be kept secret. To his plural wife Sarah Whitney and her parents, he stressed: "Only be careful to escape observation, as much as possible. I know it is a heroic undertaking . . . Burn this letter as soon as you read it; keep all [herein] locked up in your breast. My life depends upon it" (Joseph Smith to Newel K. Whitney, Elizabeth Ann Whitney. 18 August 1842, copy of holograph in possession of the Brian C. Hales. Quoted by Dean C. Jessee, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1984, 539-40). After teaching Joseph B. Noble of plural marriage, Joseph said "In revealing this to you, I have placed my life in your hands" (Joseph B. Noble in Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:38, 1869, CA MS 3423 fd 5). Emily Dow Partridge remembered that regarding plural marriage in Nauvoo: "Everything was so secret" ("Incidents of the life of a Mormon Girl," n.d. MS d 5220 fd 2, CA). Sometime after the Prophet's assassination, his plural wives became aware of each other, forming personal friendships that probably did not exist in Nauvoo because of the clandestine nature of polygamy practiced there. On April 28, 1886, Emily wrote to fellow plural wife Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner: "Of course you heard of my sister Eliza's death. Also Sister Marinda Hyde's death, Desdmona Fullmer has passed away also, all went pretty near together. It seems as if Joseph was calling his family home" (Emily Dow Partridge Young to Mary Elizabeth Lightner, April 28, 1886, copy of holograph in LKNC, Marriott Library, University of Utah). In all known research documents, caution and secrecy were maintained and appear to have guided his personal interactions that dealt with marriage and sexuality.

4. Brian C. Hales, who has reviewed all available documents containing accusations of Joseph's committing adultery with women to whom he was not married,

has concluded, “In summary, I have yet to identify any convincing evidence in historical record that Joseph Smith was sexually involved with a non-wife.”

**The twenty-six accusers.** Ordinarily, I would not think it necessary to review each of the twenty-six accusers who charged Joseph Smith with gross sexual misconduct. It should be sufficient to know that there were several anti-Mormons who did so accuse him. However, I have chosen to briefly discuss each accuser to give the reader a feeling for who they were, the type of people they were, for their credibility, and for their motives in making their accusations. This specific review has been at once both enlightening and comforting to me.

**1. Levi Lewis.** He was the son of Emma’s uncle Nathaniel Lewis, a Methodist minister. He wrote that he had “been acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. and Martin Harris, and that he has heard them both say, adultery was no crime” (“Mormonism,” *Susquehanna Register and Northern Pennsylvanian*, May 1, 1834; quoted in Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* [sic], Painesville: by the author, 1834, 268-69 and by Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002, 4:296-97). The entire quote was: “Levi Lewis states, that he has “been acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. and Martin Harris, and that he has heard them both say, adultery was no crime. Harris said he did not blame Smith his (Smith’s) attempt to seduce Eliza Winters &c . . . With regard to the plates, Smith said God had deceived him—which was the reason he (Smith) did not show them.”

Such a recollection greatly contrasts with numerous other public and private evidences showing that Joseph Smith taught and practiced a rigorous moral standard. Also, that such hypocrisy would have been unnoticed by others would be most surprising. The Book of Mormon sexual standard that placed extra-marital relations next to murder in severity (Alma 39:5) was well known to Latter-day Saints in 1843.

Another problematic part of the quote is its statement that Joseph “did not show” the golden plates to others. He obviously did show them to others including the three and eight witnesses. Thus, this part of the statement is obviously blatantly false.

Third, it is unclear whether Levi Lewis was ever positioned to witness the two men (Martin Harris and Joseph Smith) making declarations they would later contradict on numerous other occasions throughout their lives. Neither is anything known about the circumstances through which Martin might have become privy to sensitive information regarding Joseph Smith’s alleged immoral behavior with Eliza Winters.

**2. Dan Vogel.** Dan Vogel is an accomplished author and researcher. Unfortunately he appears to have the tendency of going beyond available evidence resulting in his making assertions that consistently seem to portray Joseph Smith in a negative light. Examples follow:

- In a statement above, Levi Lewis purportedly quotes Martin Harris. Lewis implies that Martin Harris knew of and did not object to Joseph’s trying to seduce Eliza Winters. It is certainly doubtful that Martin Harris would approve of this action by

Joseph Smith. The chance that Levi Lewis correctly quotes Martin Harris here is most unlikely. Vogel distorts this report of Levi Lewis and has Martin Harris saying that *Levi Lewis* accused Joseph Smith of trying to seduce Eliza Winters. Vogel states that Martin Harris said that *Levi Lewis* made the accusation. Vogel's version—that Martin Harris allegedly made this statement—implies that Martin thought this worth mentioning. It would seem to suggest that Vogel hopes to imply that Martin thought it a distinct possibility. This error transforms a dubious account into a firsthand allegation. Vogel's distortion in this case is surprising and disappointing.

- In addition, Vogel states that in an interview of Eliza Winters years later, she did not “confirm or deny” the Levi Lewis allegation (Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002, 4:346). In fact, available evidence does not disclose that the incident was even discussed. Here Vogel goes clearly beyond the evidence in his assertion.

- Regarding another accusation, Vogel writes: “His [Joseph Smith's] July 1830 trial in South Bainbridge included testimony accusing him of improper conduct with two of Josiah Stowell's daughters, Miriam and Rhoda” (*Ibid.*, 4:206 footnote 9). In fact, no such trial records exist that contain any “testimony accusing him of improper conduct” matching Vogel's description. This error carries the potential of turning non-evidence into evidence. It indicates Vogel is also capable of pure fabrication.

**3. William Bond.** Bond was an obvious anti-Mormon. In his book, *The Early History of Mormonism, and the True Source Where the Aborigines of the Continent Came from* (Portland: Schwab Brothers), Bond accuses Joseph of sexual impropriety with a woman in the year 1829-30 while visiting Erie county, Pennsylvania. Bond does not identify the source of his allegation and many of the details contradict contemporaneous historical accounts. This was an empty accusation indeed.

**4. Clark Braden.** Braden was born in 1831. He became a Protestant minister in 1848 and served as a pastor of thirty-five different churches before his death in 1915. He had a reputation as a fierce and skillful debater. He was an excellent public speaker, and his technique in debating was to pepper his opponents with accusations that were poorly documented. He was often criticized for his poor research on the topics he would address. As his opponents tried to respond, they would find themselves trying to correct misinformation rather than promoting their own agenda.

In 1884 in Kirtland, a public debate occurred between Braden, representing the Church of Christ, and one E. L. Kelley representing the RLDS Church. In that debate Braden presented rapid-fire over a dozen accusations of immoral conduct against Joseph Smith, several of which can be shown to be blatant falsehoods and the rest based upon questionable evidence or upon no evidence at all. Despite lack of evidence for his allegations during this speech, several have been repeated many times in antagonistic literature.

**5. Nancy Smith Alexander.** Alexander wrote a statement that has been quoted as genuine by several anti-Mormon authors. While we have the quotations, we don't have the original manuscript in which it was allegedly written. The statement is: "My father, William Smith [no relation to the Prophet's brother William B. Smith] and mother became Mormons in Bolton, N. Y., and moved to Kirtland Ohio in 1836. After Jo Smith, the Mormon Prophet robbed us, I worked out at housework at 25 cents a week. My sister received 50 cents a week; we gave our wages to our parents. Father had broken his arm six weeks before leaving N. Y., and could not work. Mother had to work very hard, she had 14 children."

The details provided in the document help to corroborate one Nancy Maria Smith as the first person in the account. She was the daughter of William and Lydia Calkins Smith, born December 1, 1822. She and her family gathered to Kirtland only to apostatize, blaming Joseph Smith for robbing them. Nancy married Justin Alexander on September 4, 1850 at Kirtland. She and her husband stayed in the area of Kirtland. A problem with this woman as an accuser is the inability of historians to corroborate her relationship to the document that contains the quotation in question. The original document has not been located.

**6. Richard Van Wagoner.** In his book *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*, Van Wagoner writes: "Gossip in Ohio's Western Reserve linked Smith to Athalia and Nancy Rigdon, Sidney's sixteen and fifteen-year-old daughters" (634). Van Wagoner doesn't explain the specific nature of the described "link," but sexuality seems to be implied. To support the presence of a "link," Van Wagoner refers to an 1884 testimony from a man named William S. Smith (no relation to the Prophet's brother) that was recorded during the debate between Clark Braden and RLDS member E. L. Kelley. Nothing in the script of the debate between Clark Braden and E. L. Kelley describes or even implies a "link" between Joseph Smith and the Rigdon daughters. No other evidence is presented. Van Wagoner's assertion regarding the "link" is recklessly undocumented while contradictory evidence is available.

In another of Van Wagoner's publications, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, first edition 1986, second edition 1989), he speaks of "rumors" and "stories" to his readers as if they together constituted a documented history of Joseph Smith's polygamy for the 1832-35 period. On pages 4-6 Van Wagoner quotes several narratives in succession without providing his readers with any analysis of credibility of the accounts. First he misquotes the Levi Lewis allegation concerning Eliza Winters. Next comes a rendition of Clark Braden's late account (1884) concerning Marinda Nancy Johnson. This is followed by Benjamin Winchester's charges (from 1889). After this, readers encounter the Vienna Jacques story (reportedly from Nancy Maria Smith Alexander in 1886). Lastly, Van Wagoner rounds out his "history" by including several antagonistic accounts of the Fanny Alger

relationship (1872 and later) concluding that it did not include a “distinctly polygamous marriage ceremony.”

As the first author to write a chronology of Mormon polygamy, Richard Van Wagoner is commended for his 1986 research and willingness to tackle a difficult subject. Yet it appears he lined up dubious historical sources chronologically without checking credibility or providing context. That most of these accounts were not published until many decades later may undermine their ability to accurately describe any contemporaneous unfolding of plural marriage during the 1832-35 period. To repeatedly quote “rumors” and “stories” without analyzing reliability might sensationalize common gossip, transforming it into documented history in the minds of his readers.

Van Wagoner’s audience will easily conclude from his reconstructions that Joseph Smith was a licentious womanizer. That seems to be the conclusion he wants to portray. However, new documents and greater scrutiny of existing manuscripts indicate that Van Wagoner’s interpretations of the beginnings of plural marriage may be dated, problematic, and simply false.

**7. Sarah Pratt.** Historical evidence supports that in 1841, John C. Bennett and Sarah Pratt had an illicit sexual relationship. An August 31, 1842, special edition of *The Wasp*, contained the statements of J. B. Backenstos and Stephen and Zeruiah Goddarda supporting the charge (The affidavits have been dismissed as inaccurate by authors like Richard Van Wagoner and Gary Bergera. However, close examination demonstrates they are reliable and attempts by antagonists to discredit them are based upon faulty reasoning). D. Michael Quinn connects Sarah to Bennett as a wife (or sexual partner) by referring to her as “Sarah M. Bates (Pratt, Bennett, Pratt)” (*The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994, 503). Quinn intends to say that Sarah was married to Orson Pratt, then John C. Bennett, then Orson Pratt again, although nothing exists to suggest that a liaison between Sarah and Bennett would have included a marriage ceremony.

Sarah denied any relationship with Bennett and accused Joseph Smith of trying to seduce her. On January 20, 1843, Joseph Smith told Orson Pratt, Sarah’s husband: “She lied about me. I never made the offer which she said I did. I will not advise you to break up your family, unless it were asked of me. I would counsel you to get a bill from your wife and marry a virtuous woman and raise a new family” (minutes of a meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, January 20, 1843—on *New Mormon Studies: A Comprehensive Resource Library*, CD-ROM. Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates, 1998). One year earlier, Joseph Smith told Orson Pratt that “if he did believe his wife and follow her suggestions he would go to hell” (Elden Jay Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*. 1801-44. Salt Lake City: Smith Secretarial Service, 1968, August 8, 1842, 120-21).

In 1845 Sidney Rigdon interviewed Orson Pratt: “When Pratt was interrogated about this [disagreement with Joseph Smith concerning his wife Sarah in 1842], he said

that he had got a bad spirit when he said so, and that he had repented of it. Thus, literally telling the people that all Smith said about his wife was true" (Sydney Rigdon, "Tour East," *Messenger and Advocate of the Church of Christ*, volume 2, number 2, December, Pittsburgh, 1845, 1).

In 1875 Sarah Pratt reported: "I was formerly a member of the Mormon Church and don't know that I have been cut off. I have not been a believer in the Mormon doctrines for thirty years and am now considered an apostate, I believe" (excerpt from an undated column of the *Salt Lake Herald*, copied into the "Journal History" for January 22, 1875, Richard E. Turley, Jr. *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Provo, Utah: BYU Press, volume 2, DVD #6).

Wilhelm Wyl (a pseudonym for Wilhelm Ritter von Wymetal) in 1886 used Sarah Pratt for his source in accusing Joseph Smith. When he asked her about the statement, "Joseph had eighty wives at the time of his death." Sarah replied: "He had many more, my dear sir; at least he had seduced many more, and those with whom he had lived without their being sealed to him, were sealed to him after his death" (*Mormon Portraits, or the Truth About Mormon Leaders From 1830 to 1886*. Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Co., 1886, 54). There is simply no reliable evidence that Joseph seduced any woman at any time or that he lived with other women without being married to them.

On March 31, 1886, Sarah Pratt signed a statement affirming: "This cerifys [sic] that I was well acquainted with the Mormon Leaders and Church in general, and know that the principle [sic] statements in John Bennetts [sic] Book of Mormonism are true" (Sarah Pratt, Handwritten statement, March 31, 1886, Mormon Collection, Chicago Historical Society; copy in D. Michael Quinn Papers, Yale University, Special Collections, Uncat WA MS. 98, 881028, bx3, fd 3). So, we are forced to choose. We must accept the truth of Bennet's book, *The History of the Saints* or decide that Sarah Pratt is an unreliable witness.

**8. Mary Ettie Coray Smith.** Stanley S. Ivins, arguable the most extensive researcher on Mormon polygamy, considered Mary Ettie Smith's writings as "inaccurate and of no value" (Stanley S. Ivins Collection, USHSS notebook 4, 63). Exposé author Fanny Stenhouse described Ettie Smith in 1875 as "a lady who wrote very many years ago and in her writings, so mixed up fiction with what was true, that it was difficult to determine where the one ended and the other began (*"Tell It all," The Story of a Life's Experiences in Mormonism*. Hartford: A. D. Worthington & Co., 1875, 618).

**9. William Hall.** Accusations against Joseph Smith were published in 1852 by William Hall in *The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed; containing many Facts and Doctrines concerning that singular people during seven years' membership with them, from 1840 to 1847*, (Cincinnati: I. Hart). Non-LDS sociologist Lawrence Foster wrote: "William Hall's accounts are of extremely dubious accuracy and must be evaluated with the caution used in evaluating any malicious gossip" (*Religion and Sexuality: Three*

*American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981, 308 n. 93). In most ways, Hall's claims resemble tabloid level reporting. No evidence is available to substantiate his accusations and reliable historical sources contradict his reconstructions.

**10. Fawn Brodie.** The most influential and widely distributed interpretation of Joseph Smith's involvement with plural marriage was written by Fawn Brodie in her 1945 biography, *No Man Knows My History*.

A major weakness of Brodie's work is her excessive dependence upon published sources rather than original personal manuscripts (journals, diaries, letters). Virtually all books and pamphlets printed by non-Mormons in the 1800s reflected the idea that Nauvoo polygamy arose because Joseph Smith was a womanizer. Clergy and anti-Mormons wrote numerous reports during that time period with that singular message. Any writer who, like Brodie, preferentially quotes printed documents will also reflect this view. Excommunicated from the LDS Church, Fawn Brodie composed her biography without doing any research in the Church Historical Department, even though it holds the largest cache of pertinent documents, including hundreds of handwritten manuscripts written by participants.

LDS historian Marvin S. Hill wrote: "With regard to plural marriage, where Brodie is so confident that the real Joseph Smith, the pleasure lover and sensualist, shows through, there is no evidence in his writings to suggest that he thought of it in other than religious terms. Had Brodie seen more of what is in the archives she might have hesitated before adopting her thesis of intentional fraud" ("Brodie Revisited: A Reappraisal." *Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought*, winter 1972, 4:76). Charles L. Cohen, professor of history and religious studies at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and director of the Lubar Institute for the study of the Abrahamic Religions, assessed: "Brodie's insight that Smith's life must have become sexually stale. . . rests on inference rather than evidence" ("No Man Knows My Psychology: Fawn Brodie, Joseph Smith, and Psychoanalysis," *BYU Studies*, 2005, 1:67).

Undoubtedly the popularity of Brodie's biography is due to the impressive writing style and the prose she produced. In addition, her credentials are impressive. However, the greatest factor propelling her views among subsequent generations is undoubtedly that she presents a version of Joseph Smith that is appealing to readers who disbelieve his message.

**11. Benjamin Winchester.** Benjamin Winchester and his family were baptized in 1833 and moved to Kirtland. He was a missionary for the Church in 1837-39. Following his mission he moved, in 1839, to Philadelphia. In December 1839 the Philadelphia Branch was organized by the visiting prophet Joseph Smith. Three months later Winchester was installed as the presiding elder or president. He proved early on, to be rebellious, stubborn, contentious, and completely unwilling to take counsel. In 1841, the apostle John E. Page recommended, in a letter to Joseph Smith, that

Winchester be replaced as president of the branch. He was summoned to Nauvoo and given a severe reproof by Joseph. In January 1842, he was suspended from his office for disobedience. In April 1843, Joseph Smith said of him: "You can never make anything out of Benjamin Winchester, if you take him out of the channel he wants to be in" (Journal History for the date, April 19, 1843; Richard E. Turley, Jr. *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Provo, Utah: BYU Press, volume 2, DVD #1. See also *HC*, 5:367).

In May 1843 Joseph received a letter from Sister Armstrong of Philadelphia complaining of slanderous conduct of Benjamin Winchester. He was again called to Nauvoo at the end of May and a council was immediately convened to deal with his insubordination including his accusations that the Prophet was guilty of "improper conduct" with "Miss Smith." Joseph called Winchester's accusations "damnable lies." Joseph sharply rebuked Winchester, told him he had a lying spirit, and told him of his many errors (*HC*, 5:410-11). That same day the Prophet recorded in his journal: "Winchester was silenced" (Scott H. Faulring, ed. *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989, 381).

Winchester thereafter had a mercurial relationship with the Church. After the Prophet's death, he aligned himself with Sidney Rigdon's group in Pittsburgh. In the 1850s he moved to Iowa and embraced "spiritualism." He visited Utah in 1871 and in 1889 wrote a recollection entitled "Primitive Mormonism," for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, wherein he vented his frustrations in an article highly critical of Joseph Smith.

**12. John C. Bennett.** The ostensible strength of Bennett's witness stems from the fact that he claimed he was a polygamy insider and therefore privy to information known only to those who had the confidence of the Prophet.

Current research, however, suggests that Bennett was positioned close enough to hear rumors of Joseph Smith's plural marriage practices, but that he never learned anything about celestial marriage directly from the Prophet. Andrew F. Smith acknowledged: "No primary evidence has been presented indicating that Bennett was officially involved in the evolving practice of polygamy at Nauvoo" (John Cook Bennett's Nauvoo," *The John Whitmer Historical Association 2002 Nauvoo Conference Special Edition*, Nauvoo: JWHS, 114-15). This conclusion is strengthened by several observations:

- The timeline shows that Bennett had lost the confidence of the Prophet and was an outsider before even a handful of men had entered plural marriage in Nauvoo. In May of 1842, he was excommunicated for grossly immoral conduct. At that time only Heber C. Kimball, Vinson Knight, and Brigham Young had also married polygamous wives under Joseph's direction. By that time Bennett and his followers had seduced many women in the name of his "spiritual wifery" practices.

- Bennett's own behaviors in 1841 and early 1842 fail to provide any evidence that he was aware of the principle of plural marriage as Joseph was then privately

teaching. Bennett's directives involving "spiritual wifery" bore no resemblance to Joseph Smith's teachings on polygamy. Bennett never practiced the principle of authorized plural marriage. The only principle Bennett espoused at that time compatible with the principle of plural marriage was keeping his practices secret. In the case of Bennett, he tried to keep his sins secret.

- Bennett's "spiritual wifery" included no marriage ceremonies or marital vows prior to conjugal relations. It was only clandestine, opportunistic seduction and then sharing a bed.

- Bennett's description of the "Church's system of polygamy," as published in his book *History of the Saints*, does not resemble the authorized polygamy happening in the Church. Bennett referred to the system as the "Grand Lodge" or "Mormon Seraglio." A "seraglio" is a harem. The women involved in Bennett's "Relief Society" were classified as to their status in the system and wore veils with colors indicative of their status. The women of the lowest status wore white veils and were known as "Cyprian Saints." The more honored women were "Chambered Sisters of Charity" and wore green veils. The most honored were "Consecratees of the Cloister" or "Cloistered Saints" and wore black veils. The women in this last category were those "married or unmarried, who, by an express grant and gift of God, through his Prophet the Holy Joe, are set apart and consecrated to the use and benefit of particular individuals as secret, spiritual wives." If Bennett ever learned the details of Joseph Smith's polygamy, he never so indicated in his writings or recorded teachings. He obviously had his "own system."

A summary of his system that marks it as completely distinct from Joseph's teachings includes:

- a. He spoke of his system as "spiritual wifery."
- b. He never spoke of his system as a restoration of Old Testament polygamy.
- c. He never spoke of, and was obviously unaware of, the commanding angel with a drawn sword.
- d. No ceremony was required. No husband-wife marital relationship was established.
- e. No priesthood authority was involved.
- f. There was no test of worthiness to qualify.
- g. There was no mention of eternity of the relationship.
- h. He taught the "doctrine" of "there is no sin where there is no accuser."
- i. Polyandrous sexual relations were permitted.
- j. His three orders of polygamous wives.

- Bennett was a known philanderer prior to arriving in Illinois in 1840 (see Richard and Pamela Price, *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy*, volume 1, Independence, Missouri: Price Publishing, 2000, 63-73, for a well-written synopsis of Bennett's pre-Nauvoo past). Just months after his appearance in Nauvoo, the Prophet became

apprised of his immoral past. It is doubtful Joseph would have shared religious principles that required absolute sexual purity (D&C 132:42-43) with a man who was struggling to control his own sexual lusts.

- Bennett did not abide by his own “order” of spiritual wifery described in his book, *History of the Saints*. Eye-witness testimony demonstrates that he propositioned women for sex without any pretense toward his system of “spiritual wifery.”

- Bennett wrote on October 28, 1843, over a year after his excommunication, to the *Hawk Eye* newspaper, printed at Burlington, Iowa: “This ‘marrying for eternity’ is not the ‘Spiritual wife doctrine’ noticed in my exposé [*The History of the Saints*], but is an entirely new doctrine established by special Revelation” (“Letter from General Bennett,” *Hawk Eye*, Burlington, Iowa, December 7, 1843, 1).

As early as January of 1840, Joseph Smith had discussed eternal marriage (without plurality) with Parley P. Pratt in Philadelphia (*Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt, One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 259-260). Joseph’s plural marriage to Louisa Beaman on April 5, 1841, was for both time and eternity, a fact unknown to Bennett. Bennett’s texts demonstrate that even in late 1843 (by which time he had completed his exposé), he was still unaware that “marrying for eternity” had been secretly taught during the entire time he lived with the saints in Illinois.

Even anti-Mormon writers acknowledged Bennett’s limitations. Apostate writer Ann Eliza Young commented on his exposé: “It is probable that the book would have had a much wider influence had not Bennett’s character been so well known. He was a notorious profligate, and was pronounced by Gentiles who had known him before he embraced Mormonism to be ‘the greatest villain unhung’” (*Wife Number 19*, Hartford: Dustin, Gilman, and Co., 1876, 74). Regarding his writings, anti-Mormon author T. B. H. Stenhouse cautioned: “There is no doubt, much truth in Bennett’s book . . . but no statement that he makes can be received with confidence” (*The Rocky Mountain Saints*, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1873, 184 foot note 2). Fawn Brodie admitted: “To any discerning reader Bennett revealed himself in his own book to be a base and ignoble opportunist” (*Now Man Knows My History*, 317).

It appears Bennett’s accusations of Joseph Smith’s sexual misconduct must be filtered through the lens that he was unaware of the Prophet’s teachings regarding eternal marriage, with all the ramifications that acknowledgement demands. Numerous other problems can be identified in Bennett’s claims. While he was positioned to hear rumors about plural wives, his distance from the nucleus of Nauvoo polygamy requires all authors who quote him to exercise great caution.

**13. Wilhelm Wyl (Wilhelm Ritter von Wymetal).** An unsophisticated anti-Mormon, he accused the Prophet of sexual misconduct in his book *Mormon Portraits*. Originally his book was intended to be a series of books. Only the first volume was ever printed. It contained the subtitle: *Joseph Smith, the Prophet, His Family and His*

*Friends*. Wyl's major problem is the poor quality of his scholarship. His writings typify polemic literature. That is, they use controversial and questionable arguments directed against Joseph. Throughout his book, he makes extreme claim supposedly issuing from unidentified or partially identified informants. The anonymity of the contributing voices largely removes accountability from the informants and Wyl himself. It also impedes efforts to verify the accounts.

Concerning the accuracy of Wyl's book, a few authors have commented. A non-Mormon writer Thomas Gregg wrote: "The statements of the interviews must be taken for what they are worth. While many of them are corroborated elsewhere . . . there are others that need verification, and some that probably exist only in the mind of the narrator. One fact, however, will obtrude itself upon the mind of the reader—that while these seceders are making all those damaging statements against the Prophet and the leaders at Nauvoo, it is remembered that only a year or so earlier they were denying them when made by others. It is for them to reconcile these damaging facts" (*The Prophet of Palmyra: Mormonism Reviewed and Examined in the Life, Character, and Career of its Founder*. New York: John B. Alden, 1890, 504). William Law, who lived in Nauvoo in the 1840s, addressing Wyl wrote: "Your informants . . . may, now and then, have drawn a little on their imagination, [and] may have reached false conclusions in some instances judged from circumstances and not from facts; doing injustice, perhaps, to the innocent" (letter written to Wyl, January 7, 1887; quoted in "The Mormons in Nauvoo: Three Letters from William Law on Mormonism, *The Daily Tribune*: Salt Lake City, July 3, 1887). Richard L. Bushman provided this assessment of Wyl: "[He] introduced a lot of hearsay into his account of Joseph. Personally I found all the assertions about the Prophet's promiscuity pretty feeble. Nothing there [was] worth contending with" (email correspondence between Richard L. Bushman and Dr. Brian Hales). Elder B. H. Roberts wrote: "[*Mormon Portraits*] follows very much in the style and tone of Bennett's exposé, and severer criticism than this could not be passed upon it" (*Comprehensive History of the Church*, 2:164).

Wyl's accusations suffer from lack of corroborating evidence. Several claims can be shown to be blatantly false, hence, his accuracy regarding any statement should not be assumed. Historical data from more reliable sources predictably and consistently contradict his claims.

**14. Ann Eliza Webb Young.** Born in 1844, she had no personal knowledge of Nauvoo plural marriage. Her qualifications as a "polygamy insider" were gained through two sources. First, her parents were devout church members in Kirtland and later in Nauvoo. Reportedly, Fanny Alger went to live with the Webb family after being cast out of the Smith home in 1836. Second, Ann Eliza Webb became a plural wife of Brigham Young and would have had some association with Brigham's other plural wives, some of whom had also been married to the prophet Joseph.

In 1876, she published *Wife No. 19, Or, The Story of a Life in Bondage* (Hartford Connecticut: Dustin, Gilman and Co.), which contains several allegations against Joseph Smith. Evaluation of her claims supports that she sensationalized many aspects of plural marriage. Many of her claims contain implausible accusations.

In 1887 Zina Huntington, plural wife of both Joseph and Brigham, speaking of Ann Eliza's claims, said: "She was not truthful . . . she has convicted herself out of her own mouth. . . . Ann Eliza knew she was misrepresenting the facts" ("J.J.J.," "Two Prophet's Widows," August 8, 1887, *Globe Democrat*). She obviously manifested deep anti-Mormon sentiments. Her claims were secondhand and late.

**15. William Arrowsmith.** He was not a member of the Church but was married to the sister of the apostle, John Taylor. Reportedly, on March 3, 1849, Arrowsmith called on anti-Mormon writer, John Bowes, and provided Bowes with a few complaints against Joseph and the Mormons. Arrowsmith claimed that some of the saints had persuaded his wife to leave him; that they had robbed him of three hundred dollars worth of property; that Joseph Smith was a drunken man; and that he (Arrowsmith) had slept at his mother-in-law's house when Joseph Smith slept with Orson Hyde's wife under the same roof. John Bowes eventually published his exposé entitled: *Mormonism Exposed, in Its Swindling and Licentious Abominations, Refuted in Its Principles, and the Claims of Its Head, the Modern Mohammed Joseph Smith, Who Is Proved to Have Been a Deceiver and No Prophet of God.*

**16. Phebe Louisa Holmes Welling.** She lived from 1851 to 1939. She was the daughter of one of Joseph's plural wives, Elvira Cowles. Towards the end of her life she wrote a history of her extended family. In this history she alleged that her mother, "lived with" Joseph Smith as a plural wife. We noted above that she was married to Jonathan Holmes. Phebe's wording is somewhat ambiguous, but could imply a sexual relationship. If Phebe was in fact alleging a sexual relationship and if she was correct, then it is likely that Jonathan Holmes may have served as a "front husband" to Elvira just as Joseph C. Kingsbury was a "front husband" to Sarah Ann Whitney. Without additional historical evidence, anyone asserting sexual polyandry from this account is going beyond the evidence.

**17. John Hyde.** In 1857 John Hyde, who had served as a missionary for the Church, apostatized and published *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York, 1857), a vitriolic attack on the Church. A review of his book showed that he was capable of extreme and ludicrous claims. For example, he asserted that proxy marriages for that dead had "to be consummated in the same manner as that of the living" implying some type of earthly sexual consummation was necessary with each such ceremony (88-89).

Kenneth L. Cannon, II wrote: "Hyde's activities did not go unnoticed in the Salt Lake City. In a sermon delivered on January 11, 1857, Heber C. Kimball publicly moved that the errant elder be 'cut off root and branch' from the Church and 'delivered

over to Satan to be buffeted in the flesh' because 'there is no sympathy to be shown unto such a man.'" ("A Strange Encounter: The English Courts and Mormon Polygamy," *BYU Studies*, volume 22, number 1, 76). His credibility is destroyed by his false statements made within his book and his highly biased antagonistic perspective.

**18. Edwin Mace.** Edwin Mace is a reliable witness who related in 1929 that his "parent told" him Joseph Smith was the father of Josephine Henry. It is probable that Edwin was sincere and that the rumor was known to a number of other people as well. Analysis of the gossip, however, shows that it could not have been true.

**19. Joseph H. Jackson.** Jackson often alleged a close relationship with Joseph Smith. However, after being befriended by Joseph on May 20, 1843, Joseph told William Clayton, three days later, "Jackson is rotten hearted" (George D. Smith, ed. *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995,105-06). It seems unlikely Joseph would have confided in him after that point, including any private conversation regarding plural marriage. In his book, *A Narrative of the Adventures and Experiences of Joseph H. Jackson in Nauvoo* (1844), he, however, repeatedly represented himself as belonging to Joseph's "inner circle." He made many salacious claims against the Prophet. His claims have no secondary source and many are as outlandish as "Joe Smith boasted to me that he . . . had seduced 400 women" (*Ibid.*, 13). His narrative brims with self-importance and unverifiable claims.

On January 10, 1844, Hyrum Smith testified before the Nauvoo City Council: "Jackson told him he meant to have his [Hyrum's] daughter. Jackson laid a plan with 4 or 5 persons to kidnap his daughter and threatened to shoot any man that should come near after he got her" (*HC*, 6:435). Non-LDS biographer Thomas Gregg wrote: "If half of Jackson's statements were true, the Prophet and some of his abettors should have been hung. If not true, Jackson himself should have been hung—in either case without benefit of clergy. His exposé was of much the same character as that of General [John C.] Bennett" (*The Prophet of Palmyra: Mormonism Reviewed and Examined in the Life, Character, and Career of its Founder* (New York: John B. Alden, 1890, 296-97).

**20. William Law.** Law is undoubtedly the most credible accuser among the twenty six. He arrived in Nauvoo in November of 1839. After observing the Prophet for one year, he wrote to his close friend and one-time idol, Isaac Russell, who was in the process of apostatizing: "It is needless for me to express my regret that you remain so long from the body of the Church. . . I have carefully watched his [Joseph's] movements since I have been here, and I assure you I have found him honest and honourable in all our transactions which have been very considerable. I believe he is an honest upright man, and as to his follies let who ever is guiltless throw the first stone at him, I shant do it" (Lyndon W. Cook, "'Brother Joseph Is Truly a Wonderful Man, He is All We Could Wish a Prophet to Be': Pre-1844 Letters of William Law," *BYU Studies*, 20:217-18).

In an 1871 letter, Law, who became a counselor in the First Presidency in January 1841, further reflected: "In 1842 I had not heard of such teachings [polygamy] .

. . . I think it was in 1843 that I first knew of the ‘plurality doctrine,’ I believe, however, it existed possibly as early as 1840” (T.B.H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints*, 198-99).

Law was one of the first to receive his temple endowment from the Prophet in 1842. It appears that William and Jane Law were introduced to the principle of plural marriage the following year by Joseph and Hyrum sometime after the revelation on celestial and plural marriage was written (July 12, 1843). Law was allowed to take a copy home for him and Jane, his wife, to read and consider. The *Nauvoo Expositor*, printed June 7, 1844, contained this affidavit from Law: “I hereby certify that Hyrum Smith did (in his office), read to me a certain written document, which he said was a revelation from God, he said that he was with Joseph when it was received. He afterwards gave me the document to read, and I took it to my house, and read it, and showed it to my wife, and returned it next day. The revelation (so called) authorized certain men to have more wives than one at a time, in this world and in the world to come. It said this was the law, and commanded Joseph to enter into the law. And also that he should administer to others. Several other items were in the revelation, supporting the above doctrines.” Law later wrote of the events following his reading of the revelation on celestial marriage: “After reading it I went directly to Joseph Smith and showed him the document. He looked at it and said it was all right. Said it was a great privilege granted to the High Priesthood. He spoke strongly in its favor. I remarked that it was in contradiction to the ‘Doctrine and Covenant.’ He said they were given when the Church was in its infancy, when they were babies, and had to be fed on milk, but now they were strong and must have meat. He seemed much disappointed in my not receiving the revelation. He was very anxious that I would accept the doctrine and sustain him in it. He used many arguments at various times afterwards in its favor. I suppose he dreaded my official influence in opposing and utterly rejecting the so-called revelation” (quoted in Charles A. Shook’s *The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy*. Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Co., 1914, 126).

It is not known precisely when the Laws officially declared themselves unbelieving. Brigham Young recalled in 1866: “In one council where Joseph undertook to teach the brethren and sisters, William Law was there and William and Hyrum and a few others were against Joseph. William Law made this expression: ‘If an angel from heaven was to reveal to me that a man should have more than one wife, and if it were in my power, I would kill him’” (quoted in Elden J. Watson, *Brigham Young Addresses, 1865-1869, A Chronological Compilation of Known Addresses of the Prophet Brigham Young*. Salt Lake City: Elden J. Watson, 1982, 5:53).

A journal entry recorded January 1, 1844, suggests that sometime prior to that date, he had seriously entertained the possibility of joining the two dozen Nauvoo pluralists then practicing polygamy. William and Jane Law’s son Richard S. Law gave this report in 1903: About the year 1842 [sic—should be 1843], he was present at an

interview between his father and the Prophet Joseph. The topic under discussion was the doctrine of plural marriage. William Law with his arms around the neck of the Prophet, was pleading with him to withdraw the doctrine of plural marriage, which he had at that time commenced to teach to some of the brethren, Mr. Law predicting that if Joseph would abandon the doctrine, "Mormonism would, in fifty or one hundred years, dominate the Christian world. Mr. Law pleaded for this with Joseph with tears streaming from his eyes. The Prophet was also in tears, but he informed the gentleman that he could not withdraw the doctrine, for God had commanded him to teach it, and condemnation would come upon him if he was not obedient to the commandment. During the discussion, Joseph was deeply affected. Mr. Richard S. Law says the interview was a most touching one, and was riveted upon his mind in a manner that has kept it fresh and distinct in his memory, as if it had occurred but yesterday. Mr. Law also says, that he has no doubt that Joseph believed he had received the doctrine of plural marriage from the Lord. The Prophet's manner being exceedingly earnest, so much so, that Mr. Law was convinced that the Prophet was perfectly sincere in his declaration" ("An Interesting Testimony with Richard S. Law, son of William Law" *Improvement Era*, volume 6, number 7, May 1903, 508-09).

William Law penned his accusation of seduction against Joseph Smith in his journal May 13, 1844: "He [Joseph] has lately endeavored to seduce my wife and has found her a virtuous woman" (Lyndon W. Cook, *William Law*, Orem Utah: Grandin Book Co., 1994, 53). Law's journal entry is crossed out for reasons that are not known. It is, however, still readable. It is possible that Joseph, seeing that William Law was inextricably headed toward complete apostasy, sought to save her by having her sealed to him for "eternity only." William Law was doubtless made aware of Joseph's attempt and misconstrued it as an attempt to seduce his wife. Possibly William Law became later aware of the true nature of Joseph's approach to Jane Law and crossed out the accusatory journal entry, knowing it improperly represented the actual events.

In 1887 Jane Law's son Tommy J. Law flatly contradicted the allegation that Joseph Smith had tried to seduce his mother: "What has been said about Joseph having made an attempt on her [Jane Law, his mother] is not true. In such a case my father would not have started a paper against him—he would have shot his head off. No man can be more delicate and conscientious about the relations of husband and wife and more apt to be terrible in such a case, than my father" ("The Law Interview," *The Daily Tribune*: Salt Lake City, July 31, 1887).

The Laws were excommunicated in April 1844. William Law would then take actions that would establish him in the minds of the saints as "a Judas." Choosing the plural marriage of Joseph to Maria Lawrence as a test case, William Law filed a law suit on May 23, 1844, in the Hancock County Circuit Court, located at Carthage. Knowing that a judge would not recognize the legitimacy of Joseph's sealing to Maria Lawrence, Law charged the Prophet with living "in an open state of adultery" with Maria from

October 12, 1843, to the day of filing (it is likely October 12, 1843, was the day Joseph confided in him details concerning his relationship with Maria). On June 7, 1844, William Law as the primary instigator, published the anti-Mormon *Nauvoo Expositor*, which set in motion the events that ultimately resulted in the death of the Prophet on June 27, 1844.

William Law's rejection of plural marriage did not initially include discarding the Book of Mormon and other evidences of Joseph's earlier prophetic calling. For him, Joseph was a fallen prophet, but not a false prophet. Law later abandoned Mormonism completely. One can only imagine Joseph's pain experienced by the apostasy and betrayal of his beloved and respected friend, William Law.

**21. Eliza Jane Churchill Webb.** Eliza Jane Churchill (born 1817) married Chauncy Webb (1811-1903) in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1835. By their own reported accounts, they were "intimately acquainted with Joseph Smith and his family for eleven years" (Wilhelm Wyl, *Joseph Smith the Prophet: His Family and His Friends, also entitled Mormon Portraits*, 7) and "offered to take her [Fanny Alger] until she could be sent to her relatives" (*Wife Number 19*) after she was sent away from the Smith home. Eliza Jane recalled: "Fanny Alger had lived in Joseph's family several years, and when she left there she came and lived with me a few weeks" (letter from Eliza Jane Churchill Webb, Lockport, New York, to Mary Bond, April 24, 1876).

Chauncy and Eliza Jane migrated to Nauvoo, settling in a home on Granger Street, where their daughter, Ann Eliza was born on September 13, 1844, a few months after the Prophet's death. She would later become a plural wife of Brigham Young and then apostatize. She would publish *Wife Number 19; or, The Story of a Life in Bondage, Being a Complete Exposé of Mormonism, and Revealing the Sorrows, Sacrifices, and Sufferings of Women in Polygamy in 1876*.

In 1846, Eliza Jane and Chauncy were sealed as a couple in the Nauvoo temple, where Chauncy served as a temple worker. They also traversed the plains to settle in the Tooele area of Utah. Chauncy served a mission in 1852. Later in life Chauncy married plural wives, and Eliza Jane became disaffected, moving to the East. There she wrote several letters that mention the early days of the Church, including Joseph Smith's plurality. In one of these, she repeats a claim from William Law that Joseph Smith had attempted to seduce Jane Law. If the account is correctly related and is simply an echo of William Law's accusation, this would not represent a separate allegation against the Prophet. See the above discussion of William Law.

**22. Edward Brotherton.** In 1845 Edward Brotherton (1816-1866) published a scathing anti-Mormon tract entitled: *Mormonism: Its Rise and Progress and the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Printed so soon after Joseph's death, the potential for accuracy is enhanced. Unfortunately, Brotherton appears to have done little more than repeat prior antagonistic accusations without any reference to primary manuscripts. His approach was to write with no basis in documentable reality. He is a purely secondary source of

hearsay and nonsense. For example, in his pamphlet he wrote: "Suffice it to say, that it is clearly established that a system of all but universal female prostitution exists at Nauvoo, as a secret regulation of the church, none but the faithful being permitted to have the privilege" (15).

**23. "Mrs. Davenport."** In 1939, more than one hundred years after Joseph Smith's first plural marriage, an otherwise unidentified Nan Hill quoted an also unidentified "Mrs. Davenport" as saying: "A later reminiscence from Chenango County [New York] claims that Smith was an early advocate of polygamy and that a Mrs. Davenport of Doravill, Chanango County, said 'she repeatedly heard her grandmother tell of Joe Smith coming into her home one day, long after she was married and saying that it had been revealed to him that she was to be his 'spiritual wife.' The woman, according to the story, ejected him from the house with her broom" (*Afton Enterprise*, July 20, 1939).

Efforts to identify Mrs. Davenport have been unsuccessful. Surprisingly, Dan Vogel included this account in his book *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*. Vogel comments: "The early rumors cannot be dismissed too quickly" (514). This seems a level of logic and scholarship unworthy of Vogel.

**24. Oliver Cowdery.** It appears that the Prophet's involvement with plural marriage in Kirtland in 1835-36 drove a wedge between him and Oliver. One account suggests that Oliver knew nothing of Joseph's relationship with Fanny Alger until the night Emma insisted that she be ejected from the Smith home (Ann Eliza Webb Young, *Wife No. 19*, 66-67). Several pieces of evidence indicate that prior to this episode, Joseph, in a ceremony performed by Levi Hancock, was married to Fanny. It is surprising to learn that Oliver was kept in the dark concerning Joseph's relationship with Fanny until that night. Perhaps Joseph sensed that Oliver would not be receptive to the restoration of Old Testament plural marriage and hence, approached Hancock to perform the ceremony. The earliest document referring to the Smith-Alger relationship is one written by Oliver in January 21, 1838. No other contemporary sources, published or private, mention it in any way prior to that time. It is obvious that Oliver did not consider the plural marriage to be legitimate. He later referred to it as "a dirty, nasty, filthy affair" (letter to Warren Cowdery, January 21, 1838, Letterbook, Huntington Library, San Marino, California).

Following Fanny Alger's ejection from the Smith home, rumors began circulating that Joseph had committed adultery. These may have originated with Oliver. At that time the saints had no inkling of the doctrine of eternal or plural marriage. Joseph, therefore, took action to stem the tide of gossip that Joseph had confessed to Oliver that he had committed adultery. Joseph was limited by circumstances to being able only to deny any adultery. He was not yet allowed by the Lord to share the doctrine of plural marriage with the saints. Joseph requested that a statement be published in the next issue of the *Elder's Journal* written by Oliver saying that Joseph had never

acknowledged to him that he was guilty of adultery. It would seem at that time that no one but Emma and Oliver knew of Joseph's relationship with Fanny Alger. Richard L. Bushman summarized: "In contemporaneous documents, only one person, Cowdery, believed that Joseph had had an affair with Fanny Alger. Others may have heard the rumors, but none joined Cowdery in making accusations. David Patten, who made inquiries in Kirtland, concluded the rumors were untrue. No one proposed to put Joseph on trial for adultery. Only Cowdery, who was leaving the Church, asserted Joseph's involvement. On his part, Joseph never denied a relationship with Alger, but insisted it was not adulterous. He wanted it on record that he had never confessed to such a sin. Presumably, he felt innocent because he had married Alger" (*Rough Stone Rolling*, 324-25). Joseph was obviously in a difficult position. He had to let the saints believe that he was denying any type of sexual relationship with Fanny Alger.

Oliver's experiences in the Church prompted him to eventually return to the Church and be rebaptized shortly before his death in 1850. It appears, however, he never was reconciled to the practice of plural marriage.

**25. Fanny Brewer.** In 1835, Heber C. Kimball traveled as a missionary to Boston. There, "in company with Apostles Thomas B. Marsh and Brigham Young, and after spending several days with the Saints in that city . . . each was presented with a new suit of clothes by Sisters Fanny Brewer, Polly Voce, and others" (Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 82). Two years later Fanny traveled to Kirtland. She lost her faith and in 1842 teamed up with John C. Bennett to disparage Joseph Smith. She wrote: "In the spring of 1837, I left Boston for Kirtland, in all good faith, to assemble with the saints, as I thought, and worship God more perfectly. On my arrival, I found brother going to law with brother, drunkenness prevailing to a great extent, and every species of wickedness. . . There was much excitement against the Prophet, on another account, likewise,—an unlawful intercourse between himself and a young orphan [sic] girl residing in his family, and under his protection!!! Mr. Martin Harris told me that the Prophet was most notorious for lying and licentiousness!! In the fall of 1837, the Smith family all left Kirtland, by revelation, (or necessity) for Missouri" (John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints: Or an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*, 85-86).

Fanny Brewer's statement may correctly represent the gossip in Kirtland in 1837. As amply discussed, the Smith-Alger relationship was a plural marriage, a fact that few understood at that time. Virtually all of the rumors focused upon an adulterous interaction that Joseph had denied.

**26. "Historicus."** "Historicus" was a pseudonym for a writer who remains unidentified. He/she wrote a column in the *Anti-Polygamy Standard* entitled "Sketches from the History of Polygamy, The First Polygamous Marriages," 10:1 and 1:1). It appears that this author was not a contemporary of Nauvoo polygamy, but performed research and drew his own conclusions. Based upon the information he provided, one of his informants may have been William McLellin.

Latecomer accusers are only as reliable as their historical sources, and as a columnist for the *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, objectivity would not normally be expected. How extensively his biases influenced his interpretations is a question left to readers.

### **Did Joseph Smith Practice Sexual Polyandry?**

See the “Definition of Terms” above. Historical evidence indicates that Joseph Smith was sealed to thirteen women who had legal husbands. This list includes Sylvia Sessions Lyon—see the problematic case of Sylvia Sessions Lyon” below. Eight of those husbands were members of the Church. See “Notes on Joseph’s Plural Wives” above.

It would seem that the particular behavior of Joseph, relative to his practice of polygamy, that is most difficult to fully understand is his being sealed to women already legally married. How are we to interpret his actions? Most members of the Church are either ignorant of Joseph’s practice of polygamy or they have heard about and simply ignored it—hoping it will go away.

This is a most important topic that each of us in the Church should come to understand. Following these sealings, if Joseph then had begun a sexual relationship with any of the twelve and if the prior husband had also continued a sexual relationship with her, Joseph would then have been involved in true or sexual polyandry. We would all agree that both Joseph and the woman would then have been guilty of the sin of adultery. If, on the other hand, Joseph was sealed to these twelve women and never engaged in a sexual relationship with any of them, we would all be relieved and assume he was practicing only pseudo- or ceremonial polyandry.

It is apparent that each of us concerned members today is fully entitled, from all the evidence available to us, to believe that Joseph Smith’s sealings to women already married were pseudo-polyandrous relationships. This evidence, in impressive and comprehensive detail, has been made available to us by Brian C. Hales whose book to be published in early 2011 is referenced near the beginning of this chapter.

Specifically, Brother Hales has identified nine allegations of sexual polyandry and has found none of them to be convincing. He refers to each as unsubstantiated, “tabloid level” accusations. I will not review each of these allegations individually. They are available for review on Brian Hales’ website: <http://www.josephsmithpolygamy.com>. Brian Hales also offers compelling reasons why Joseph’s involvement in sexual polyandry is untenable. These are reviewed in the section that follows.

**Reasons why accusations of Joseph’s involvement in sexual polyandry are false.** 1. In the nineteenth century, for a woman to mention her personal sexual involvement was rare. To admit to a polyandrous relationship would be rarer. But to openly refer to a polyandrous sexual involvement would be most extraordinary and most unlikely. Any listener to such an admission would have had no context to evaluate the declarations except to consider the behaviors blatantly immoral. It is simply unthinkable

that some type of doctrinal foundation was proffered by Joseph Smith justifying sexual polyandry. Hence, any woman who admitted an adulterous union with Joseph would be essentially declaring herself to be unchaste and guilty of adultery. A review of the particular allegations, as already stated, has shown that none rises above the level of “tabloid reporting”—that is, reported in a vulgarly sensational or lurid way without any admissions or evidences to corroborate it.

2. There were no complaints from any of the alleged participants. Despite several allegations, research fails to identify complaints of sexual polyandry from any of the alleged participants, including the women or their legal husbands. Todd Compton acknowledges that true polyandrous relationships would have been most difficult for the men involved. Unfortunately, we have no reliable evidence describing the husbands’ knowledge of or immediate response to their wives’ sealings to the Prophet in eleven of the twelve cases. Again, see the section above—“Notes on Joseph’s Plural Wives.” In one case—that of Zina Diantha Huntington—her husband stood as witness as his wife was sealed to Joseph and later to Brigham Young. On the matter of whether or not the other husbands knew and, if so, just what their responses were, opinions differ. Richard Van Wagoner wrote in 1985: “The legal husband did not usually know about the extralegal husband” (“Mormon Polyandry in Nauvoo.” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, [fall 1985] 81). Richard L. Bushman wrote in 2005: “In most cases, the husband knew of the plural marriage and approved” (*Rough Stone Rolling*, 439).

Reviewing these twelve “polyandrous” husbands, we find great diversity respecting their relationships to the Church and its leaders. There are friendly non-members (Cleveland, Lightner, and Sayers), an antagonistic member (Buell), an unpredictable member of the Church (Jacobs), active members in the Church (Durfee, Harris, and Sessions), a cyclic member (Hyde), and stalwart members (Kingsbury and Holmes). Despite their differences, research suggests that these men shared two things in common. First, their legal wives were sealed to Joseph Smith during the Prophet’s lifetime. The second is that they all seem to have reacted to the relationship with the exact same response—no response at all.

3. One common practice during the Nauvoo period that seems foreign to us today is that of ignoring legal secular marriages instead of obtaining formal divorces. Any Justice of the Peace could perform a marriage. But it took the circuit court or the state Supreme Court, or, in some states, the state legislature(!) to grant divorces. Nauvooans who sought divorces had to go to the Circuit Court in Carthage when it was in session. As it turns out, few did.

In that day, priesthood marriages were always viewed as superior to secular ceremonies. In Nauvoo, eternal sealings trumped any earthly matrimony (see D&C 132:15-17). Hence, legal marriages became a relative non issue during the early practice of plural marriage. Stanley B. Kimball wrote: “Some church leaders at that time considered civil marriage by non-Mormon clergymen to be as unbinding as their

baptisms. Some previous marriages . . . were annulled simply by ignoring them” (*Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981, 95).

There is no question that in special circumstances, Joseph Smith, as president of the Church, believed himself capable of granting permission to ignore legal unions (constituting a religious divorce). One example was the case of Lydia Goldthwaite Bailey. In October of 1835, the Prophet was consulted regarding the status of Lydia’s marriage to her abusive husband, Calvin Bailey, who had deserted her three years earlier. At that time, Lydia had received a marriage proposal from Newel Knight and didn’t know what to do, since a formal divorce had not been obtained. Hyrum Smith was acting as an intermediary. Hyrum took the matter to Joseph who, after prayer and reflection, declared that Lydia was capable of remarrying. Joseph also instructed that thereafter they needed to no longer “fear either the law of God or man.” Joseph evidently considered his judgment in that matter to satisfy all pertinent concerns including state and federal laws, so far as the participants were concerned. Throughout that case of Lydia Bailey’s, there was not hint of approved polyandry, sexual or otherwise.

On occasion the Nauvoo High Council also assumed authority to allow a new matrimony to a man still legally married (see the case of Henry H. Wilson in Fred C. Collier, *Nauvoo High Council Minute Books of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Hanna, Utah: Collier’s Publishing Co., 2005, 80).

It appears that for most Latter-day Saints, the sealing ceremony constituted a matrimonial upgrade sufficient to dissolve previously contracted earthly matrimones. Priesthood authority was sufficiently superior as to trump any marriage ceremony sanctioned only by worldly powers. The eternal union authorized conjugality in the sealed marriage and eliminated permission for sexual relations in the previous union. The need for a legal divorce was ignored in the wake of an eternal nuptial, but the religious divorce was binding and prohibited sexual relations in the prior relationship.

The important factor in deciding whether or not Joseph Smith was involved in sexual polyandry was whether or not the woman was living with and having connubial relations simultaneously with Joseph *and* her “legal” husband. A previous legal marriage was not a valid deterrent to sexual relations, so long as the woman was not living with any other man.

4. From the standpoint of LDS theology, sexual polyandry is easily classified as non-doctrinal and anti-doctrinal. It constitutes the sin of adultery. No ceremonies are described that would solemnize a true polyandrous relationship wherein a woman was authorized to be sexually involved with both husbands. The revelation on eternal marriage defines sexual polyandry as adultery saying that if a woman, “after she is espoused, shall be with another man, she has committed adultery, and shall be destroyed (D&C 132:63; see also verse 42).

Early Utah church leaders condemned true or sexual polyandry. Brigham Young stated in 1852: “What do you think of a woman having more husbands than one? This is not known to the law” (*JD*, 1:361). On October 8, 1869 Apostle George A. Smith taught that “a plurality of husbands is wrong” (*JD*, 13:41). Orson Pratt instructed: “God has strictly forbidden, in this Bible, plurality of husbands, and proclaimed against it in his law” (*JD*, 18:55-56). Importantly, each of these individuals quoted here were involved with Nauvoo polygamy and several were undoubtedly aware of Joseph Smith’s sealings to legally married women. Hyrum Smith’s son, Joseph F. Smith, wrote in 1889: “Polyandry is wrong, physiologically, morally, and from a scriptural point of order. It is nowhere sanctioned in the Bible, nor by the law of God or nature and has not affinity with ‘Mormon’ plural marriage” (Richard E. Turley, Jr. *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Provo, Utah: BYU Press, volume 1, DVD #29).

One of the ways sexual polyandry is anti-doctrinal is that it creates confusion regarding the paternity of the wife’s offspring. Charles W. Penrose wrote that in polyandry: “The paternal identity is destroyed, or made so doubtful, as to annihilate those natural sympathies which properly should exist between the father and his offspring” (“Why We Practice Plural Marriage.” *Millennial Star*, 29:578). Mormon theology assigns specific responsibilities to parents regarding their own children but does not hold them responsible for their neighbors’ children. Polyandry would unavoidably introduce confusion into this strict injunction.

Joseph’s eternal sealings involved witnesses and officiators, often family members of the women involved. How readily would these individuals have accepted and participated in a process they could have viewed only as adultery? There is no credible documentation that any of these women saw themselves as practicing sexual polyandry.

5. There is evidence for “eternity only” sealings in some of Joseph’s plural marriages. It is notable that some authors refuse to acknowledge that any of Joseph’s sealings in Nauvoo could have been for “eternity only.” Todd Compton explained: “There are no known instances of marriages for ‘eternity only’ in the nineteenth century” (*Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997, 14; see also 500). D. Michael Quinn agreed: “If the phrase ‘eternity only’ ever appeared in an original record of LDS sealing in the nineteenth century, I have not discovered it while examining thousands of such manuscript entries” (*The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, 183).

Actually, manuscript documentation has been identified supporting that “eternity only” sealing occurred during Joseph Smith’s lifetime and even within his own “polyandrous” marriages. Nauvooan Justus Morse recounted in an affidavit dated March 23, 1887: “In the year 1842 at Nauvoo, Illinois, Elder Amasa Lyman, taught me the doctrine of sealing, or marrying for eternity . . . and that within one year from that

date 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” (Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy*, Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1914, 169-70). Within the research papers of Andrew Jenson, author of the 1887 Historical Record article on Joseph Smith’s plural wives, is the following statement: “Mrs. [Ruth] Sayers was married in her youth to Mr. Edward Sayers. . . . Though he was not a member of the Church, yet he willingly joined his fortune with her and they reached Nauvoo together some time in the years 1841. While there, the strongest affection sprang up between the Prophet Joseph and Mr. Sayers. The latter not attaching much importance to the theory of a future life for eternity, as he himself should only claim her in this life. She was accordingly sealed to the Prophet among the Prophets’ plural wives. She however continued to live with Mr. Sayers [and] remained with her husband until his death” (Andrew Jenson Papers, ca. 1871-1942, LDS Archives).

It is notable that Joseph did not seek out a relationship with Ruth Sayers. She likely sought him out at the encouragement of her husband. Other documents from Zina Huntington, Patty Bartlett, and Mary Elizabeth Rollins indicate their marriages may also have been “eternity only” sealings as well (see “Evidence from Zina D. Huntington Young,” *Saints Herald*, January 11, 1905, 29; Patty Bartlett in Donna Toland Smart, ed., *Mormon Midwife: The 1846-1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions*, Logan, Utah: Utah State University, 1997, 276; and May Elizabeth Rollins in “Remarks” at BYU April 14, 1905, copy of original signed typescript in Special Collections at BYU, 7).

One interesting clue from Joseph’s behavior suggests that he was clearly motivated to be sealed to a woman for “eternity only,” perhaps just as much as he was to be sealed to her for “time and eternity.” Brigham Young recalled the non-polyandrous sealing of his fifty-six-year-old spinster sister Fanny to the Prophet: “I recollect a sister conversing with Joseph Smith on this subject [plural marriage]. She told him: ‘Now, don’t talk to me; when I get into the celestial kingdom, if I ever do get there, I shall request the privilege of being a ministering angel; that is the labor that I wish to perform. I don’t want any companion in that world; and if the Lord will make me a ministering angel, it is all I want.’ Joseph said ‘Sister, you talk very foolishly, you do not know what you will want.’ He then said to me: ‘Here, brother Brigham, you seal this lady to me.’ I sealed her to him. This was my own sister according to the flesh” (*JD*, 16:166-67). There is no indication that sexual relations were in any way contemplated or experienced by the participants, yet Joseph instantly requested the participation of both Fanny and Brigham in effectuating the ordinance. Todd Compton observed that this sealing “shows how casual and unromantic polygamy could be” (*In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*, 616).

It does seem likely that during the period of Joseph’s polygamy, a woman was given the choice as to whether or not she would like to be sealed “for eternity” to a man

other than her legal husband. With Ruth Vose Sayers serving as an example, other women who were married to non-members or unworthy husbands may have followed her lead, or perhaps preceded her in this practice (see Justus Morse, Affidavit, March 23, 1887, in Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy*, Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1814, 169-70). Apparently some women with active LDS husbands chose to be sealed to the Prophet, as with Esther Dutcher. Women's preferences continued to be respected concerning sealings to Joseph Smith after his death. For example, Joseph married two widows, Delcena Johnson Sherman and Martha McBride Knight, presumably for "time only." After the Prophet's death, when the women appeared at the Nauvoo Temple to be re-sealed to him for eternity by proxy, Delcena was sealed vicariously to her deceased legal husband, Royal Lyman Sherman, while Martha McBride was sealed to Joseph Smith, not to her civil spouse, Vinson Knight (*Lisle Brown, Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings: a Comprehensive Register of Persons Receiving LDS Temple Ordinances, 1841-1846*, Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006, 272, 273). Apparently the individual choices of these women determined to whom they were to be united eternally.

6. From a purely practical standpoint, Joseph knew well the inherent risks and possible consequences of having adulterous relations with another man's wife. In that day, the Prophet knew well how readily a man would grab a gun or otherwise threaten the life of another male who takes sexual advantage of his wife. It seems to have been not only a common reaction, but an expectation in nineteenth-century America for husbands and brothers to avenge women who were coerced into extra-marital intimacies. It is unlikely that any of the husbands, particularly the four who were not members of the Church, would have accepted any type of explanation of plural marriage had they learned that Joseph was sexually involved with their wives. Retribution to the Prophet and perhaps even the man's wife might have been swift and sure. The fear of frontier justice would have been a natural deterrent to Joseph were he to have contemplated any sexual polyandrous arrangements. Certainly such recklessness does not characterize the Prophet's life and temperament.

**The problematic case of Sylvia Sessions Lyon.** One "polyandrous" relationship is routinely referenced as an undeniable example of polyandrous sexual relations. The relationship in question is that of Joseph Smith and Sylvia Sessions Lyon. In 1915, Sylvia's daughter, Josephine Rosetta Lyon, signed the following affidavit: "Just prior to my mother's death in 1882 she called me to her bedside and told me that her days on earth were about numbered and before she passed away from mortality she desired to tell me something which she had kept as an entire secret from me and from all others but which she now desired to communicate to me. She then told me that I was the daughter of the prophet Joseph Smith" (see Daniel W. Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith." M. A. thesis, Purdue University, 1975, 141). Several other historical documents, in addition

to Josephine's affidavit, support a genetic relationship between the Prophet and Josephine. How could this be? How could Joseph have fathered a child and yet not have been involved in sexual polyandry. We know that Sylvia wedded Windsor Lyon in a civil ceremony on April 21, 1838 (see "Notes on Joseph's Plural Wives" above).

The question here is exactly *when* was she sealed to the Prophet and what was the status of her marriage to Windsor at that moment? Identifying sexuality between the Prophet and a "polyandrous" wife would not demonstrate sexual polyandry unless the persistence of sexual relations was also verified in the legal marriage.

Two dates have been suggested for their sealing from historical documents, but neither seems more likely than the other. The two dates are February 8, 1842 and February 8, 1843. Sylvia's legal husband, Windsor Lyon was excommunicated from the Church November 19, 1842 over a falling out with stake President William Marks over a financial negotiation. As mentioned previously, when two sealing dates are suggested by historical data, perhaps a first was for "eternity only" and then a later second sealing was for "time and eternity." That would make sense in this particular case. The same may hold true in a few other plural marriages of the Prophet's, though there is simply no available information that might resolve the issue.

One question that arises is: "Did Windsor and Sylvia obtain a civil divorce after his excommunication? No documentation of a legal divorce between Windsor and Sylvia has been found. Such divorces required a hearing before the circuit court in Carthage. It seems doubtful that the absence of a legal divorce was not a major concern of either Joseph or Sylvia prior to being sealed. Several pieces of evidence indicate that some sort of divorce or termination was inherent in Windsor Lyon's excommunication or at least accompanied it chronologically. Andrew Jenson reflects this perspective in referring to Sylvia as "formerly the wife of Windsor Lyon" (Andrew Jenson Papers, LDS archives). The same author wrote that Sylvia "was married to Mr. Lyon. When he left the Church she was sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith" (biographical information on Windsor and Sylvia Lyon, undated sheet in Andrew Jenson Collection, LDS Archives). It is also recorded that Sylvia told her daughter Josephine that she (Sylvia) was "sealed to the Prophet at the time that her husband Jr. Lyon was out of fellowship with the Church" (Josephine R. Fisher, certificate, February 24, 1915. Original in vault folder LDS Archives, 48-49). Windsor's church estrangement was interpreted by Josephine as an official separation or divorce of her mother Sylvia and Windsor. There was never any implication that Josephine thought her mother was simultaneously married to two men or that Sylvia continued to cohabit with Windsor after his excommunication. No evidence exists to support continued conjugality between Sylvia and Windsor after his excommunication and prior to Joseph's death.

Windsor was rebaptized in January 1846 following Joseph's death. He had fathered three children with Sylvia prior to his excommunication, and he would father two after his 1846 rebaptism. The only child conceived while he was out of the Church

was Josephine who was likely the daughter of Joseph Smith. Importantly, there is no evidence of sexual polyandry in this relationship.

**Summary.** We may summarize the probable characteristics of Joseph Smith's thirteen "polyandrous" marriages. It appears that one sealing for "time and eternity" may not have been, in fact, polyandrous at all—that of Sylvia Sessions. A second was based upon a "pretend" marriage—that of Sarah Ann Whitney (Joseph C. Kingsbury was the "front husband). Five were probably "eternity only" sealings (Ruth Vose, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Sarah Kingsley, Presendia Lathrop Huntington, and Esther Dutcher). Additional historical data is needed to clarify the situation of the remaining six (Zina Diantha Huntington, Patty Bartlett, Marinda Nancy Johnson, Elvira Annie Cowles, Elizabeth Davis, and Lucinda Pendleton).

In light of all available evidence, authors who continue to assert that Joseph Smith practiced sexual polyandry are obliged to agree and accept the following:

1. that credible evidence exists beyond the "tabloid level" accusations supporting it. Most serious researchers would not draw strict conclusions based upon the sensationalized claims that are currently available.

2. that Joseph Smith would blithely disobey a commandment he had dictated, a commandment that labels such behavior as "adultery," stating that women so involved would be "destroyed" (D&C 132:63).

3. that the plural wives and other participants—including those who performed and witnessed the sealings—would have condoned the relationships, ignoring biblical teachings and Joseph Smith's instructions condemning such relations.

4. that all participants would have easily overlooked Joseph Smith's hypocrisy on this point, continuing to follow him as a prophet without apparent complaint.

For decades, anti-Mormon writers have apparently been comfortable with these assumptions, accusing Joseph Smith of sexual polyandry. Doubtless these accusations will continue.

### **Joseph's Relationships with Adolescents**

The list of Joseph's plural wives includes ten under the age of twenty at the time they were sealed to him:

- Helen Mar Kimball 14
- Nancy M. Winchester 14 (or possibly 15)
- Flora Ann Woodworth 16
- Sarah Ann Whitney 17
- Sarah Lawrence 17
- Lucy Walker 17
- Fanny Alger 19
- Emily Dow Partridge 19
- Maria Lawrence 19

Malissa Lott 19

Of particular concern is Joseph's relationships with the two youngest on this list, Helen Mar Kimball and Nancy Winchester. Critics have usually assumed that since they were sealed to Joseph as plural wives, they were also having sexual relations with him. Other informed members of the Church are also uncomfortable with these two adolescents being on this list and hope that Joseph did not have sexual relations with them.

One may wonder about the possibility of what we would today refer to as "statutory rape." This occurs when any adult, male or female, has sexual relations with a child who has not yet reached the age of consent. Attorney Melina McTigue wrote of the civil statutes governing the age of consent for sexual relations during the 1800s: "Early English law set the age of consent at ten. The age was gradually raised over the years. In the nineteenth century, most states had set the age of consent at ten. A few states began by using twelve as the cutoff. Delaware set the age of consent at seven" ("Statutory Rape Law Reform in Nineteenth Century Maryland: An analysis of Theory and Practical Change," 2002, <http://www.law.georgetown.edu/gh/mctigue.htm>). The minimum age for consent in Illinois at that time was ten (Mary E. Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1995, 14).

Available research shows that in Joseph Smith's day, marriages to fourteen year-old girls were legal, but rare. The Nauvoo City Council passed an ordinance specifying the minimum ages for marriage which recited Illinois State law verbatim: "All male persons over the age of seventeen years, and females over the age of fourteen years, may contract and be joined in marriage, provided, in all cases where either party is a minor, the consent of parents or guardians be first had" ("Nauvoo Records," "An Ordinance Concerning Marriages passed February 17, 1842," MS 16800, Church History Library).

Importantly, when analyzing the ages of women at the time of their first marriages, data derived from monogamous unions may not apply to polygamous marriages. This is because the sexual dynamics in monogamous and polygamous marriages may be very different. Male polygamists could experience sexual relations with their other plural wives, thus facilitating sealings to younger women wherein conjugality would be postponed. In contrast, monogamist men would be less willing to delay sexuality with their single wife, thus motivating them to marry older women who would be capable of bearing children immediately.

One of the most significant deterrents to pubescent brides throughout human history has been the potential complications arising from the physical immaturity of many fourteen-year-old girls. Generally it has been known that when immature females attempt to give birth to a term baby, both the baby and the mother may be in grave danger. This peril results from an undersized boney pelvis which creates a too-narrow

birth canal that will not allow the baby's head to pass. This disparity can and has resulted in serious injury and even death of both baby and mother.

There is no evidence to support that sexual relations were included in Joseph's relationships with his youngest two wives. While we have no firsthand accounts outlining Joseph's counsel on marriages to young girls, Brigham Young taught that young wives should be left to mature. Eugene E. Campbell described Brigham's instructions given in Utah: "One of the more distressing developments was the number of men asking Young for permission to marry girls too young to bear children. To one man at Fort Supply, Young explained, 'I don't object to your taking sisters named in your letter to wife if they are not too young and their parents and your president and all connected are satisfied, but I do not want children to be married to men before an age which their mothers can generally best determine.' Writing to another man in Spanish Fork, he said, 'Go ahead and marry them, but leave the children to grow.' A third man in Alpine City was instructed, 'It is your privilege to take more wives, but set a good example to the people, and leave the children long enough with their parents to get their growth, strength, and maturity.' To Louis Robinson, head of the church at Fort Bridger, Young advised, 'Take good women, but let the children grow, then they will be able to bear children after a few years without injury.' Another man in Santa Clara was told that it would be wise to marry an Indian girl but only if she were mature" (*Establishing Zion: The Mormon Church in the American West 1847-1869*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988, 198 n. 5).

Wilford Woodruff married a fifteen year old named Emma Smith on March 13, 1853. Concerning that marriage, historian Thomas G. Alexander surmised: "[Brigham] Young . . . sealed Wilford, who had turned forty-six twelve days before, to fifteen-year-old Emma Smith and nineteen-year-old Sarah Brown. Sarah presented him with a son, David Patten Woodruff, the following year on April 4. He probably refrained from sexual relations with Emma until she became older, since she did not bear her first child, Hyrum Smith Woodruff, until October 4, 1857, seven months after she turned nineteen" (*Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991, 168).

One study showed that the average age for plural wives married in one area of Utah was about twenty (Larry Logue, "A Time of Marriage: Mormon Monogamy and Polygamy in a Utah Town," *Journal of Mormon History*, 1984, 13:3-26). C. C. Rich took a bride of 14 years though he did not live with her until she was 18 years old (Kimball Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* New York: Henry Hold, 1954, 177). Lorenzo Snow and Eleanor Houtz (born 1831) made a promise to marry when she was just fourteen. However, they were not married for three more years (Bray, Mildred H., "Eleanor Houtz Snow: Biographical Sketch. MS 12145 Church History Library).

Mosiah Hancock recalled his sealing to Mary Dunn in the Nauvoo Temple in 1846. She was two months past her twelfth birthday, and he was three weeks shy of

his: "On about January 10, 1846, I was privileged to go in the temple. . . I was sealed to a lovely young girl named Mary, who was about my age, but it was with the understanding that we were not to live together as man and wife until we were 16 years of age. The reason that some were sealed so young was because we knew that we would have to go west and wait many a long time for another temple" (Amy E. Baird, Victoria H. Jackson, and Laura L. Wassell, compilers, "Mosiah Lyman Hancock Autobiography (1834-1865)," Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, undated, 20-21). It does not appear that the couple ever consummated the union, even four years later. They had no children together and each married other spouses in Utah. Mary wed Martin Luther Ensign in Salt Lake City in 1852 and had nine children.

As might be expected, some anti-Mormons have painted a different picture. Excommunicated Latter-day Saint Fanny Stenhouse wrote in 1872 concerning marriage patterns in Utah: "There is no particular age specified as proper for marriage, but the younger the girl is, the better. It is seldom that there are any girls married under fifteen years of age; but sixteen is a very sweet age" (Linda Wilcox DeSimone, ed., Fanny Stenhouse: "Exposé of Polygamy, A Lady's Life among the Mormons," Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2008, 129). Anti-Mormon writer Jules Remy asserted in 1861 that six years previously he heard Brigham Young state: "Let me see no more boys above sixteen and girls above fourteen unmarried" (Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, *A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake City*. London: W. Jeffs, volume 2, 1861, 60). This statement directly contradicts the well documented statements of Brigham Young above.

**The fourteen-year-old Helen Mar Kimball.** Helen was one of Joseph Smith's two fourteen-year-old plural wives. Current evidence suggests that Helen's father brokered the union. Her father was Heber C. Kimball. Helen, speaking of her father, wrote: "He taught me the principle of Celestial marriage and having a great desire to be connected with the Prophet, Joseph, he offered me to him; this I afterwards learned from the Prophet's own mouth. My father had but one ewe lamb, but willingly laid her upon the altar" (Jeni Broberg Holzapfel and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, eds., *A Woman's View: Helen Mar Whitney's Reminiscences of Early Church History*. Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1997, 482-87). Richard Anderson observed: "Helen says several times that her father took the initiative to arrange the marriage and very possibly he did so with the view to committing her to the Prophet before her budding social life produced a choice or a proposal [from someone else]" (letter to Richard L. Anderson to Dawn Comfort, May 9-15, 1998. Copy of letter in Scott H. Faulring Papers, box 93, fds 1-3, accn 2316, Marriott Library).

The question remains as to whether or not, in their thirteen-month relationship, sexual relations were ever initiated. As might be predicted, D. Michael Quinn claimed they were, though his statement, not surprisingly, is undocumented (*The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, 639). Researcher Michael Marquardt disagreed with

Quinn: "Helen Kimball's sealing to Joseph Smith was a spiritual one unlike other wives who had sexual relations with the prophet" (*The Rise of Mormonism: 1816-1844*. Longwood, Florida: Zulon Press, 2005, 609). Todd Compton claims a more central position: "Some conclude that Helen Mar Kimball, who married Smith when she was fourteen, did not have marital relations with him. This is possible, as there are cases of Mormons in Utah marrying young girls and refraining from sexual relations until they were older. But the evidence for Helen Mar is entirely ambiguous in my view" (*In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*, 14).

Brian Hales has found no evidence of conjugal relations between Helen and the Prophet. In 1882 Helen wrote: "During the winter of 1843, there were plenty of parties and balls. . . Some of the young gentlemen got up a series of dancing parties, to be held at the Mansion once a week. . . I had to stay home, as my father had been warned by the Prophet to keep his daughter away from there, because of the blacklegs and certain ones of questionable character who attended there. I felt quite sore over it, and thought it a very unkind act in father to allow [my brother] to go and enjoy the dance unrestrained with others of my companions, and fetter me down, for no girl loved dancing better than I did, and I really felt that it was too much to bear. It made the dull school still more dull, and like a wild bird I longed for the freedom that was denied me; and thought myself a much abused child, and that it was pardonable if I did murmur" (*Woman's Exponent*, volume 11, number 12, November 15, 1882, 90).

It is apparent that Helen lived with her father following her sealing to Joseph. It is also clear that Joseph had a role in preventing her from socializing as an unmarried lady. Church dissenter Catherine Lewis reported Helen's saying: "I would never have been sealed to Joseph had I known it was anything more than a ceremony" (*Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the Mormons; Giving an Account of their Iniquities*. Lynn, Massachusetts: by the author, 1848, 19).

There is no evidence of a sexual relationship in these accounts. If there had been one, we might expect that her anticipation of pregnancy and other wifely responsibilities might have oriented her more toward no longer being single. Instead, she expressed boredom and a desire to be socially involved like her peers. It would appear that she regarded the marriage as more symbolic than real. Stanley B. Kimball, Heber C. Kimball's biographer, wrote: "Many years later in Utah she [Helen] wrote a retrospective poem about this marriage from which we learn that it was "for eternity alone," that is, unconsummated. Whatever such a marriage promised for the next world, it brought her no immediate earthly happiness. She saw herself as a "fetter'd bird" without youthful friends and a subject of slander. This poem also reveals that Joseph Smith's several pro forma marriages to the daughters of his friends were anything but sexual romps. Furthermore, the poem reinforces the idea that, despite the trials of plurality in mortality, a "glorious crown' awaited the faithful and obedient in heaven" (*Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer*, 98).

It would seem that the pattern of waiting until the women were mature, as taught in Utah, undoubtedly began in Nauvoo. Also, apparently Joseph had other relationships with the daughters of friends that followed a similar pattern.

**The fourteen (or fifteen) year-old Nancy Winchester.** Whether or not Nancy was fourteen or fifteen depends on the date of her sealing to the Prophet. She was born August 10, 1828 and therefore would have turned fifteen on that date in 1843. We don't have the exact date in 1843 of her sealing to Joseph. In fact the evidence that Nancy was actually sealed to the Prophet is a bit soft. Perhaps the best evidence we have is that it was Eliza R. Snow's opinion that she was (Richard Lloyd Anderson and Scott H. Faulring, "Review of *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*, by Todd M. Compton," FARMS Review of Books, Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute, 1998, 77).

It is curious that Nancy's brother, Benjamin, failed to give evidence of her marriage to Joseph. Benjamin had many negative things to say about the Prophet, even accusing him of adultery in Philadelphia in 1840 and criticizing him several times in later writings. But throughout it all, Benjamin never mentioned a plural marriage or any improper relations between Joseph and his teenage sister. This might be because there was no marriage or because Benjamin was unaware of the sealing. Had he been aware, he surely would have condemned the union. No documentation exists to suggest that Nancy was sexually involved in any way with the Prophet.

### **What Motivated Women to Want to Be Sealed to the Prophet?**

A review of Joseph's polygamous relationships suggests it was sometimes the woman or her family that took the lead in instigating the relationship and not Joseph himself. Why would they have wanted to be sealed to the Prophet? The notion developed early, even in Ohio, in the history of the Church that "sealing" meant being sealed up to eternal life. It seems likely that these women saw being sealed to Joseph as a way to have their calling and election made sure. Elizabeth Rollins Lightner wrote in 1902: "I was sealed to Joseph Smith the Prophet by commandment. In the spring of 1831, the Savior appeared and commanded him to seal me up to everlasting life" (Lightner, "Statement signed February 8, 1902). Today, of course, we would regard an eternal marriage sealing as something quite apart from being sealed up to eternal life. At the time of Joseph's experiences with polygamy the involved women or their families saw being sealed to Joseph as having great eternal value. In some cases, the already-married women perceived that their civil marriages (their legal husbands) could not produce that same benefit.

At other times it was Joseph who instigated the polyandrous sealing. This seems to have occurred particularly when Joseph perceived that the woman's present husband would not lead her to a celestial reward. It is also evident that on some occasions Joseph was rebuffed in these attempts.

### **Following a July 13, 1843, Agreement, Joseph Married Only Two Additional Plural Wives.**

Available evidence supports the idea that Emma tried desperately to accept the principle and uphold Joseph in its practice. She participated in four plural sealings in May of 1843 by approving and placing the woman's hand upon Joseph's during the ceremony. However, within weeks her experiences in a plural household became unbearable and she vacillated in her support for the principle. She apparently eventually confronted Joseph with an ultimatum that included the threat of divorce and/or exposure. Finally on July 13, 1843, Joseph and Emma came to an agreement that included the transfer of property and other resources into Emma's name so that if anything happened to him or to their marriage, she would be capable of supporting herself and their children. An additional condition of their agreement appears to have been her insistence that Joseph not marry any more plural wives without Emma's permission. Records show he was sealed to two additional spouses after this episode, but each was a special circumstance.

The first occurred in September involving Malissa Lott, the nineteen year old daughter of Cornelius Lott, the caretaker of Joseph's farm outside of Nauvoo. She was sealed to Joseph on September 20, 1843. In 1892, Malissa explained that Emma knew all about the sealing and gave her consent.

It appears that Emma permitted this single new polygamous union after the July 13, 1843 agreement. Apparently she experienced a resurgence of faith in September and early October of 1843. During that time, she received her entire temple ordinances and began administering them to other sisters in the Church. However, her ability to sincerely support polygamy was still shaky. Mary Jane Woodward recalled a notable conversation with Emma in which Emma stated that she knew the principle was right but she admitted having a "jealous heart" (signed statement by Maria Jane Woodward attached to George H. Brimhall to Joseph F. Smith, April 21, 1902; on Richard E. Turley, Jr., *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Provo, Utah: BYU Press, volume 1, DVD #28).

The second sealing occurred a month and a half later with Brigham Young's fifty-six year-old sister Fanny Young. The context of the sealing was so that Fanny would have a husband in "the celestial kingdom," with no conjugality on earth. Consequently, it may not have been a concern to Emma.

According to available historical manuscripts Joseph Smith did not marry any additional plural wives during the remaining eight months of his life.

## **“Fundamentalists” Practicing of Plural Marriage Today**

There are two fundamental differences between the polygamy taught by Joseph Smith (and practiced generally in the Church between 1852 and 1904) and that practiced by fundamentalists today:

1. The first centers on the question as to whether or not plural marriage is necessary for exaltation.

2. Joseph Smith’s polygamy was tightly controlled by “one” man who held priesthood authority—the keys of sealing—necessary to perform the marriages. He plainly taught that plural marriages performed without the authorization of the “one” man were “not valid neither of force” (D&C 132:18). The “one” man is also entitled to the inspiration allowing him to discontinue the practice when the Lord desires.

**Is polygamy necessary for exaltation?** “Mormon fundamentalist” groups have claimed ties to Joseph Smith’s polygamy. They assert that the practice of plural marriage is required today. They cling tenaciously to certain statements of the early brethren. For example, in 1866 Brigham Young taught: “The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy. Others attain unto a glory and may even be permitted to come into the presence of the Father and the Son; but they cannot reign as kings in glory” (*JD*, 11:269). Brigham Young also taught: “It [plural marriage] is a principle that always has existed and that always will” (Elden J. Watson, *Brigham Young Addresses, 1865-1869, A Chronological Compilation of Known Addresses of the Prophet Brigham Young*, Salt Lake City: Elden J. Watson, 1982, 5:155). Brigham did not say, however, it was a “commandment that always has existed.” Rather it is a principle that may be commanded permitted or not permitted. In 1855 Brigham referred to it as a “duty” (*JD*, 3:265). Years later he instructed: “I will now give you, in short, my opinion with regard to plural marriage. It is of God, and He has revealed it from the Heavens and made it obligatory upon the Saints in the last days” (Elden Watson, *Brigham Young Addresses, 1865-1869*, 5:33). “It [polygamy] is the commandment of the Lord to us (Brigham Young, “Remarks,” October 27, 1875, *Deseret News Weekly*, 24:619).” Note that Brigham did not say it was a commandment to all men who ever lived on earth in any era.

It is obvious that Joseph Smith, between 1835 and his death was commanded and even threatened by the Lord (recall the angel with drawn sword) lest he practice it. From 1852 through 1890, priesthood authorities including Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff were always adamant that the Latter-day Saints, during those years, were required to comply. During those years, celestial marriage was equivalent to polygamy, and the two terms were used interchangeably. Section 132 was sometimes interpreted as referring strictly to plural marriage, rather than eternal marriage. Damnation was the awful penalty affixed to a refusal to obey the law of polygamy. It became an acknowledged doctrine of the Church. However, even throughout those years, no priesthood leader ever proclaimed in unambiguous

language that every man in the celestial kingdom is a polygamist regardless of when and where he lived on the earth. No such sweeping and all-inclusive declaration concerning the absolute requirement of plural marriage for all males who come to this earth has been found. If such a doctrine were orthodox and true, it is strange that priesthood leaders, in all of their hundreds of discourses that mentioned plural marriage, never made an explicit pronouncement to that effect.

Specifically, there is no documentation that Joseph Smith ever preached that all men, regardless of the time and place they existed on earth, must practice plural marriage in order to be exalted. Neither did he teach that all men in the celestial kingdom are polygamists. In 1892 Wilford Woodruff was asked “if Joseph Smith had ever taught you at Nauvoo or anywhere else during his lifetime, that in order for a man to be exalted in the hereafter, he must have more than one wife?” President Woodruff responded: “I don’t know that I ever heard him make use of that expression or use that form of expression” (Wilford Woodruff deposition. Temple Lot transcript, respondent’s testimony [part 3], page 66, question 698). When queried: “Did Joseph Smith teach you that a man must have more than one wife to be exalted,” Nauvoo polygamist and apostle’s wife, Bathsheba Smith responded: “I never heart of that” (Bathsheba Smith deposition. Temple Lot transcript, respondent’s testimony [part 3], page 319, questions 1028-1029). When Joseph C. Kingsbury was asked if Joseph Smith taught him “that a man could not be exalted in the hereafter unless he had more wives than one,” Kingsbury replied: “No sir. He did not teach me that. He did not say anything about that” (Joseph Kingsbury deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent’s testimony [part 3], page 205, question 600). Kingsbury also recalled: “I heard it preached from the stand that a man could be exalted in eternity with one wife” (*Ibid.*, 600).

In 1832, Joseph Smith taught a general principle, that to receive God’s blessings, his followers must be obedient to the works required of them *at their particular time and place*: “You have no right to claim the promises of the inhabitants before the flood; [and] you cannot found your hopes of salvation upon the obedience of the children of Israel, when journeying in the wilderness; nor can you expect that the blessings which the apostles pronounced upon the churches of Christ eighteen hundred years ago were intended for you: Again, if others’ blessings are not your blessings, others’ curses are not your curses; you stand then in these last days, as all have stood before you, agents unto yourselves, to be judged according to your works” (“To the Honorable Men of the World, “ *Evening and Morning Star*, August 1832, 3:22). There were righteous Book of Mormon monogamists and New Testament Saints who had but one wife. Joseph F. Smith explained: “It [plural marriage] is applicable to all gospel dispensations, when commanded and not otherwise, and neither acceptable to God or binding on man unless given by commandment” (*JD*, 20:26).

Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal on February 12, 1870, that a church member, John Holeyment “made a long speech upon the subject of polygamy. He

contended that no person could have a celestial glory unless he had a plurality of wives.” In response, President Brigham Young clarified that “there would be men saved in the Celestial Kingdom of God with one wife” (Scott G. Kenny, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833-1898*, 9 volumes, Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983-85, 6:527). On February 10, 1873, in the Salt Lake School of the Prophets a question was raised regarding the truthfulness of the statement: “That no man who has only one wife in this probation can ever enter [the] Celestial Kingdom.” Wilford Woodruff “expressed disagreement and John Taylor said ‘he did not believe [it]’” (Salt Lake City School of the Prophets, minutes, February 10, 1872, Church History Library). In 1884 First Presidency counselor, George Q. Cannon, stated that, “He believed there would be men in the Celestial Kingdom that had but one wife” (Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1833-1898*. 8:235).

It would seem to be important that each and every member of the Church, whether or not he or she is called upon to practice polygamy, must accept that the church’s practice of polygamy between 1852 and 1890 was a principle of divine origin and was mandated, at that time, by God. Polygamy is a law of the gospel applicable to all dispensations, but only when it is specifically commanded.

**Mormon fundamentalists lack the priesthood authority with its vital keys of sealing.** “Mormon fundamentalists” are similar to fundamentalist groups that have attached themselves to other religions such as Islam, Catholicism, and the Jewish faith in that they selectively emphasize a few fundamentals while ignoring other vital principles. For example, Mormon fundamentalists do not do missionary work, although preaching the gospel to non-members was more fundamental to Joseph Smith than polygamy. They seem to somehow assume the necessary priesthood authority through their supposed historical attachment to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Church, obviously, denies any relationship with them and denies that they hold the priesthood of God.

Joseph Smith taught that through him, God commanded the practice of plural marriage. Joseph emphasized that “one” man holds the sealing keys (D&C 132:7) and that all plural marriages performed must be authorized by him. Through “one” man God regulates this practice. Plural marriages performed without his approval are “not valid neither of force when they are out of the world”:

And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife, and make a covenant with her for time and for all eternity, if that covenant is not by me or by my word, which is my law, and is not sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, through him whom I have anointed and appointed unto this power, then it is not valid neither of force when they are out of the world, because they are not joined by me, saith the Lord, neither by my word; when they are out of the world it cannot be received there, because the angels and the gods are appointed there, by whom they cannot pass; they

cannot, therefore, inherit my glory; for my house is a house of order, saith the Lord God (D&C 132:18).

It might be argued that this single verse was included in the Doctrine and Covenants in anticipation of the Mormon fundamentalist movement.

Without the Prophet's permission in January 1844, church member Hiram Brown taught that polygamy was acceptable, for which he was excommunicated ("Notice," *Times and Seasons*, February 1, 1844, 3:423). Latter-day Saint John Taylor (not the apostle) recalled another man named Durfy who "went out to Layhart [Illinois] and he told the people there he thought the time would come when they would practice polygamy, or the same doctrine in reference to plural wives, that David and Solomon did" (*Times and Seasons*, March 15, 1844, 474). Durfy was severely rebuked (*Ibid.*).

During Joseph Smith's lifetime, his brother, church Patriarch Hyrum Smith, attempted to seal a marriage without Joseph's approval. In 1845 Brigham Young recalled the event: "Joseph said that the sealing power is always vested in one man, and that there never was, nor never would be but one man on the earth at a time to hold the—sealing power—keys of the sealing power in the church, that all sealings must be performed by the man holding the keys or by his dictation, and that man is the president of the church. . . Hyrum was counselor . . . but the sealing power was not in Hyrum. . . This was proven, for Hyrum did in one case undertake to seal without counsel, & Joseph told him if he did not stop it he would go to hell and all those he sealed with him (Brigham Young to William Smith, "City of Joseph, August 10, 1845," in *Brigham Young Collection*, Church History Library, CR 1234/1).

After Joseph's death, Brigham Young held the sealing keys as the senior apostle upon the earth. Three years later, W. W. Phelps served a mission to the eastern states where he married three wives. His mission companion Henry B. Jacobs performed the marriages without having first obtained permission from President Young. Upon returning to Winter Quarters, Iowa with the three women, Brigham Young heard the story. Hosea Stout recorded: "President Young decided that Phelps had committed adultery every time that he had laid with one of them & that Jacobs should be silenced for the part he had taken in marrying them" (Juanita Brooks, ed., *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844-1861*, 2 volumes, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964, 1:289). Phelps was excommunicated on December 6, 1847 and was quickly rebaptized after acknowledging his misunderstanding. Nevertheless, the most important observation is that unauthorized plural marriage relations were considered to be adultery by President Young, even though Phelps had been righteously intentioned.

Earlier that year President Young complained of men who would enter into plural marriages by virtue of the authority of "some clod head of an elder" who was willing to say the sealing ceremony, rather than being authorized by Brigham to use the true "authority of this church" (Charles Kelly, ed., *The Journals of John D. Lee 1846-47 and 1859*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1984, 80).

Some Mormon fundamentalists claim their authority to practice polygamy from a higher priesthood council called the “Council of Seven Friends,” comprised of “High Priest Apostles.” They claim this council was higher than the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. There is no evidence that this council existed (see Brian C. Hales, *Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism: the Generations after the Manifesto*, Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 1006, 193-214).

At Brigham Young’s death, John Taylor became the senior apostle thereby holding the sealing keys. Upon his passing, the presiding priesthood authority on the earth was Wilford Woodruff. These transitions occurred in an orderly fashion consistent with Joseph Smith’s teachings that God’s house is a house of order. Through the 1890 Manifesto, Wilford Woodruff informed the saints that the commandment to practice plural marriage was removed and the saints no longer needed to comply (George Q. Cannon, “Remarks Given at Logan.” Cache Stake Conference, November 1, 1891, 6). Lorenzo Snow succeeded President Woodruff and then at his death, Joseph F. Smith became the presiding apostle and holder of the sealing keys. In 1904, he refused to authorize any new plural marriages (see James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6 volumes, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-71, 4:84-85) and wrote another Manifesto. Both the 1890 and 1904 Manifestos were included at the end of the Doctrine and Covenants, but the latter was dropped from the 1981 edition.

Since 1904 the keys of sealing have been held by each succeeding president of the Church. They have been used daily to seal monogamous marriages for the living and sometimes plural marriages by proxy as when a widower is sealed to a new living wife.

Brian C. Hales concludes:

A review of Joseph Smith’s teachings demonstrates that unauthorized plural marriages bring divine condemnation. He taught that if the man holding the keys of sealing were to cease to permit plural matrimonyes, irrespective of the reason, the ability to practice authorized polygamy would instantly cease (D&C 132:18). Proper sealing priesthood authority is always required. When sealing authority is withheld, celestial plural marriage cannot be practiced. Nothing—including traditions, individual sincerity, or personal revelation—can surmount the lack of genuine authority. Unauthorized polygamy [does] not constitute obedience. . . .

In my *Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism: the Generations after the Manifesto* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2006), I examine the priesthood claims of all major “Mormon fundamentalists” groups, identifying numerous insurmountable problems. My research into Joseph Smith’s polygamy further convinces me that stories that a special priesthood group could exist outside of the Church,

ostensibly to keep polygamy alive, is unsupportable and in error (<http://www.josephsmithpolygamy.com>).

## **Conclusion**

In 1903 church President Joseph F. Smith wrote: “It is difficult to convince the prejudiced mind that any but base intents and impure desires prompted the practice of plural marriage, but nevertheless it was entered into, God knows, with the highest religious and moral motives” (“The Mormonism of Today,” *The Arena*, May, 1903, 5:450).

It is entirely appropriate to allow Dr. Brian Hales to conclude this chapter:

Several specific areas of controversy regarding the Prophet’s polygamy [have been] identified. . . After reviewing hundreds of historical documents, those topics can be readdressed perhaps with more complete understanding.

It appears that the best evidence indicates that Joseph Smith’s pre-Nauvoo reputation did not include gossip of licentiousness and that Fanny Alger was his first plural wife. Manuscript documentation supports plural sealings to perhaps thirty-four women, with many of those being for “eternity only,” that is, for the next life. Sexual relations were present in some of the Prophet’s plural marriages, but probably much less than half and less commonly than detractors have alleged. It appears that two or perhaps three children were born through those unions. Evidence indicates Joseph Smith never participated in sexual polyandry and that he condemned such associations as adultery. No historical data has been found supporting sexual relations with his fourteen/fifteen-year-old wives, consistent with Utah policies of waiting until the women matured. A review of the numerous allegations of sexual involvement with non-wives fails to identify any that do not suffer from factual errors, internal inconsistencies, or gross implausibilities.

I enthusiastically join my testimony with that of Brian Hales. To me there is no question that Joseph “lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people” (D&C 135:3). He was a truly noble, dignified, and wholesome prophet of God.

## The Joseph Smith Papyri and Their Relationship to the Book of Abraham

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### Joseph's Acquisition of the Papyri

**The account commonly known and accepted by church members.** In 1831 Antonio Lebolo, a “celebrated French traveler” and a resident of northwestern Italy’s Piedmont region, after obtaining appropriate governmental approval, employed 433 men for four months and two days and excavated a catacomb (an underground burial site consisting of tunnels and rooms) in Egypt, near the place where once stood the renowned city of Thebes. On June 7, 1831, Lebolo entered the catacomb and obtained eleven mummies in sarcophagi or coffins. While transporting his mummies home in 1832, he became ill. He put in at Trieste in Italy and, after a ten day illness, he died. Before his death, he had drawn up a will and had named his Irish nephew Michael H. Chandler to inherit his new treasure. He thought his nephew was in Ireland, and thus he arranged to send the whole package to Dublin. Meanwhile, Michael Chandler had immigrated to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a few years previously. Chandler’s friends forwarded the mummies to New York, where they were received at the Customs House in the winter or spring of 1833.

Chandler went to the Customs House in New York and claimed his peculiar legacy. He discovered, when he opened the sarcophagi, that in connection with two of the bodies were two rolls of papyrus. Two or three other fragments or papyri were found in association with some of the other mummies. These latter fragments contained astronomical calculations, epitaphs, etc.

Shortly after returning from New York to Philadelphia, Chandler made arrangements to display all of the ancient artifacts in various arcades and museums in the city, charging an entrance fee of 25 cents per adult and 12 ½ cents per child. After several weeks of displaying the mummies in Philadelphia, Chandler took the mummies to Baltimore, Maryland, where they were well received. Later that summer he displayed the mummies in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Soon after receiving the mummies Chandler sold several of them to various buyers in Philadelphia. He had retained only six of the original eleven mummies by the time he traveled to Baltimore.

By the spring of 1835 Chandler’s original cache of eleven mummies had dwindled to four. After two years, Chandler, anxious to terminate his transient life-style, advertised in a Cleveland newspaper both the Egyptian exhibit and the fact that the mummies were for sale. At each presentation he inquired if there was anyone who could read Egyptian hieroglyphs. Several times Joseph Smith’s name was mentioned, mostly in derision, as one who professed to read Egyptian writings, since the plates of gold were claimed to be engraved in that ancient form of writing. Chandler made arrangements to exhibit his unusual display at Kirtland, located just a few miles east of

Cleveland. During the last part of June or the first week of July 1835, Michael Chandler arrived in Kirtland. He brought with him four of his Egyptian mummies and the two rolls of Egyptian papyri covered with hieroglyphic figures.

**A more accurate account.** The foregoing account of the finding of the mummies and papyri and their acquisition by Michael Chandler is based on account written by Oliver Cowdery after he had interviewed Michael Chandler (*HC*, 2:348-51). As mentioned above, it is the account most often read and accepted by members of the Church. It contains, however, some significant errors. A more accurate account has been related by Professor John Gee, an Egyptologist at the Brigham Young University:

When Napoleon invaded Egypt in July of 1798, he brought with him an army of French academics including mathematicians, anthropologists, linguists, political scientists, chemists, archaeologists, and others. They began to investigate and publish all that was interesting to science in that singular country. These publications were combined into a major collection of writings in French consisting of eighteen volumes and published under the title of *Description de l' Egypte* (Description of Egypt). These resulted in widespread interest in Egypt, especially in Europe.

After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in June of 1815, one of Napoleon's soldiers, an Italian from the Piedmont area named Antonio Lebolo, had to fend for himself. Stigmatized in his home country for fighting with the French, he abandoned his wife and child and left for Egypt. There he was employed by another Italian from the Piedmont area, a Bernadino Drovetti who had also fought for Napoleon and who had previously served as the French consul general to Egypt. Drovetti employed Lebolo as his agent, sending him on errands to scout for antiquities to loot. At this time, Egyptian archaeology was indistinguishable from tomb robbery. Europeans were, at that time, anxious to acquire Egyptian antiquities for themselves, and men like Lebolo and Drovetti were willing to supply them. The business of robbing tombs for antiquities was characterized by rivalry, dirty dealing, and bribery, and those involved were uniformly unsavory scoundrels.

Among the loot acquired from various tombs, Lebolo kept a small personal collection that he took with him when he retired from the tomb robbery business. In 1822, he returned to his native town of Castellamonte in Italy with a black mistress and a collection of eleven mummies. Upon his untimely death in on February 19, 1830, he passed his collection of Egyptian antiquities to his son, Pietro, who, to earn money, sold them on consignment to Albano Oblasser to sell in America to whomever would purchase them for whatever price they might fetch.

When the mummies arrived in New York, they were purchased in 1833 by one Michael Chandler, who had borrowed a good deal of money to do so. Chandler had hopes of getting rich, but on opening the coffins, he was disappointed to discover they contained little other than the mummies. He had supposed or hoped he might find some diamonds or valuable metal, but he found no such valuables. He did discover

that in connection with two of the bodies, there was something rolled up with a kind of linen, saturated with bitumen (a tar-like substance), which, when examined, proved to be two rolls of papyri. Two or three other small pieces of papyrus were also found that contained astronomical calculations, epitaphs, etc. Chandler resolved to earn a living displaying the mummies and the papyri as part of an Egyptian freak show, much like P. T. Barnum would do a few years later. Chandler eventually tired of life on the road and, needing to repay the money he had borrowed to purchase the mummies, decided to sell the collection. After passing through Cleveland, his circuit took him through Kirtland, Ohio. At that time he had only four of the original eleven mummies remaining. Finding a willing buyer in Joseph Smith, Chandler sold the mummies and papyri in July 1835 for \$2,400, and he settled down to farming.

Even though Joseph was not aware of the exact content of the papyri at the time of the purchase, he apparently was impressed by the Lord to raise the considerable amount of money being asked for them. Some Kirtland residents were provoked by Joseph's interest and became eager to purchase the mummies and the papyri from Chandler. The \$2,400 was a large sum of money, especially when the completion of the temple was so pressing. Two of the saints contributed \$800 each, and many other saints with fewer resources contributed the \$800 balance. Joseph Smith intended to translate the papyri and was given control of the antiquities.

**The translation of the papyri.** Shortly after the purchase, Joseph Smith, in company of his scribes, commenced to translate a few of the hieroglyphs. Joseph wrote:

With W. W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery as scribes, I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt. . . . Truly we can say, the Lord is beginning to reveal the abundance of peace and truth (*HC*, 2:236).

Joseph described the papyrus containing the record of Abraham as being "beautifully written on papyrus, with black, and a small part red, ink or paint [called rubrics], in perfect preservation" (*HC*, 2:348-51). As mentioned, Joseph stated that, in addition to the writings of Abraham, the papyri contained a record kept by Joseph in Pharaoh's Court in Egypt.

Joseph began the translation of the papyri in earnest in July of 1835. During that same month the Prophet also mentioned working on a project he called an "Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar." He never explained his methods or his objectives for that project, and it was never mentioned again after July 1835. Joseph left off translating in August 1835 to visit the saints in Michigan. Translation did not commence again until October 1, 1835. The last record of any translation was in November 1835. While Joseph would revise the translation preparatory to its publication in 1842, there is no evidence that he worked on the translation itself after 1835.

There is also no evidence that Joseph used the Urim and Thummim in translating the book of Abraham. Indeed, the Urim and Thummim were probably surrendered to Moroni years previously. Warren Parrish, one of the scribes involved in the translation during late 1835, stated, "I have set by his side and penned down the translation of Egyptian hieroglyphics as he claimed to receive it by direct inspiration of Heaven" (letter to the editor of the *Painesville Republican*, dated 5 February 1838, in *Painesville Republican*, 15 February 1838, 3). Joseph clearly regarded the book of Abraham as divine revelation to the saints.

**Publishing the book of Abraham.** Subsequently the mummies and the papyri were transported to Missouri in the summer of 1838 and then to Illinois in the fall of 1838 with the rest of the saints.

In 1842, over six years after his last known work on the papyri, Joseph finally had time to again turn his attentions to the book of Abraham. Three installments of the book were published in the *Times and Seasons* beginning in March of 1842—each containing facsimiles, although only the first two installments contained text. Abraham 1:1-2:18 was published in the March 1, 1842 edition; Abraham 2:19-5:21 in the March 16, 1842 edition; and Facsimile 3 in the May 16, 1842 edition. Elder John Taylor indicated in the February 1, 1843 edition of the *Times and Seasons* that Joseph Smith planned to publish more of the translation. However, Joseph's martyrdom and the events leading up to it prevented this. The Prophet had indicated that writings from Joseph, the son of Jacob, were also found among these papyri (*HC*, 2:235), but he did not publish any translation of those writings.

The facsimiles accompanying the publication of the book of Abraham were made to size by Reuben Hedlock, the former elders' quorum president in Kirtland. The book of Abraham was also published in the *Millennial Star*, a publication of the British Mission beginning in July of 1842. It was later included in the first edition of the Pearl of Great Price in 1851.

Further installments of the book of Abraham were promised but never published. Anson Call in his journal said that in 1838 the book of Abraham took about two hours to read out loud, which would seem to mean that it was approximately four times the length of the published version.

**The fate of the papyri.** After the death of the prophet Joseph in June of 1844, the four mummies and the papyri were entrusted to the care of Lucy Mack Smith, the Prophet's widowed mother. She exhibited the mummies and the papyri until her death and charged the going rate of 25 cents. The Prophet's mother died on May 14, 1856. Meanwhile Emma had remarried. Her new husband was Lewis C. Bidamon. After Lucy Mack's death the mummies and papyri reverted to the care of Emma and Lewis Bidamon. Within two weeks of the death of the Prophet's mother, they sold the mummies and the records to a Mr. Abel Combs, a traveling salesman. Mr. Combs sold two of the mummies with some papyri to the St. Louis Museum in St. Louis, Missouri, in

the summer of 1856 (Combs apparently retained for himself some of the fragments of papyri). There they remained until July of 1863 when they were sold to the Wood Museum which later moved to Chicago. The fate of the other two mummies is unknown.

The mummies and papyri remained in the Wood Museum in Chicago until the great Chicago fire of October 1871. It is believed that all of the papyri which were in Chicago at that time were destroyed.

For a long time it was felt that all of the papyri were destroyed, but it was not so. There remained the fragments of papyri that Abel Combs did not sell to the St. Louis Museum. These were willed at his death to his housekeeper, Charlotte Benecke Weaver. These ended up in the possession of the housekeeper's daughter, a Mrs. Alice Heusser of Brooklyn, New York. Alice Heusser approached Albert M. Lythgoe of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City with the papyri in 1918, but Lythgoe decided that the museum was not interested. In the spring of 1946, however, the Metropolitan had a change of heart due, in large measure to the efforts of Ludlow S. Bull. Bull had studied Egyptology at Yale University and he was appointed assistant curator in the Department of Egyptian Art in 1922. He was made associate curator six years later. Bull maintained an interest in the papyri and tried in 1946 to ascertain what had happened to them. By the time Bull returned to acquire the papyri for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alice Heusser had died, so Bull negotiated with her widower, Edward Heusser. These were purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

In 1967 New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art was under the dynamic direction of Thomas Hoving. Hoving wanted the biggest and the best of everything. To get the funds for the biggest and the best, he needed to get rid of the less desirable of the museum's pieces and instructed the various departments to rid themselves of the least historical pieces. This included the Egyptian galleries, which then had a problem: What should they do with the Mormon papyri? Who would want them? Maybe the Mormons would want them back.

Opportunity presented itself in the form of Aziz S. Atiya, a Coptic scholar on the faculty of the University of Utah. On a trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to research Coptic objects in its collections, Atiya was approached by Henry Fischer, the curator of the Department of Egyptian Art at the Metropolitan, with a delicate matter. Did he think that the Mormons might be interested in the papyri? Would he approach the Mormons and find out? He would. Atiya approached N. Eldon Tanner, a member of the First Presidency of the Church. Negotiations began in earnest in 1966, but it took a year to get the matter approved through the museum's de-acquisition process. The transfer was then arranged for on November 27, 1967. An anonymous donor gave a gift to the museum, and in exchange the museum gave the Church the papyri.

The newspapers came up with a slightly colored version of this story which was released to members of the Church. This version maintained that Dr. Atiya was in the museum searching through some manuscripts. He found a file which contained Facsimile No. 1, which he recognized from his reading of the Pearl of Great Price. He searched further and “saw more pieces of papyri stacked together and suspected that Providence had assisted” (Jay M. Todd, “Egyptian Papyri Rediscovered,” *Improvement Era*, January 1968, 14).

The file obtained from the Metropolitan Museum of Art consisted of ten fragments of papyri and a bill of sale transferring “four Egyptian mummies with the records of them” from the Prophet’s widow to Mr. A. Combs.

The Church published an article about the fragments of papyri obtained from the Metropolitan Museum of Art two months after their acquisition, in February of 1968. In that article the fragments were categorized and numbered, I to XI. The numbering scheme which we use today for the fragments today goes back to that original article.

Let us go back to 1835 and compare what Joseph might have had in his possession then with what was delivered to the Church in 1967 by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is believed that the materials that came into possession of the Church in 1835 consisted of four mummies, at least two separate papyrus scrolls or rolls, and a hypocephalus. In 1835 the papyri had been removed from their sarcophagi, and there was no way to associate a particular papyrus with its mummy. Though only two rolls and some odd fragments were described in 1835, the fragments delivered to the Church in 1967 suggest that, in all, parts of four rolls were actually present in the 1835 collection.

**1. The Hor roll.** One 1835 roll of papyrus contained a Book of Breathings, a sort of abbreviated Book of the Dead, that belonged to a man named Hor the son of Usirwer. By 1967 there had been significant fragmentation and parts became separated into sheets. Some of these were mounted on paper and preserved under glass. The 1967 papyrus fragments that belonged to this roll include fragments I, XI, X (arranged in that order from right to left). Facsimiles 1 and 3 were thought to have been part of this roll. An Egyptologist who saw this papyrus in the Wood Museum, Gustavus Seyffarth, described the opening line of the text on the scroll as “Beginning of the Book of . . .” Unfortunately his description does not allow us to determine exactly which book was included.

Critics of the Church have assumed that this Hor Book of Breathings must have been the manuscript from which the book of Abraham was translated. They give as evidence the fact that illustrations on this manuscript (Facsimiles 1 and 3) had been included in the book of Abraham. The 1967 fragments of this roll contain two damaged lines of hieratic writing (a form of ancient Egyptian writing consisting of abridged forms of hieroglyphics, used by the priests in their records). There are only eighteen

characters in all. There is no reason to believe that this roll had anything to do with the book of Abraham.

**2. The Tsemminis roll.** The second roll in 1835 contained a Book of the Dead belonging to Tsemminis, daughter of Eskhons. This roll also seems to have contained a vignette of a tree, a man, and a woman with a snake standing on its legs with its head in the woman's ear.

The 1967 papyrus fragments that belonged to this roll include fragments VII, VIII, V, VI, IV, and II (arranged in order from right to left) along with papyrus IX whose miscellaneous fragments belong throughout the roll. Twenty-seven chapters from the Book of the Dead are still contained in the remaining fragments.

**3. The Neferirtnoub roll.** In 1835 this roll contained parts of a Book of the Dead belonging to a woman named Neferirtnoub. From early accounts this roll was described as "a roll as [like] No. 1 [the Tsemminis roll], filled with hieroglyphics, rudely executed" and found on a female mummy. The 1967 fragment III was from this scroll.

**4. The Amenhotep roll.** This roll in 1835 contained a Book of the Dead belonging to a man named Amenhotep. No 1967 fragments were discovered from this scroll. It is known only from a poor quality partial copy which was made and found among the so called Kirtland Egyptian Papers. The copy suggests that this scroll also contained at least parts of the Book of the Dead. Other copied parts have thus far resisted identification with any known Egyptian text.

**The "hypocephalus."** In 1835, Joseph also possessed The "hypocephalus" of a man named Sheshonq. Hypocephalus is Greek for "the thing under the head," presumably the head of the dead. The Church does not currently have this in its possession. We have it only in the form of Facsimile 2 in the book of Abraham.

On the basis of the handwriting, the historical period in which the religious writings on these papyri were in use in Egypt, and other historical references to at least one of the original owners of the papyri, these Egyptian documents can be reliably dated to somewhere between 220 and 150 BC.

Professor John Gee, an Egyptologist on the faculty of Brigham Young University has estimated that the fragments obtained from the Metropolitan Museum of Art probably represent about thirteen percent of the papyri Joseph once had in his possession. The remainder was destroyed in the Chicago fire. He also estimates that the original scrolls existed in long rolls measuring 126 inches (about ten feet) by 12 inches.

The Joseph Smith Papyri are generally termed typical funerary documents. Some people assume that if the documents are funerary, they cannot contain anything else. Some Book of the Dead papyri, however, do contain other texts (see John Gee's article, "Eyewitness, Hearsay, and Physical Evidence," in *The Disciple as Witness, Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges, 192). Just because

the preserved sections of the Joseph Smith Papyri are funerary in nature does not mean that they could not have had other texts on the missing sections of the rolls. For example, Papyrus Vandier (one described by Posner in 1985) features a Book of the Dead on one side of the papyrus roll and, on the other side, a story about a man named Meryre who was sacrificed on an altar.

### **Kirtland Egyptian Papers**

It seems appropriate to comment on a strange batch of early church papers filed together in a gray cardboard box in the Church Historian's Office. They are all in the handwriting of men associated with Joseph Smith in Kirtland in 1836 and 1837, and all have been classified for one reason or another as "Egyptian." They have therefore been called the "Kirtland Egyptian Papers."

The Kirtland Egyptian Papers have been grouped into two classes of documents:

1. manuscripts containing parts of the book of Abraham, sometimes associated with Egyptian hieratic symbols written in the margins of the text. One of these seems to be a printer's manuscript for the very first installment of the book of Abraham.

2. other types of Egyptian manuscripts. In this category, along with a number of odds and ends, is a notable document, a bound manuscript entitled "Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language."

All of these documents are written in the handwriting of six men: W. W. Phelps, Frederick G. Williams, Warren Parrish, Oliver Cowdery, Willard Richards, and Joseph Smith. The contributions of Richards, Williams, and Joseph Smith are trivial which leaves Phelps, Cowdery, and Parrish as the key operators.

Modern Church scholars have not been able to make much sense out of these documents. No one is sure why they were written, in what context they were created, what was their intended purpose, or what role the prophet Joseph had in their creation. For example, it is not clear what the intended purpose of the "Grammar and Alphabet" was. Was it intended to be a key to translation? If it was, it was a project only barely and timidly begun. It is a bound book but only 34 of 220 pages have entries. The written pages do not run consecutively, but are scattered at intervals throughout the book. The "alphabet" consists of only thirty symbols. There are hundreds of hieroglyphic and thousands of hieratic symbols to choose from. Why only thirty? Of the thirty symbols only one is completely explained.

Scholars have been able only to speculate on the meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers. Perhaps they represented some type of mandatory period of investigation and exploration during which men are required to "study it out in your mind" (D&C 9:8), making every effort to "obtain for themselves" whatever can be so obtained, thereby discovering and acknowledging their own limitations before asking for direct revelation from on high.

Perhaps also the brethren, particularly Phelps and Cowdery, between whom there seemed to be considerable rivalry and jealousy, were trying to use their own gift of translation. And why not? Joseph had always encouraged them to seek their own gifts. He always gave them a free hand. There seemed to be also some degree of jealousy of even the Prophet himself among these brethren. They seemed to be impatient of Joseph Smith's scholarly limitations and had been invited by Joseph to surpass him.

There has been much speculation about the Kirtland Egyptian Papers and their relationship to the book of Abraham, especially among critics of the Church. Critics have even claimed that Joseph Smith translated the book of Abraham using the Kirtland Egyptian Papers. But the Kirtland Egyptian Papers were created after the translation of the book of Abraham was complete. As is common with most deciphered ancient languages, the decipherment and translation comes first, and a grammar is written after the text is understood. Therefore, the Kirtland Egyptian Papers, if anything, may have been the result of an effort by the brethren to align the book of Abraham—already received by revelation—with papyri documents in their possession. The question of full participation by Joseph Smith in the creation of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers doubtful.

### **The Process of Translation**

More needs be said regarding the translation of Egyptian records. Basically, Egyptologists have not been able to successfully translate ancient Egyptian texts. Egyptian scholars do have the ability to change hieratic text (again, a form of ancient Egyptian writing consisting of abridged forms of hieroglyphics, used by the priests in their records) into hieroglyphics, and the hieroglyphics can be changed into English phonetic equivalents. The problem is that once this is done, the scholar is left with gibberish or technical jargon of uncertain meaning. This kind of mechanical translation need in no way imply understanding. This has been the repeated experience of many Egyptologists. The ablest Egyptologists have always insisted that the main difficulty that confronts them is not a matter of grammar or vocabulary but a complete ignorance of what the Egyptian writer really had in mind. One scholar said "The difficulty is not in literally translating the text, but in understanding the meaning which lies concealed beneath familiar words" (Peter Le Page Renouf, *The Egyptian Book of The Dead*, 14). Another Egyptologist wrote, "A certain helplessness in the face of these mythological records is unavoidable to both layman and Egyptologist" (Rudolf Anthes, "Review of Alexandre Piankoff, *The Shrines of Tutankh-Amun*, 2 volumes" in *Artibus Asia* 20.1, 1957: 92). No matter how well one knows Egyptian grammar, one may still be totally excluded from the real meaning of any Egyptian text.

What is a *translation*? We have already demonstrated that a literal translation of Egyptian texts—changing of the text from Egyptian into English—is not generally helpful. Probably the most carefully thought out definition of translation is: "A statement in the translator's own words of what he thinks the author had in mind." A little reflection

will show that this is the best if not the only possible definition. A translation must be not a matching of dictionaries but a meeting of minds. This has simply not been possible with ancient Egyptian documents. Every good translator will tell you that after all the aids and implements at his disposal, including his own long training, have been brought to bear, it is, in the last analysis, his own feeling for things that makes a convincing translation. Without intuition he could never make any kind of intelligible translation. If truly scientific translation were possible, machine translation would have been perfected long ago, but where wide gaps of time and culture exist, such a thing as a perfect mechanical translation is out of the question. In the end it is the translator's own imponderable intuition that is his claim to distinction. The most learned technical linguists do not always make the best translators.

Joseph never shared with us the actual method which he used to translate. It is highly unlikely that he translated the book of Abraham in the same way that an Egyptologist would translate. The Prophet never claimed to be operating as a linguist. Rather the translation was given to him by "the gift and power of God"—by revelation. Obviously the most important aspect of "translation" is to tell us what the original author wanted to say. No one ever stated the case more clearly than the prophet Joseph himself when he said concerning 2 Peter 1: "The things that are written are only hints of things which existed in the prophet's mind" (*HC*, 5:401-02). Joseph did not translate the book of Abraham after the manner of the scholars. He did not have their tools, their abilities, or their problems. He had another method. Consider the introduction to D&C 7: "Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, April 1829, when they inquired through the Urim and Thummim. . . . The revelation is a translated version of the record made on parchment by John and hidden up by himself." Here we have a translation which Joseph Smith did not make—it was given to him, and he called it a revelation. Yet, it was made from a real document on parchment or treated leather, that John wrote with his hand and then hid away. Another example is the book of Enoch which was made from a document that was never in the Prophet's possession and may indeed have been destroyed thousands of years ago. Did Joseph know the original language of Enoch? Nobody does, but that makes no difference when a translation is not worked out linguistically, but rather given to one by revelation. Yet another example is the book of Moses (Moses 6:26-50 and Moses 7) which was "translated" beginning in June of 1830 when Joseph set out to revise the book of Genesis. Plainly this type of translation depends on the help of the Spirit and is not to be accomplished by intellectual effort alone.

The Book of Mormon was translated in this same way—by the gift and power of God and not by any power of man (see *The Process of Translating the Book of Mormon* in volume 2, Appendix A of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*). An interesting question arises from this understanding of the process of "translating" these ancient documents. If all the Prophet had to do was to read off an English text given him by the Lord, why

did he even need the original characters in front of him? Apparently, he didn't! "I frequently wrote day after day," Emma Smith recalled, "often sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with a stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us. . . . He used neither manuscript nor book to read from . . . the plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen table cloth" (*Emma Smith to Joseph Smith III*, 289-90).

Just what was the process of translating the book of Abraham and what is the relationship of the papyri to the book of Abraham? First, let us acknowledge that the 1967 papyri fragments which the Church now owns have nothing on them which relates to the book of Abraham. Critics of Joseph Smith claim this proves he was a fraud. There are three theories which have been put forth to explain how Joseph came to translate the book of Abraham:

1. The missing papyrus theory. Since the papyri fragments in the possession of the Church today account for, at best, thirteen percent of the papyri Joseph Smith possessed in 1835, the reason the book of Abraham does not match the translation of the preserved papyri is that the book of Abraham was translated from a portion of the papyri that is now missing. It was destroyed in the Chicago fire. Perhaps the book of Abraham was the second text on the papyrus of Hor. It must be acknowledged that even the proponents of this theory readily admit that Joseph did not translate an ancient record as an Egyptologist would translate. Rather the process was one of personal revelation. The translation "unfolded" by the gift and power of God. The process was one of revelation not of research. Proponents of this theory would also readily admit that the papyrus from which Joseph translated the book of Abraham was not an *autograph* by the prophet Abraham. That is, it was not written in his own hand. It, rather, would be a copy handed down over the centuries to eventually be buried with someone who died in Egypt in the second or third century BC.

2. The pure revelation theory. Did the two rolls of Egyptian papyri in the possession of Joseph at the time of the translation of the book of Abraham actually contain the writings of Abraham and ancient Joseph written in the language of the ancient Egyptians? It is difficult to be certain, but perhaps they did not. Perhaps with the papyri functioning as some type of trigger or catalyst, the book of Abraham was given to Joseph by pure revelation. This idea, while worthy of serious consideration, does seem to contradict several statements by the Prophet that he was translating the book of the papyri (*HC*, 2:235; *Jessee*, 1989, 2:50, 87, 90). This may be explained by the fact that Joseph never had reason to question that the book of Abraham was coming from the papyri, as he was simply empowered to "translate" them with the papyri laying in front of him. And the book of Abraham resulted.

3. The Kirtland Egyptian Papers theory. There is no substance to this theory as documented from the foregoing materials. It is highly likely that these papers are an after-the-fact byproduct of the translation process.

**The meaning of the facsimiles.** What about the association of Facsimiles 1 and 3 with the Hor Book of Breathings? A plausible explanation is that the original illustrations drawn by Abraham or prepared under his direction were, over the centuries, modified and adapted for use by Hor, the owner of the papyrus. What Joseph Smith did with the facsimiles is thus similar to the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible—he provided additional revealed meaning or perhaps even restored the original meaning of Abraham’s illustrations. Perhaps he corrected the changes and distortions that had taken place over nearly two millennia. The same, of course, holds true for the hypocephalus—Facsimile 2.

But is there any evidence that, even in distorted form, these illustrations were ever associated with Abraham anciently? There is indeed. In an ancient Egyptian papyrus dating to roughly the first or second century AD there is a lion-couch scene similar to the one shown in Facsimile 1. Underneath the illustration the text reads, “Abraham, who upon . . .” (Johnson, Janet H. “The Demotic Magical Spells of Leiden I 384,” 1975, column XIII line 6). There is a break in the text here, so we do not know what word followed. The key point, however, is that an ancient Egyptian document, from approximately the same time period as the papyri Joseph Smith owned, associated Abraham with a lion-couch scene similar to that found in Facsimile 1.

There are more than a hundred examples of hypocephali (like Facsimile 2) in museums around the world. On an Egyptian papyrus of the early Christian period appears the expression “Abraham, the pupil of the eye of the Wedjat” (Griffith, Francis Llewellyn, and Herbert Thompson, *Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden*, London: H. Grevel & Co., 1904, column VIII line 8, 64-65). In the 162nd chapter of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, which gives instructions on how to make a hypocephalus, the Wedjat eye is described, and the hypocephalus itself is called an “eye” (Lepsius, Richard, 18452, pl. XXVII). The Apocalypse of Abraham, a pseudepigraphical text dating from the early Christian era, describes a vision Abraham saw while making a sacrifice to God. In this vision he is shown the plan of the universe, “what is in the heavens, on the earth, in the sea, in the abyss, and in the lower depths” (Apocalypse of Abraham, 12). This excerpt is very close to the expression found in Facsimile 2, figures 9, 10, and 11, reading, “O Mighty God, Lord of heaven and earth, of the hereafter, and of this great waters.” The similarity to the hypocephalus, which for Egyptians represents the whole of the world in a circular format is striking. There is even a description of what are clearly the four figures labeled number 6 in Facsimile 2 (*Ibid.*, 18). This text also relates how Abraham is promised the priesthood, which will continue in his posterity, and this promise is associated with the temple (*Ibid.*, 25). He is shown the “host of stars, and the orders they were commanded to carry out, and the elements of the earth obeying them” (*Ibid.*, 19). This passage shows a remarkable parallel to the wording in Abraham 4:10, 12, 18, 21, and 25. In The Testament of Abraham, another pseudepigraphical text of the early Christian era, Abraham sees a vision of the Last

Judgment that is unquestionable related to the judgment scene pictured in the 125th chapter of the Book of the Dead, thus clearly associating Abraham with the Egyptian Book of the Dead (*Testament of Abraham*, recension A, 12-13). One of the Joseph Smith papyri is in fact a drawing of this judgment scene from the 125th chapter of the Book of the Dead, and Facsimile 3 portrays a scene closely related to this.

We may summarize this previous paragraph by saying that several ancient Near Eastern documents—roughly contemporary with the hypocephalus and the other Egyptian papyri owned by Joseph Smith—associate Abraham with the scenes portrayed in Facsimiles 1, 2, and 3. Significantly, none of these documents had even been discovered at Joseph Smith's time. These facts strongly support the authenticity of the book of Abraham and Joseph Smith's association of the facsimiles with Abraham.

**The Lord's use of objects in the translation process.** Why are gadgets or physical devices (Urim and Thummim, seerstone, plates, and papyri) necessary? Why did Joseph Smith need a Urim and Thummim, and why did he go through the greatest pains and perils to get and keep the plates if he didn't really need them? Can't we forget all the hardware and be guided by the Spirit alone? No, because God does not want it that way. Whether we find it agreeable and rational or not, God makes use of both human agents and physical implements in carrying out his purposes in the earth, not because he needs to, but because he wants to help us help ourselves. We are here, among other things, to learn, and we will learn precious little if we get all our solutions from the answer book. We must have our faith tested and our skills improved. In a way, the gadgets or physical devices of translation (Urim and Thummim, seerstone, plates, papyri) are analogous to physical ordinances and rituals. There is nothing of arbitrariness in the Lord's use of these objects. Rather, he is trying to teach those who utilize these gadgets important spiritual truths through the use of them. For a discussion of the Lord's use of physical ordinances and ritual, see *The Lord's Use of Ritual*, chapter 29 of volume 3 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. See also the commentary for Moses 6:35 in *Learning to Love the Pearl of Great Price*.

Let those who are still unsure of the proposition that the Spirit works with and through physical devices consider the visits of the Lord to his disciples after the resurrection. On one occasion, he walked with two of them on the road to Emmaus. The Lord himself, of course, is the source of all knowledge and the wellspring of the scriptures themselves. He could well have pushed the dusty books aside and admonished his listeners to heed him alone, from whom all the books came in the first place. Instead of that, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). Among the Nephites he called for the records and personally inspected them for errors and omissions, admonishing the people to spend their days reading the words of a prophet who had been dead for seven hundred years—"For great are the words of Isaiah" (3 Nephi 23:1). If the Holy Ghost brings all things to our remembrance, one may well ask,

why do we need to record anything at all? Because God has so commanded “for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23).

We must not think that the Lord, in giving his servants special devices to assist them, was letting them off easy. He did not hand them the answer-book, but only a slide rule. It takes far more formidable qualifications and far more intense concentration and cerebration to use a seer-stone than it does to use a dictionary. The existence in our midst of computers does not mean, as some fondly suppose, that mathematicians and translators and genealogists no longer have to think—they have to think harder than ever. A Urim and Thummim, like a dictionary, is only an aid to the translator who knows how to work it and may gradually be dispensed with as the translator becomes more proficient in his spiritual exercise. Certainly the documents with which Joseph Smith was dealing could be translated in no other way than by the Spirit. How can any mortal ever know what the original first writer of Genesis had in mind save by the power of revelation? And without that knowledge no translation is possible. It was Brother Joseph’s calling to interpret the minds of other dispensations to the minds of our own dispensation.

There is evidence that the prophet Joseph’s mind may have been imbued with parts of the Book of Abraham even before he sat down with the papyri to translated. He had revised chapters 11-25 of Genesis which are chapters that pertain to Abraham. Therefore the life and times of Abraham were certainly on his mind. One LDS scholar, James R. Harris, has found some writings of Joseph Smith from December 1833 which closely resemble a passage from the Book of Abraham. These are recorded in the “Patriarchal Blessing Book No. 1: “We diligently sought for the right of the fathers and the authority of the holy priesthood, and the power to administer in the same for we desired to be followers of righteousness and the possessors of greater knowledge.” This has a striking resemblance to Abraham 1:2: “I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge.” Brother Harris concluded: “It is this author’s contention that the text of the Book of Abraham was already impressed upon the mind and heart of Joseph Smith before he received the papyri collection” (*Studies in Scripture, Volume 2, The Pearl of Great Price*, 280). It is possible that a papyrus text in the hands of the Prophet was not essential to the production of the translation of the Book of Abraham.

### **The Book of Abraham—Where and When Was It Written and by Whom?**

One interesting question is when was the text of our Book of Abraham originally written and by whom? Most members of the Church, including Dr. Gee, feel that the text was written by the patriarch Abraham, though the papyri from which Joseph Smith translated it need not have been an original autograph penned by the hand of Abraham. Rather it would be the text of a book written by the hand of Abraham that had been

handed down for centuries before a manuscript version of it was placed in the sarcophagus near Thebes. A small minority of Latter-day Saint scholars think that the Book of Abraham was written in Hellenistic Egypt by an unknown author (in the few centuries before the time of Christ), and that it was an ancient pseudepigraphon translated by Joseph Smith. Most critics of the Church, of course, think that the Book of Abraham is a modern fabrication by Joseph Smith.

Where did Abraham write the text of the Book of Abraham, and how was it transmitted to that catacomb near Thebes? Of course those who believe that the text dates back to Abraham automatically hold that the manuscript was written in Egypt by the hand of Abraham and that there was no geographic transmission of the text. Or, the only transmission of the text occurred as Egyptians transmitted copies of the text to the catacomb. Those who believe that the text was originally written in Hellenistic Egypt in the second and third centuries BC also automatically believe that there was no transmission of the text. Yet another theory of transmission postulates that the Book of Abraham was written by Abraham and passed down through his descendants, some of whom took a copy to Egypt where it was translated and copied onto a later manuscript.

One may well differentiate the method of translation from the results of translation. It is on the grounds of *method* that Egyptologists have weighed Joseph Smith in the balance and found him wanting. They maintain, "He was no scholar, he was not one of us, he did not use our methods!" Once the method has been discredited, it has been considered unnecessary to look further into the results of that method. But the Prophet has saved us the trouble of faulting his method of translating by announcing in no uncertain terms that it is a method unique to himself, depending entirely on divine revelation. This still leaves wide open the truly effective means of testing any method, which is by the results it produces. And to this venture we invite any and all—to read and test the Book of Abraham. It mattereth not by what imponderable method Joseph Smith produced his translations, as long as he came up with the right answers. It matters even less from what particular edition of what particular text he was translating. It is enough to know that the Prophet was writing real books of Abraham, Moses, Enoch, Mosiah, and Zenos. We testify enthusiastically that the Book of Abraham is authentic and true, and we invite the world to test it!

# Mountain Meadows Massacre

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## Introduction

Certainly one of the blackest hours in our Church's history is the massacre of more than 120 unarmed men, women, and children on September 11, 1857, by about four dozen members of a militia comprised of Mormon settlers at Mountain Meadows in southern Utah. It was a truly ugly and despicable event. The Mormons were aided in the atrocity by Paiute Indians. But it was the Mormons and not the Indians who took the lead in this. This incident was an obscenity to all the good and righteous things Mormonism stood for. It cast the Church in an unfavorable light and justifiably tarnished the Church's image throughout the United States, and doubtless throughout the world.

This chapter is part of a book I've called *Resolving Concerns*. The various chapters in this book are intended to do just that—resolve concerns. It is my role as author to write from the standpoint of an apologist. I must try to help those with concerns to understand the truth and feel more comfortable about any criticisms leveled against the Church. How is that possible when the subject is the massacre that occurred at Mountain Meadows? If a member of the Church, or anyone at all, is concerned about the Church's role in this particular debacle, how is it possible to help resolve his or her concerns?

In spite of all well-justified misgivings, I do feel it is possible to come to an equilibrium with this event. This involves coming to fully accept two premises:

1. The first is that there were circumstances present in southern Utah in 1857 that made the Mormon settlers' actions more understandable. One example is that they all believed that a U.S. army of some twenty-five hundred men was marching toward Utah led by man know for his ruthlessness and even cruelty. War was imminent, and it was urgent that they be prepared. They looked upon outsiders—"Americans"—as their enemies. They had assumed a "military" mentality and were conditioned to obey any orders, as a good soldier must.

These mitigating circumstances will be carefully itemized and discussed. Regardless, however, of the number and nature of these circumstances, the saints were still far from being justified in what they did.

2. The second premise is more important. Two of the characters in the drama that played out in the late summer of 1857 are, I believe, almost entirely to blame for the occurrence of the incident. Without either of them, the massacre would not have happened. Both of these individuals evidenced spiritual and emotional inadequacies and a degree of personal pride that proved cataclysmically fatal. These men were John D. Lee and Isaac C. Haight. They were both leaders—and they were leaders at a time when it was vital that leaders be obeyed.

Each of these two men was a unique individual. Each had his own issues, problems, situations, responsibilities, and concerns. Neither I nor any other mortal is in a position to judge their culpability relative to the eternal laws of God. Only the Lord can and will do that. I do, however, hold to the notion that the judgments, decisions, and instructions that issued forth from these men in September 1857 were responsible for the massacre at Mountain Meadows.

It is true that several others were directly involved in the massacre including nearly fifty Mormon militiamen and a hundred or so Paiute Indians. It is important, however, to acknowledge that the Mountain Meadows Massacre, as an event, was in no way representative of the moral standards, the character, the motives, the ideals, or the deeply held doctrinal beliefs of the Mormon settlers in that area, including those militiamen most directly involved. The tragedy shouldn't really reflect in any way on the Church or the church members of that day, save for those two I have identified as being responsible.

Chapter outline:

1. First I will provide a short introductory biography for John D. Lee and Isaac C. Haight.

2. Then, I will summarize what I consider to be the most important circumstances present in 1857 that enhanced the likelihood of the massacre. These are the factors that existed over and above the roles played by Lee and Haight.

3. Finally, I will provide a relatively short narrative detailing the salient happenings in the story of the massacre. This includes those events leading up to and including the massacre. I have told the unvarnished truth. I warn you in advance that it will be one of most awful things you have ever read.

I have intentionally made you, the reader, aware of John D. Lee and Isaac C. Haight in order that you might follow their roles carefully as you study the account of how the disaster developed and played out. The reader is invited to formulate his or her own opinion as to the importance of the roles Lee and Haight shared.

I have utilized as my primary resource the book *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* by Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Glen M. Leonard (Oxford University Press: New York, N. Y., 2008). This exhaustively referenced work is the most authoritative and credible we have available on the Mountain Meadows massacre.

Since my chapter here is intended only for distribution among family and friends, I have taken the liberty of freely quoting from the book without providing particular references to the primary sources. I invite the reader to consult Walker et al's book if specific references are desired. For a few of the most important quotes, I have referenced them only as to their location in *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (hereafter, *MMM*). In all quotations, I have corrected the grammatical and spelling errors to bring them up to a modern standard. For any significant conflicts between the book and my brief summary, I take full responsibility.

## **Brief Introductory Biographical Sketches of the Main Perpetrators**

**John D. Lee.** He was born in Kaskaskia, Illinois, in 1812 and was therefore 45 years old on the day of the massacre. He suffered a troubled childhood. An intruder beat his mother senseless, leaving her impaired. Lee remembered his father as “a kind-hearted generous, noble man” when sober, though he drank heavily and provided poorly. John’s mother died when John was three. Five years later his father “went to Texas.” John was sent to live with his mother’s sister who believed in not sparing the rod. John later reported that he had been “knocked down and beaten . . . until I was senseless, many times.” Conditions were apparently so difficult living with his aunt, that at one point he even considered suicide. At the age of sixteen, he left his aunt’s home and went to work as a mail courier, stage driver, Mississippi River “roust-about” (a wharf laborer), farmer, store clerk, and bartender. He briefly dealt cards and gambled professionally. He married Agatha Ann Woolsey. He then established a small store and farmed in Fayette County, Illinois. Still in his twenties, he acquired 160 acres, two hundred cattle, and a thousand sheep. He found he could easily outtalk, out-trade, and outwork almost anyone.

Lee was converted to the Church after he rescued two frost-bitten Mormon missionaries from a snowstorm. In 1838, he and Agatha Ann gave up their comfortable situation in Illinois to join the main body of saints in Missouri. They then moved to Nauvoo where he built a large home and served as the wharf master and as librarian of the Masonic lodge. He also served as a bodyguard to Joseph Smith and, upon Joseph’s death, to Brigham Young. “I became very popular among the saints,” Lee recalled without a blush. “I was young, strong, and athletic. I could drive ahead and work all day and stand guard half of the night, through all kinds of weather.” Brigham Young took a liking to Lee and agreed to adopt him in a spiritual father-son relationship.

Lee reached Utah in 1848, and two years later Young asked him to help settle southern Utah, where his whirlwind energy might do some good. Brigham Young may have had another reason for sending Lee south. Both before and during the saints’ westward migration, Lee had trouble getting along with people and found himself called before church tribunals for offenses that included bickering, lewd talk, boasting of a sexual orgy with one of his wives, and domestic violence. “He threatened to cut my throat,” said plural wife Nancy Bean in a December 4, 1847 statement. Lee often denied the stories others told about him, calling them outlandish charges aimed to destroy his public character. But Brigham Young and others came to believe that Lee had been guilty of some misconduct and even reproved Lee himself. This incident caused a minor stir. Lee’s reputation had been damaged and possibly his career in the Church as well.

Despite preferring to remain in Salt Lake City, Lee accepted President Young’s assignment to go south “to redeem my standing.” He lived in Fort Harmony, twenty miles southwest of Cedar City. He eventually became militia major in Fort Harmony.

Fort Harmony also became a center for the church-established Indian Mission. The missionaries called to labor in that mission were often at odds with Lee. Lee felt there should only be one “head” at Fort Harmony, and that was he. Lee served as “presiding elder” in Fort Harmony, and often spoke of personal dreams, visions, and revelations that he probably didn’t really have. Finally, a petition against Lee circulated at Harmony and included the signatures of Indian missionaries and settlers. Lee was relieved of his office as presiding elder but maintained his office as major over the militia battalion at Harmony. In all, Lee was a volatile, divisive, and notably proud character.

**Isaac C. Haight.** He was born at Windham, New York, in 1813. He was converted to the Church and lived in Nauvoo. There he worked as a policeman for the city of Nauvoo. He was a member of the city posse that destroyed the press of the anti-Smith *Nauvoo Expositor* and was a part of the guard that went with Joseph and Hyrum to Carthage Jail.

Once out west, in Salt Lake City, he accompanied Parley Pratt on his 1849/50 expedition to explore the area of southern Utah. He then served a mission in England for twenty-eight months. On returning, he led a group of emigrants from England to the Utah territory. Shortly thereafter, he was sent to Cedar City by Brigham Young to take charge of the Deseret Iron Company. In addition, he became Cedar City stake president, the Mayor, legislator, and militia battalion major. Few men in Utah seemed to have a brighter future. In 1857 he was forty-four years old.

Like other Utah communities, Cedar City had recently revitalized its militia in response to legislation passed early in the year 1857. Also the rumors of war had accelerated preparations for military action (see “Perception of an imminent war between the United States Government and the Mormons,” below). Haight seemed ready, if not anxious, to defend the city.

### **Most Pertinent Precipitators of the Massacre**

How could basically good people participate in such a terrible atrocity? The perpetrators were not hardened criminals. Nor were they iniquitous, amoral individuals lacking in common sense. Rather they were ordinary men trying to exist in the difficult rural, environs of southern Utah. Though we will never be able to justify the awful occurrence of the massacre, I believe it will be useful here to summarize those factors that practically played a role in the happenings and were the precipitators of the event. I should warn in advance that we as a people are too much believers in institutional and personal responsibility. We have difficulty blaming the massacre on historical or psychological models. Nonetheless, the following factors cannot be expected to be without consequence.

One Mormon resident of southern Utah at the time of the massacre who did not take place in the killing told his son: “You would not understand if I told you. You know nothing about the spirit of the times. . . . You don’t understand and you can’t

understand” (William R. Palmer to Joseph Anderson, October 16, 1959, William R. Palmer Material, First Presidency, General Administration Files, 1923, 1932, 1937-67, Church History Library).

It is clear that the massacre was a complex event in which any people and many forces had a role.

**The Turbulent Era.** The period from 1830 to 1860 has been called “The Turbulent Era.” During this period the United States was a violent place, particularly for some racial, ethnic, and religious minorities. Indeed, it had been for the Mormons. They had experienced violence in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, and when a U.S. army marched toward Utah Territory in 1857, the Mormons believed they were about to become victims again. One of the great ironies of the massacre was that some of the people who had long deplored the injustice of illegal violence became its perpetrators.

The belief that citizens had the right to take the law into their own hands to protest unjust conditions existed in colonial America, where citizens violently defied British rule and finally overthrew it. By the time of Joseph Smith, the traditional “right of riot” was also being used against individuals and groups. The people had so often heard “that all power, government, and authority of right belong to them,” wrote a contemporary critic of American conditions, “that they occasionally mistake the true limit of that sovereignty, and undertake to exercise despotic powers” (David Grimstead, “Rioting in Its Jacksonian Setting,” *American Historical Review* 77 [April 1972]:392-93).

American cities had “labor riots, election riots, anti-abolitionist riots, anti-Negro riots, and anti-Catholic riots. Rural America also had its roughnecks, bushwhackers, and night riders, who put down anybody they strongly disliked. This violence was frequently aimed at unpopular minorities whether racial, ethnic, or religious. Contributing to this problem was poor law enforcement. The system of sheriffs and constables could not keep pace with the rising violence that came with growing populations.

It is little wonder that the saints encountered the violence that befell them in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. They had been taught to “renounce war and proclaim peace” (D&C 98:16). Up until 1857, they had never really lifted a finger in their own defense. They did threaten forcible retaliation in 1835 with the Zion’s Camp march. They did not, however, have an opportunity to exert any force once they arrived in Missouri. Also on Independence Day in 1838, Sydney Rigdon delivered an aggressively worded warning to the Church’s enemies. Other relatively minor skirmishes resulted from the freelance bands of so-called “Danites” made up of young church members. However, actual, well-organized, substantial, retaliatory defense never materialized.

In the setting of colonial America, episodes of violence often began when one people classified another as “the enemy,” stripping them of any humanity and mentally transforming them into objects to be hated and feared. Once the process of devaluing and demonizing occurred, stereotypes took over, rumors circulated, and pressure built

to take group action against the perceived threat. When these tinderbox conditions existed, a single incident—even small and ordinary—could spark great violence ending in atrocity.

**Perception of an imminent war between the United States Government and the Mormons.** The saints had begun arriving in the Utah territory beginning in July 1847 with an understandable passion for self government. During the early days of their settlement, they spoke of a “land of promise held in reserve by the hand of God.” Initially, it seemed the federal government seemed amenable to the idea. In 1851 President Millard Fillmore appointed Brigham Young governor and superintendent of Indian affairs for the Utah territory. However, three of the six other territorial appointees were outsiders and non-Mormons. The outside appointees were hardly in Utah before they left, taking the territory’s congressional appropriation of twenty-four thousand dollars with them. The “runaways” announced that the Mormons had not received them properly and were guilty of “malicious sedition.” These accusations reflected the deeply held feelings on both sides.

A few other incidents fueled the fire between the Mormons and the federal government. In 1853 Pahvant Indians in central Utah killed U.S. Army Captain John W. Gunnison and seven members of his party who were surveying a possible route for a railroad to the Pacific. The following year, Washington ordered Lt. Colonel Edward J. Steptoe and his command to travel to Utah to aid Utah officials in bringing the killers to justice. When the case came to trial, a local jury dismissed the charges against some of the Indians and found three others guilty only of manslaughter. The jury believed the main ringleaders were still at large and that the crime had been an act of retribution for the killing of Pahvant leader by Missouri emigrants going to California. Critics of the Mormons were enraged. They believed the Mormons had not upheld the nation’s military honor.

The soldiers under Colonel Steptoe’s command further provoked the saints by wooing the Mormon women. One officer tried to seduce a daughter-in-law of Brigham Young whose husband was absent on a mission. When the army left, perhaps as many as one hundred Mormon women went with them. “Everybody has got one except the Colonel and Major,” boasted one soldier. “The doctor has got three—mother and two daughters. The mother cooks for him and the daughters sleep with him” (*MMM*, 21). The incident outraged the Mormons.

The Mormons and the sequence of federally appointed judges had one running battle after another. After a local man was acquitted in federal court, the presiding judge, W. W. Drummond, reportedly physically threatened him. A Mormon-controlled grand jury in turn indicted Drummond and his servant for assault “with intent to kill.” Rowdies broke into the law library of federal judge George P. Stiles, a Mormon who had been excommunicated for “immoral conduct.” The vandals burned his law firm’s books and papers in a privy. Local people also had clashes with other U.S. appointees

including surveyors and Indian agents. The federal appointees became united in their strong opposition to Mormonism. These conflicts trashed Mormon hopes for a quiet, independent society in Utah.

During the 1850s, as many as sixteen federal officers left their positions in the territory in frustration, fright, or both. Negative reports began filtering back to Washington, accusing the Mormons and their Church of being “despotic,” “dangerous,” and “damnable.” The Church’s practice of polygamy added fuel to the conflict. The ideas began to grow that the Mormons considered the agents of the federal government as an “obtrusive presence,” and that the Mormons themselves were in a state of rebellion. By 1857 some outsiders thought conditions in Utah were out of control. The Mormons and particularly Brigham Young became fed up with the federally appointed agents sent to Utah, feeling they were often incompetent and corrupt.

Brigham began to insist that the Utah territory should become a state and have a voice in the selection of those who governed them. Brigham Young was so insistent on leaders acceptable to the saints, he began to be regarded by some as a traitor who was declaring war on the federal government. A campaign against the Church began to rage in several newspapers in the eastern United States. Their stories contained many lies and half truths about the Mormons. One example was the *New York Tribune* which reported to its readers that Utah was full of espionage, rape, robbery, and suicide. “Surely there never was a more atrocious and revolting tyranny,” it said. The *New York Times* demanded Brigham Young be replaced by a new territorial governor, backed by a military force “to tender the Constitution with one hand, while a drawn sword is held in the other” (*MMM*, 28-29). By May and June, 1857, rumors grew statewide that Brigham Young was, in fact, going to be replaced.

On July 23-24, 1857, Brigham Young hosted a grand, two-day celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Mormon’s arrival in the valley. It was held near Silver Lake near the top of Big Cottonwood Canyon and included two thousand guests and their families. About noon on the 24<sup>th</sup>, the idyllic charm of the celebration was broken by an unexpected visit. Five horsemen rode into camp, including Salt Lake City mayor Abraham O. Smoot. He announced to the gathered group that an army of some twenty-five hundred government troops had been ordered to Utah. They were to serve under a newly appointed governor and other new federal appointees to enforce U.S. law and put down a reported Mormon rebellion (*MMM*, 36). He also announced that the federal government had summarily terminated all mail service in and out of Utah—the kind of action nations take before launching a war. Smoot also had learned that the army was to be led by General William S. Harney, a two-fisted Indian fighter. He was known for his quick temper and violent nature. This suggested that the government was taking severe measures, and it raised the saints’ fears of renewed violence against them.

Brigham Young and other church leaders quickly adopted a general policy. They agreed to accept the new territorial appointees, but only if they “would behave

themselves.” However, Harney and the army were different. If Harney crossed the eastern border of the territory, there would be a fight, and “the buzzards should pick his bones,” Brigham Young said. The saints would “no more . . . submit to oppression” (*MMM*, 38). Clearly, a war posture was established, and the word quickly spread throughout the state.

Rumors began to circulate that the army planned to hang Brigham Young and execute the more prominent men among the Mormons. The approaching army was viewed more as a mob than a military organization.

Brigham Young soon formulated his military strategy. It consisted of the following:

1. He wanted the saints outside of Utah (those in California, present-day Nevada, and in the eastern United States) to join the main settlements in the Utah territory. A war would put them a great risk.

2. He would use a hit-and-run, scorched-earth, and guerrilla tactics, attacking the army’s thousand-mile line of supply. Every mile on the Great Plains and every barrier and fissure of the Rocky Mountains would become an ally to the mountain-toughened Mormons. If the United States wanted to fight a war, Young intended that “they shall furnish [us] with arms and ammunition” (*MMM*, 45).

3. If General Harney made it to Utah, he would find Salt Lake City in ashes. The saints would scatter in the mountains or find a new place to gather in some remote region of the West. It was better to destroy their cities than to leave them for outsiders, as had happened with Mormon towns and villages in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. Brigham wanted the army to be without any kind of succor if it got to the Great Basin.

4. The Indians would be recruited to help fight a guerilla war.

During the first week in August, convinced that war was closing upon him, Brigham wrote a series of orders. He told the Mormons in San Bernardino, the largest Mormon settlement outside of Salt Lake City, to come home. He asked his men to cultivate relations with various Indian groups throughout in the state in case they were needed. Nauvoo Legion General Daniel H. Wells had already organized the Utah territory into military districts. He ordered them to be in a high state of readiness. Brigham Young urged the saints to maintain a high level of spiritual readiness and to also garner and stockpile foodstuffs and other supplies in case they would have to live on them for an extended period.

In early August 1857, Apostle George A. Smith began a speaking tour of southern Utah. Though Smith said his tour was “a mission of peace to preach to the people,” his speeches “partook of the military more than the religious” and were full of hostility and virulence. They unmistakably sounded the war cry against the approaching federal army. Brigham Young had instructed Smith that the people were to strictly conserve grain and put the militias on alert. During their tour, Elder Smith’s party was overtaken by a rider carrying a military express carrying an urgent message from

General Daniel H. Wells in Salt Lake City. Before Smith had left Salt Lake City for the south, it was believed the federal army would be unable to reach Utah before winter. But word had come that Colonel Edwin V. Sumner's First U.S. Cavalry, reported to be chasing Cheyenne Indians, had been spotted on the Sweetwater River just a few hundred miles northeast of Salt Lake City. Mormons suspected that Sumner's pursuit of the Indians was a ruse to get him closer to Salt Lake before the populace learned of his movements. Later Mormons remembered variants of these rumors. One said that a group of soldiers planned to attack from the south, travel north to meet the main body of the U.S. forces, and clean out the inhabitants as they went along. Still another said that an army captain had gone to Texas to gather volunteers to make a southern attack. In Salt Lake City, leaders began to worry that U.S. troops might enter Utah anywhere along its eastern borders and perhaps from California as well. The militias began to carefully watch all possible entries into the Utah Territory, east, west, and south. Plans were discussed as to how any hostile force approaching Salt Lake City would be dealt with.

In the years following the Mountain Meadows Massacre, Smith's journey to southern Utah became a matter of controversy with some feeling that it clearly set the stage for the massacre. Clearly all of Utah was on a war footing.

**An atmosphere of military-style authority and obedience.** This allows errant leaders to trump the moral instincts of their followers. John D. Lee and Haight were two of those errant leaders.

**The lack of clear messages about what is expected of the followers.** A dangerous situation is created when the followers of the leaders are without clear messages from headquarters. Then the followers exist in an atmosphere of ambiguity and wonder just what they should do. They become more subject to peer pressure and rumor.

**Poverty increases the likelihood of violence by raising concerns about survival.** Certainly deprivation was present in southern Utah. The Arkansas party was probably relatively wealthy by the standards of the day. The total worth of the property is difficult to calculate, but a good guess at 1857 prices would be about fifty thousand dollars. Adjusting for inflation, that amount would be more than a million dollars in today's economy. This made the emigrants' train exceptionally well to do. The poor people in southern Utah, struggling to carve out an existence in their frontier settlements must have look upon the train with wonder, and some even with envy.

One account recalled an incident as the Arkansas Party traveled through Fillmore. The emigrants "inquired how far it was to any houses"—an insult aimed at the settlers' log cabins or their new state house, both in clear view. "The emigrants then in a crowing and insulting matter inquired whether there were any men in the place" (*MMM*, 113).

When iron production in Cedar City seemed most hopeful, the village had a boomtown population of almost a thousand men, women and children, making it one of Utah's largest communities at the time. By the middle 1850s, Cedar City's iron making had floundered and most of the local people lived in dire poverty, often going without shoes and warm clothing. Their homes were a shambles and they lived in ragged attire.

**The troublemaker Dutchman.** Traveling with the Arkansas company was a man who was described even by people of the company as a "single man who has given us all the trouble we have had. He would not obey orders but [is] sassy with officers." He may have been John Gresly, whose family had emigrated from Germany and settled in York, Pennsylvania. Members of the Gresly family were known for combative behavior. In 1842, John's father, Andrew, was charged with assault and battery. In 1851 young John was found guilty of malicious mischief. Years later, another son, George, was arraigned on two charges—assault with intent to commit murder and carrying deadly weapons—for chasing down and shooting a man. Yet another son, Anthony, was convicted of assault and battery. In 1857 John Gresly would have been twenty-one years old and because of his young age was likely single, matching the description of the Dutchman in the Arkansas train. Whoever the mysterious man was, he was, by both emigrant and Mormon accounts, a troublemaker.

One account recalls that the Dutchman, after a quarrel with Mormon settlers who refused to sell provisions to the emigrants, was overheard to say, "If [I] had a good riding horse, [I] would go back to Salt Lake and kill Brigham" (*MMM*, 112). This threat to kill Brigham Young so aroused local passion that the local bishop was recalled to have said, "The only way that he could control his men was that he promised them to set the Indians on the doomed train" (*Ibid.*).

**The "perfect storm."** While there were conflicts on the southern road, the emigrants did not deserve what eventually happened to them at Mountain Meadows. The massacre was not inevitable. No easy absolution for the perpetrators is possible. All the purported wrongs of the emigrants—even if true—did not justify the killing of a single person. The best that might be argued is that the massacre was triggered by a "perfect storm" of circumstances, and some of the Mormons did not match their behavior with their ideals.

Violence is thought to be more than what one person does to another. Violence is the step-by-step process by which the violence is eventually precipitated. It seems the step-by-step circumstances in this particular tragedy all came together in a remarkable "perfect storm" way that finally triggered the massacre. The southern road in late summer 1857 was not just about adverse events along the way. It had become a complex web of fear, misunderstanding, and retribution that prepared normally decent people to kill.

Each of the above precipitators obviously had a role. Consider also these suggested steps that precede violence:

1. As emotions build, the perpetrators become convinced that their opponents are a threat to their people and values. They claim to act defensively, even while they are the aggressors. At this stage rumors are everywhere, and perception becomes reality. The final cataclysm is sudden and almost inexplicable.

The settlers began to see the emigrants as the “other” or enemy, believing the outsiders somehow threatened the values and well-being of the Mormon community. Rumors circulated that were untrue or enlarged beyond proportion, and southern Utah society was vulnerable to this excitement.

2. Most ordinary people readily allow the dictates of “authorities” to trump their own moral instincts. Impoverished settlers knew the virtues of obeying. Even in hierarchical, theocratic Utah, there were few places like Iron County.

3. The next factor is conformity. Few people have the courage to go against the crowd.

4. Dehumanization of the victims. This need not be intentional. It is allowed to occur at times by the failure of authorities to send clear and unmistakable messages about what is appropriate and moral behavior. This can be as powerful as a direct order.

The region was isolated from Salt Lake City. Mixed signals floated down the trail about emigrant policy. Civil, religious, and military power was dangerously held in the hands of a few.

For the most part, the men who committed the atrocity at Mountain Meadows were neither fanatics nor sociopaths, but normal and in many respects decent people. The modern age, confronted with mass violence and killings, has rediscovered a fundamental aspect of old theology. “If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them,” wrote Russian Nobel Prize winner Alexander Solzhenitsyn. “The line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who wants to destroy a piece of his own heart” (Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* [New York: Random House, 2007], Staub; Peck).

### **Story of the Unfolding and Occurrence of the Massacre**

Previously told versions of the Massacre have largely taken one of two approaches. One approach consists in portraying the perpetrators as good people and the victims as evil ones who committed outrages during their travel through northern, central, and southern Utah. Some descendants of the perpetrators and several Mormon historians have adopted this approach because it seems to excuse or soften what happened. The second approach emphasizes the innocence of the emigrants and the evil of their killers. The killers are at best described as followers of a misguided

religion. Some relatives of the emigrant families, church critics, and many non-Mormons have found this position attractive.

Both of these approaches break down logically. Certainly nothing that the emigrants purportedly did comes close to justifying their murder. The leading men and women among them had been substantial citizens in their Arkansas communities and were determined to make their mark in California. Likewise, most of the killers led exemplary lives before and after the massacre. Except for their experiences during a single, nightmarish week in September 1857, most of them were ordinary men with little to distinguish them from other nineteenth-century frontiersmen. Some in fact would have been pillars in any community.

Walker et al.'s book *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* takes a third approach by navigating between the extremes of the other two. The book attempts to apply common sense by recognizing that both victims and perpetrators were decent but imperfect people whose paths crossed, and a terrible tragedy resulted.

I must warn the reader that this story is told with sufficient candor and detail, that it may well be upsetting to the reader. Again, please pay particular attention to the roles of John D. Lee and Isaac C. Haight in the story.

1857 was a time of many emigrants passing through Utah on the way to California. They believed fortunes could be made in sunny and warm California, not only from gold but by other means as well. The party of emigrants involved in the massacre will be referred to as either "the Arkansas company" or simply "the emigrants' company." This group of emigrants consisted of at least two separate larger groups and several small ones.

1. The first large group was the Baker Party led by John Twitty Baker, generally known by the name of "Jack" or "Captain Jack Baker. He was born in Alabama in 1807. Baker was a colorful character who worked hard, drank hard, and was inclined to be involved in fights. According to his family tradition, he, on one occasion, killed three men. He himself was wounded. After recovering from his wounds, he returned home and found that the angry families of the three men had burned his barn and taken all his cattle. The constant threat of further retaliation led to his moving to Crooked Creek Township, Arkansas—his address at the time he departed for the west. A few of Baker's sons had previously traveled to California and spoke highly of its possibilities.

"Overlanders" or emigrants typically started their journeys west in April. The Baker party was joined by several families including their own children and friends. Somewhere along the line they met up with two large Dunlap families. They all brought their own cattle, and each family brought along hired men to serve as drovers for the cattle. They hoped to sell the cattle to "hungry gold miners" in California for high prices.

2. The Baker party also was joined by another family grouping led by Alexander Fancher. He was born in Tennessee, but he and his wife settled in Arkansas in the 1840s to raise their nine children. Like the Baker boys, Fancher himself had also been

previously to California on two occasions and was impressed by possibilities of selling cattle in the area of central California. He returned to Arkansas in the mid-1850s to drive more cattle to California. In April 1857, Fancher was forty-five years old and seasoned in the ways of the frontier. He had talent and charisma. A family history described him as “a farmer, tall, slim, erect, of dark complexion, a singer, and a born leader and organizer of men . . . with great common sense.” His party, like the Bakers, also consisted of extended family and some friends.

The Baker and Fancher parties were eventually joined by several other smaller family groups. Some gave Alexander Fancher the credit for leading the entire group, though others considered Jack Baker the most influential. Actually, these several groups did not cross the plains from Arkansas to Salt Lake City as one cohesive group. They were often separated along the trail for long periods of time.

Successful overland caravans started early in the morning, stopped for several hours in the heat of the day to rest the oxen, and then traveled again in the late afternoon and early evening. On a good day, they could travel sixteen to eighteen miles. Typically they rotated the wagons in the lead. The man driving the lead wagon in the train was responsible for choosing the camp site for the night. The following day, that wagon would become the last in line, and the one behind it would be first. Thus each wagon spent a day in each position in line. The fear of meeting hostile Indians bedeviled many overlanders. This made larger groups of travelers more desirable. At times Indians would steal cattle or horses.

In July after some three months of travel, the Arkansas emigrants approached Utah territory. The Fanchers arrived first in July. Near Salt Lake City, the Baker company was joined by a rough set of men from Missouri, the “wild-cats.” These would become a matter of controversy and trouble among the emigrants. The “wild-cats” camp rang with vulgar songs, boisterous shouting, and coarse swearing. They also spoke of the need to wipe out the Mormons. It is possible that some in this group stayed with the traveling company all the way to Mountain Meadows and perished with the group. This, however, is a matter of controversy. The Bakers and the wild-cats pulled into Salt Lake City on August 3.

Beginning in late July each year, overlanders flooded Salt Lake City’s streets, and the numbers were especially high in 1857. That year there was particular tension between the travelers and the locals. By 1857, two years of drought had left the Mormons’ cattle weak and underfed which made locals especially protective of pasture lands. An even greater problem was the threat of war. As the saints prepared for the army’s arrival, trading with the travelers was a problem. Strict orders from General Daniel H. Wells (head of the Utah militia) and Brigham Young during the first week of August forbade selling grain to outsiders. The policy was a major setback for the travelers. The weariness and diseases of overland travel had taken a toll on the emigrants’ cattle. The emigrants’ mules and horses also needed grain. Also being

hoarded that summer in Salt Lake City was powder and lead for ammunition. The Mormons were preparing for war, and all outsiders—whether from Missouri, Arkansas, or elsewhere—were seen as potential enemies. For their part, the emigrants saw the Mormons as expatriates and even traitors. This all led to occasional scuffles and fisticuffs between the emigrants and the Mormon settlers. There were also incidents between the emigrants and local Indians. The Mormons were resented, as they usually sided with the Indians whose friendship they needed in the coming war. It would seem that, from the Mormons' perspective, the line between the U.S. Army and the emigrants began to blur.

Most trains took the northern trail out of Salt Lake City in 1857. Only a few took the southern route. Among the latter group was the large train later massacred at Mountain Meadows. This group was formed anew in Salt Lake City. It was made up of the Bakers, the Fanchers and several other smaller parties from Arkansas and some from Missouri. Those from Missouri were never identified by name. It is interesting to note that relatives of the 120 victims at Mountain Meadows and historians have been able to document only about three-fourths of the group with the rest being unidentified.

They appear to have chosen Alexander Fancher as their overall leader. While the Baker group had most of the property and people, Fancher had Utah experience. Because of the predominance of Arkansans in the train, it would come to be called "the Arkansas company." When all its members traveled together—which was only part of the time—the Arkansas train had about 140 people.

The Arkansas company as it headed south was a bustling village on the move, made up largely of young families. The senior citizens of the group included Jack Baker, Alexander Fancher, and a few others in their mid- to late forties and fifties. Most in the company were in their twenties and thirties. The company pulled out of Salt Lake City probably near the end of the first week of August. The train consisted of about twenty wagons and possibly more.

No records from the train itself survived, making it difficult to describe the initial part of the journey from Salt Lake City to Fillmore from the emigrants' perspective. The Arkansas company was not the only large train on the southern road in 1857. Leaving Salt Lake City twelve or fourteen days behind the Arkansas company were two other large companies whose members came from Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas.

By 1857 there were Mormon settlers living all along the southern trail. This resulted in competition between the overlanders and the settlers for grass and water. Also because of the war posture that prevailed, there were problems trading with the settlers along the way. The settlers had been cautioned to hoard their supplies, particularly their grain and ammunition. Some recall that the emigrants cursed the Mormons for refusing to trade with them.

Corn Creek was a settlement and a creek twelve miles south of Fillmore. The area was settled by the Pahvant Indians who were farmers. They routinely collected

some compensation from the passing emigrant companies for the use of their grass and water resources. The Arkansas company reached Corn Creek by August 25. That same day two wagons drove into Corn Creek from the south. This was George A. Smith returning from his tour of southern Utah. The captain of the Arkansas company, presumably Alexander Fancher, introduced himself to the Mormon group and asked them a peculiar question. "Would the Indians accept a dead ox that had died in the night?" The Mormons thought the emigrants' question a bit odd, and it created some suspicion. As the Mormons pulled out of Corn Creek the next morning, they saw the captain of the emigrant party standing over the dead ox with a bottle in his hand. In the coming days a few of the Indians who partook of the ox died. The rumor grew that the emigrants had "poisoned" the ox. In retrospect, it seems likely that the ox had died of anthrax and those Indians who died had acquired and died from anthrax as well. The extent of effects of the spread of the "poisoning" rumor is unknown, though it is felt it did reach the southern Utah communities involved in the massacre.

By the end of August, news was making its way to Cedar City that an emigrant train was coming. This particular train was shrouded in rumors and uneasy anticipations. Local resident Mary Campbell claimed that before the emigrants reached Cedar, Isaac Haight gave an impassioned speech that rehearsed rumored wrongs of the emigrants. She recalled: "The rumors raised the ire . . . of people" (*MMM*, 132). Campbell recalled Haight's saying that "the people in southern Utah needed some stock just then, as if he was giving the citizens a hint to get the stock away from the company." This statement is consistent with a recollection of Philetus Warn that the train "was known to be in possession of considerable valuable property, and this fact excited the cupidity [excessive zeal, greed, avarice] of the Mormons" (*Ibid.*). Even Brigham Young eventually came to a similar conclusion. Some men had taken advantage of "the disturbed state of the country to accomplish their desires for plunder," he said in 1877 (*Ibid.*).

The Arkansas company reached Cedar City around noon on Thursday, September 3, staying only a little over one hour. In that short time they generated a considerable amount of trouble. A local miller sold them about fifty bushels of wheat along with some corn. Waiting for the grain to be ground at the mill, some emigrant men sampled the Mormon "Sage Brush Whiskey" sold at the nearby distillery. They probably drank a bit too much and "they talked very freely." Trouble broke out when the miller, following the counsel of Isaac Haight, demanded a cow in trade for grinding the grain—an exorbitant price, though isolated trading posts along western trails often charged whatever they could get for goods. Another settler, Charles Willden, claimed that fifteen to twenty emigrant men began "talking in a loud excited and boisterous manner profaning and threatening to do bodily harm and kill some of the citizens." Willden said these men affirmed "that they had helped to kill Joseph Smith . . . and other Mormons at Nauvoo & Missouri, and that, by G\_\_ they would kill some more yet."

Referring to the fact that the United States troops were on the plains en route to Utah, some of them said “the [Arkansas] company would go on to the Mountain Meadows, and wait there until the arrival of the said troops and would then return to Cedar . . . and carry out their threats” (*MMM*, 133). This statement illustrates the link the residents of Cedar City had made between the emigrants and the U.S. Army. The statements of other Cedar City residents corroborated Willden’s statement, though they also recall that many among the party were respectful. They also recall Captain Fancher’s rebuking the rowdy ones in the company for the threats they made.

Another run-in took place at the Deseret Iron Company store. Store clerk Christopher J. Arthur, Haight’s son-in-law, remembered that some of the emigrants “came in to buy several articles that were not in the store which caused them to act mean.” Using profanity, they vented their anger, and some of them went looking for Haight at his nearby house, perhaps wanting to complain about what happened at the mill and store. One account suggested that “cursing” and “drunk” men went to Haight’s house and demanded that he come out “if he was a man.” The men also yelled threats about sending an army from California to seize Young, Haight . . . and “every other damn Mormon in the country” (*MMM*, 133). Haight slipped out the back door and ordered Higbee, the town marshal, to arrest the men.

A pattern was thus developing. At various points through the territory, the emigrants had a hard time getting the food and other supplies needed for their survival and comfort. Some vented their frustration in ways that made the Mormons—already apprehensive about the approaching army—feel even more threatened. At Cedar City, this cycle reached a crescendo.

As the emigrants were leaving town, one reportedly said that if “old Brigham, and his priests would not sell their provisions, by G-d they would take what they wanted any way they could get it.” With that he “killed two chickens and threw them into his wagon.” They may have been Barbara Morris’s. When the sixty-three-year-old woman crossed the street from her home to the central corral, a loudmouthed “tall fellow” on horseback “addressed her in a very insulting matter,” her son later claimed. The man “brandished his pistol in her face” and “made use of the most insinuating and abusive language.” The “man on a grey horse was the most loud mouthed of the lot,” said Mary Campbell, perhaps speaking of the same emigrant. This was likely the Dutchman (see “The troublemaker Dutchman” above.)

Barbara Morris was the mother of Elias Morris—a military captain and Haight’s second counselor—and the wife of John Morris, one of Bishop Klingensmith’s counselors. When Marshall Higbee tried to arrest the horseman for profanity and disorderly conduct, he “refused to be taken, and his companions stood by him.” Higbee was forced to back down. News of the Cedar City disturbances spread up and down the road. It is notable that not one Utah citizen was physically harmed by the emigrant company.

Though the menacing words from the emigrants were probably just idle threats and boasts made out of frustration and in the heat of the moment, in the charged environment of 1857, Cedar City's leaders took the men at their word. Haight wrote a letter to William Dame in Parowan, the military district commander, requesting permission to use his militia against the emigrants to try to save the face of those in Cedar City who had been offended. Dame wrote back that he saw the Cedar City turmoil for what it was—disturbing but hardly a threat that called for harsh measures. Dame and his war council in Parowan had decided that “all possible means should be used to keep the peace until the emigrants should leave and proceed upon their journey.” Haight did not accept Dame's direction. Instead he and others moved ahead with a plan to take action against the emigrants.

In Cedar City at the time it was felt that the local Indians, the Paiutes, were natively inclined to take harsh action against anyone that offended them. They were only held back by Brigham Young's insistence. But Brigham was also rumored to have formulated a new Indian policy. It said that if war begins between the U.S. government and the Mormons, he will allow the Indians to do whatever they wished without interference. It was assumed that the Indians would take violent action.

After receiving Dame's message, Haight and other leaders in Cedar City decided “to arm the Indians, give them provisions and ammunition, and send them after the emigrants” to “give them a *brush*” and take their cattle. Haight asked Cedar City resident William Willis, a Mexican War veteran, “the best way to make an attack on the train.” Willis offered advice that the attack should come when the emigrants were traveling. If the attack came while the emigrants were in camp, he told Haight, “the emigrants would whip his Indians.”

Haight and other leaders thought they knew just the place for an ambush. One segment of the road through Mountain Meadows descended a very steep incline into the Santa Clara Canyon. The road then wound through groves of trees and below cliffs that provided ideal hiding places for attackers. Their plan was for the Indians to attack the train, kill as many of the men as they could, and get away with as much cattle and spoil as possible, but not to harm the women and children.

For the plan to work, Haight had to convince Paiutes to participate. He turned for help to the energetic John D. Lee, a fellow major in the Iron Military District. Haight summoned Lee to Cedar City, and Haight and Lee discussed the matter all through one night. Haight detailed for Lee all of the terrible things about the emigrants. He also allegedly said that the emigrants had threatened “to return from California with soldiers . . . and kill every d—d Mormon man, woman, and child.” Lee was in complete accord with the plan to attack the emigrants. And the plan to involve the Indians was satisfactory, as it then didn't matter who or how many were killed. They could then blame the casualties on the Paiutes.

A controversy began after that all-night discussion and continued well after the atrocity. Who had been more responsible for the decisions, Haight or Lee? The most likely scenario was that when the two men breakfasted at Haight's house on Saturday after their meeting, they were partners—but with some differences. Lee, the religious zealot, wanted to play a meaningful role in what he supposed to be God's purpose. The emigrants "were enemies to us, & . . . this was the beginning of great and important events," he said shortly after the massacre. Haight was caught up by the threat he perceived in the emigrants and wanted "to put them out of the way before they did any more harm." Both men also felt the need to settle old scores with the "gentiles," and the idea of taking some cattle and other spoils could not have been too far from the surface.

The authors of *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* opined: "The white leaders' inciting of the generally peaceful Paiutes to participate in the attack is one of the most disturbing aspects of the entire story. The Southern Indian Mission had established close ties between the settlers and the Paiutes, which in cases created a sense of trust, and even dependence, that made them willing to comply" (*MMM*, 145).

Apparently John D. Lee persuaded the Paiutes to participate in the massacre by telling them "that Americans were very bad people, and always made a rule to kill Indians whenever they had a chance. He said also, that they had often killed the Mormons, who were friends to the Indians. He then prevailed on them to attack the emigrants . . . and promised them that if they were not strong enough to whip them, the Mormons would help them." Lee consented to act as their commander during the attack.

On the Friday night, September 4, the Arkansas company had camped at Leach's Spring, the last camp before they reached Mountain Meadows. Unaware of any plans for attacking them, they left their camp on Saturday morning. Mountain Meadows is a neck-like valley, about a mile and a half wide and six miles long. They entered and traveled through the valley to its southern end where they made camp.

The next morning, Sunday, September 6, in the morning, the emigrants gathered under a large tent to celebrate the Sabbath. The next leg of their journey would take them through the narrow Santa Clara Canyon. Meanwhile John D. Lee was a whirlwind of activity in instructing and gathering Indians from several surrounding areas, including as far away as the settlement of Washington to the south.

While the plan was unfolding everywhere else, it began to unravel in Cedar City. At 4:00 PM on Sunday, following the regular worship service, Haight convened a council meeting to discuss the plan for attacking the emigrant train. The meeting included members of the Cedar City stake presidency—Haight and his two counselors, John Higbee and Elias Morris; the Cedar City bishopric—Klingensmith and his counselors, James Whitaker Sr. and Morris's father, John; and members of the stake high council. Other leading citizens were also present. Apparently the more radical members of the council favored the use of harsh measures, but no one favored any wholesale killing.

One member of the council was the kindly Laban Morrill, a blacksmith and a resident of Fort Johnson, six miles north of Cedar City. Morrill arrived late to the council meeting and was stunned by what he heard. “Do not our principles of right teach us to return good for evil and do good to those who despitefully use us?” he later remembered counseling. “To fall upon them and destroy them was the work of savage monsters rather than that of civilized beings of our own enlightened time” (*MMM*, 156).

Morrill wanted to know “by what authority” Haight and the others were planning such drastic measures. Had something come from Colonel Dame in Parowan? If so, Morrill demanded to see the documents. In response Haight and his supporters had to admit they were acting on their own. Nothing had come from Parowan, they said. The full truth was that Dame had actually told Haight to let the emigrants alone. Still more damning, Haight did not tell the council about Lee and the forces that were already gathering near the Meadows. At least no one present recorded such an admission.

The debate continued until Morrill finally got the men to agree “that all should keep still [and] quiet and that there should be a dispatch to Governor Young to know what would be the best course.” Brigham Young’s views far outweighed anyone else’s in the territory, and consulting him was one way to bring the badly divided men together. Morrill and others likely believed that Young’s answer would end the matter quickly and stop the local conspiracy. The vote for the dispatch to Brigham Young was unanimous. Morrill took pains to have Haight assured him he would send the dispatch the next morning. Utah did not yet have a telegraph system, and an express dispatch from Cedar to Salt Lake City and back would require a week of hard riding.

Morrill returned home “feeling that all was well.” He had stood up to the extremists and prevailed. The Sunday afternoon meeting had worked the way the Mormon system of councils was intended. There had been a thorough discussion that checked extremism.

Following the meeting, Haight decided to send two messengers to Lee. Apparently, his intent was to back Lee off of the plan for attacking the emigrants. There seemed to be enough time to accomplish that since the emigrants were likely to stay in Mountain Meadows for a couple of days to rest and feed their cattle. Once they did break camp, they still had a two-day journey to the Santa Clara Canyon. But Haight was likely haunted by something he knew about Lee. Lee was an aspiring and glory seeking man “who ran before he was sent.”

Sometime Sunday evening Lee decided to make an attack at Mountain Meadows instead of Santa Clara Canyon. Lee later blamed the change in plans on the Indians’—saying that he could not hold them back. It is more likely Lee spearheaded advancing the date of the attack. His plan was to attack the emigrant camp Monday morning, September 7, before daybreak, which was about 5:30 AM. But things went wrong from the beginning. Instead of immediately rushing the sleeping emigrants, the Paiutes

waited for daylight, which gave the emigrants a chance to start campfires for breakfast. Their dogs, sensing strangers nearby, went “to barking.”

The Indians did attack. At first the surprised emigrants made easy targets. Lee claimed seven of them died, and another sixteen had wounds, although Indians put the total number of dead and wounded at fifteen. The emigrants quick regrouped and soon were firing back.

The two messengers Haight had sent out from Cedar City arrived in mid-morning. If they had intended to have Lee call off the attack, they were too late. The two learned that two of the emigrants were outside the meadows looking for stray cattle. The two messengers, William C. Stewart and Joel White realized that if the two returned to camp and saw what was happening, they might ride off to report the attack and get help. Stewart and White asked to borrow two pistols and they went looking for the two emigrants. They backtracked toward Cedar City and eventually found their quarry. The two emigrants were on horseback returning to camp and had paused to let their mounts drink from a creek near Leach’s Spring. Stewart and White approached the unsuspecting men and struck up a conversation. The Mormons learned that one of the emigrants was the much-talked-of “Dutchman.” The other was a nineteen-year-old, William Allen Aden. William Stewart shot and killed Aden in the head, but the Dutchman put spurs to his horse and fled, dodging bullets. He was wounded but managed to get back to camp.

After the initial attack that morning, the emigrants had circled their wagons, easing the wheels into quickly dug pits so the wagon beds were flush with the ground. For added security they chained the wheels together and filled the gaps with dirt. Inside their makeshift fort, they dug a semicircular ditch, twenty feet long and four or five feet deep. Here, most of the emigrants huddled. In the wagon circle or “corral” the emigrants had to bury bodies, nurse the wounded, and comfort terrified infants and children. More than 120 men, women, and children survived the initial onslaught, and as the siege wore on, these had to cope with the necessities of eating, sleeping, and sanitation. There were other problems. Ammunition was running low. Just as critical was the lack of water. The springs and brook of the Meadows was just out of reach. The Paiutes began gathering the spoils in the form of the cattle.

Soon after Monday’s initial attack and the start of the siege, Lee knew he was in trouble. The plan to wipe out the emigrants in one quick assault failed, and the Paiutes were angry because of the casualties they themselves had suffered and the failure to achieve the easy victory that had been promised.

Lee knew he needed reinforcements. He left the siege to try to seek help. On the way he met 150 Indians from the Washington settlement who rushed on to help their friends at the siege.

Meanwhile on Monday morning in Cedar City, Haight was trying to manage his own difficulties. Around noon, Haight learned of Lee’s failed attack. He now had to

explain and manage a situation that was rapidly getting out of control. How much should Brigham Young be told? And how should the situation at the Meadows be resolved?

This would require two express riders—one for Salt Lake City and another for the Meadows. A messenger, James Haslam, was dispatched Monday morning to ride to Salt Lake and to Brigham Young with a letter requesting Brigham's counsel. In the letter, Haight said the emigrants had been acting "very mean," and it rehearsed their threats. The letter also claimed the emigrants had gotten into trouble with Paiutes, who had surrounded them and forced them "to seek shelter behind their wagons." Finally, it sought counsel from Young on "what they must do with the Americans." In other words, the letter said to Brigham, "the Indians have the Americans corralled at the Mountain Meadows, and Lee wants to know what should be done." This letter obviously omitted key details. This was a first effort at cover up, more of which was to follow.

With the rider to Mountain Meadows, Haight sent a letter instructing Lee to back off. It actually said something like, "You will use your best endeavors to keep the Indians off the emigrants and protect them from harm until further orders."

The situation was now complicated by the escape of the Dutchman who could testify that white men—not just Indians—were killing emigrants. What if the people of California learned these facts? And how could Haight explain to his own people that his assurances during the Sunday night council meeting meant nothing?

Haight sent a rider on Monday afternoon to Parowan to inform Dame that the emigrants had gotten into a difficulty with Indians at Mountain Meadows. Whether Dame believed the message or read between the lines is unclear. He summoned a council. The council decided to offer assistance to the emigrants if they were to request it. If they did not, then they would have to fight it out on their own. At two o'clock Tuesday morning, September 8, an Indian runner reached Parowan. He was dispatched to summon more Paiutes around Parowan. Dame told the local Paiutes not to go, and he sent one of his trusted friends Jesse N. Smith to Cedar City to ascertain the full truth of the situation. He took with him Edward Dalton, a Parowan man with a well-deserved reputation for moderation and good judgment. They spoke with Haight who was purposefully vague and uncooperative.

Haight also held back the news that he had just sent a delegation of five men under the command of Higbee, the town marshal, to the Meadows. These men were leaders in the Cedar City council and were very much in the aggressive camp. Haight had learned that at least a few emigrant men were outside the besieged corral. Unless something was done to stop them, they might spread word of the attack to other California-bound companies. It seems likely he had dispatched his five-man delegation to see to this task. Near Leach's Spring this group met two men from the emigrant camp heading toward Cedar to obtain help. Thinking the Cedar men would be their saviors, the two emigrants excitedly told them that Indians had surrounded their camp

on the previous Monday, that the camp was still surrounded by the savages, and that they had been sent to obtain help from the settlements. In response to the pleas for aid, some of the Cedar men commenced firing, killing the two emigrants.

Hours before Higbee's men left Cedar on Tuesday, more violence had erupted at the besieged emigrant camp. The Paiutes, their numbers having been strengthened Monday night by Indian reinforcements from the Washington settlement had attacked the emigrants again, about sunrise on Tuesday. They had had one of their number killed and several wounded. The Indians were upset, as things were not going as Lee had promised when he lured the Paiutes to the Meadows.

The Paiutes had killed dozens of cattle and wanted to kill more in reprisal against the emigrants. Lee succeeded in getting the Indians to desist from killing any more stock that night. Lee had his own designs on the emigrants' livestock and would eventually get control of the herd.

That was not all that was upsetting the Indians. Following the Tuesday morning attack, Lee received Haight's message to stop the Indian attacks and wait for further orders. Lee at first told the Paiutes to hold off on further attacks. The white men's vacillation seemed nonsensical—if not two-faced—to the Paiutes. The Paiutes were angry at Lee and even threatened to kill him. Though Lee later recalled trying to hold off the Indians and being unable to do so, the Paiutes told the story differently. They said Lee, later on Tuesday, prevailed on them to attack three different times, the last of which Lee led personally.

The Tuesday incident gave Lee the excuse he would use the rest of his life. He denied that he participated in the first attack on Monday. Lee would claim he did not arrive at the Meadows until Tuesday, when he did everything in his power to save the emigrants from angry Indians. It was a self-serving story built on half-truths and a persistent effort to make the Paiutes responsible for what Lee and the Cedar City leaders, particularly Haight, had started.

Apparently there was a time on Tuesday when Lee did try to stop the Indians, but it would seem he readily caved in to the Paiutes' frustrations at the white men's duplicitous and actions. Some time on Tuesday, Lee betrayed his ambivalence by sending a message to Haight in Cedar City requesting further instructions.

At noon on Wednesday, September 9, with nothing to do but await Haight's decision, Lee walked to a vantage point above the emigrants' wagon fort. Seeing a white man, the emigrants sent two little boys about four years old to meet him and ask for help. Lee hid himself, and the boys turned back. The emigrants persisted in their attempts at communication. They hoisted a white flag in the middle of their fort. The best the emigrants could do was to wait for someone to rescue them, or for their attackers to grow weary and leave. They had run out of kindling, fresh water, and milk for the children.

Meanwhile the firebrand Cedar City marshal Higbee and his four men had arrived. Higbee would later write an account that tried to blame the whole affair on the Paiutes. It bristled with anger. He inflated the number of Indians to between three and six hundred, calling them “blood thirsty and crazy” savages “determined . . . to accomplish the destruction of the Company if they had to fight all the Mormons in the Southern Country.” The Paiutes were in war paint, he recalled. Higbee wrote, “Lee was trying to pacify [the Indians] and have them scatter and go away and let the emigrants go.”

Higbee and the Cedar City radical council leaders who were with him held a council with Lee. They all agreed that calling out the militia from Cedar City was the only way to end the standoff quickly. They then returned to Cedar City, arriving Wednesday evening. They reported to Haight. The situation had become more tangled than anyone imagined at the outset. People had been murdered and survivors would talk. The emigrants had seen Lee and recognized him as a white man. Even if they hadn’t, the Dutchman would have told of his being attacked and his companion, William Aden, murdered. If the emigrants were allowed to go on to California, Cedar City residents would pay a price. And where would it stop? With anti-Mormon feeling already running strong in the country and an army marching on the territory, the lives of the entire community might be at risk.

The Cedar City leaders believed they had to do something to bring events to a conclusion, and do it fast. It was emigration season, and they knew more travelers on the California road were bound to reach southern Utah and the Mountain Meadows soon. They had also been told that U.S. soldiers might enter the region at any moment. Events were coming to a head, and the conspirators saw just two chilling options. They could lift the siege and let the emigrants carry word of the attack to California, or they could leave no emigrants alive who were old enough to “tell tales.” The Paiutes could not kill the remaining emigrants on their own. But the militia could not be ordered to commit such an act without the consent of their commanding officer in Parowan, William Dame.

Late Wednesday evening Haight left for Parowan in a light wagon. He had to get Dame to give the order that would bring the Mountain Meadows matter to what he thought was its inexorable conclusion. Haight must have also been worrying about Smith and Dalton, the men Dame had sent from Parowan to investigate the situation. They had undoubtedly learned the real truth—that the Mormons were involved in the Indian attack on the Arkansas party—and had returned to Parowan earlier on Wednesday. By the time Haight reached Dame, the latter would know that the Cedar City leaders had blatantly disobeyed his directive to let the emigrants pass unharmed.

In fact, late Wednesday evening Smith and Dalton did reach Parowan, where they “expressed much disgust over what they had seen and learned, as John D. Lee and other white men were assuming a very hostile attitude toward the emigrants in

connection with the Indians.” In addition, Smith and Dalton probably reported Haight’s stonewalling.

Dame finally retired to his home on Wednesday night, but his long day was not over. Just before midnight, Haight knocked on his door. Dame quickly convened a council. The meeting was the first between Haight and Dame since the crisis began, and everything smacked of insubordination. The council decided that a company should be sent out from Parowan to call the Indians off, gather up the stock for the company, and let them continue their journey in peace. Haight later admitted, “I would give a world if I had it, if we had abided by the decision of the council.” Instead, Haight asked Dame for a private session immediately after the meeting. The two men met near a pile of tanning bark lying near Dame’s barn. It was there and then that the whole program and plan were changed.

What would become known as the “tan bark council” lasted about half an hour. Haight probably shared with Dame details he was unwilling to mention at the earlier council: the emigrants’ recognition of Lee as a white man, the wounded Dutchman making it into the wagon fort after witnessing the murder of his comrade by white men, perhaps even the killing of the two emigrant messengers who asked for help. Mostly the conversation was about covering up the white men’s role in the killing in order to protect their people from what they feared would be harsh retribution. Haight also implied that most of the fighting was over, sharing Lee’s assertion that the Indians had killed nearly all the emigrants. Also, how long would it be before any of the California-bound parties of emigrants reached the Meadows and discovered the truth? It was thought to have become necessary to kill all the Arkansas emigrants to silence the rest. Whether it actually occurred or not, Haight later reported that Dame gave him “the final order to destroy the entire company.”

Haight reached Cedar City early Thursday morning, September 10. He felt he must call out the militia and end the matter. He did not want to wait for Brigham Young’s reply which would soon arrive via the horseman. He feared that Brigham would advise them to let the emigrants go.

Haight met with his leaders and the militia was called out “to bury the dead” at Mountain Meadows. Some of them apparently didn’t know they were first going to have to “make the dead.” Some of the militiamen refused to go. This gave rise to a healthy store of folklore—proud families telling stories of how their ancestors refused to participate in the crime. “Old Joseph Walker . . . when told to go to the Meadows, put his fist in Haight’s face and told him to go to hell and do his own dirty work, said one account (*MMM*, 180). All told, less than one-fifth of Cedar City’s militiamen went to the Meadows.

The men mustered out on Thursday left for their grim task at the Meadows around midday, led by Major Higbee. As the militiamen set their sights on the Meadows, the messenger, James Haslam was barreling south through the Salt Lake

Valley carrying Brigham Young's response to Haight. He had had a grueling trip and the exhausted rider had arrived in Salt Lake about noon on Thursday. He had ridden hard but estimated that a third of his sixty-hour trip had been spent trying to obtain fresh horses. Despite a letter he carried from William Dame asking bishops and militia commanders to furnish him horses, some were not eager to lend their best animals to a hard-riding expressman.

In his response letter to Haight, Brigham Young had first tried to comfort him as to the imminent arrival of U.S. troops in Utah. Brigham said that it appeared that no troops would arrive until winter, and Brigham had been reassured that the troops had been instructed to do no harm to the Mormons. He then wrote: "In regard to emigration trains passing through our settlements we must not interfere with them until they are first notified to keep away. You must not meddle with them. The Indians we expect will do as they please but you should try and preserve good feelings with them" (*MMM*, 184-85).

Some hours after nightfall on Thursday, the militiamen from Cedar City reached the north end of the Meadows and set up camp. A few key men from the militia met with Lee and some of the chiefs of the Indians. Higbee related the orders, saying they had come from Haight and Dame. The emigrants were "to be decoyed out and destroyed with the exception of the small children" who were "too young to tell tales." "And if the Indians cannot do it without help, we must help them."

They then met in council with a larger group to work out the details of the plan. They decided to send a man with a flag of truce and request that the emigrants send out a delegation to arrange terms upon which they would leave their camp. Once the emigrants had left the protection of their wagon fort and were strung out on the road, the militia and Indians would destroy them. The more common word used by the plotters to describe the plan was "decoy." But "deceive" and "double-cross" would have been more apt choices.

Lee said, "Every man now had to show his colors. It was not safe to have a Judas in camp." Lee had every man in the council "express himself." Again no one dared to speak against the group. "All said they were willing to carry out the counsel of their leaders; that the leaders had the Spirit of God and knew better what was right than they did." Each thus passed the moral buck up the line. The first traces of light filled the pleasant valley when the council concluded their meeting.

Although Lee said all the men in the meeting consented to the plan, their support probably ranged from fervent to begrudging. Whatever their ardor, the men had deluded themselves into thinking they were justified in what they were about to do.

After breakfast at the militia camp all militiamen were called together to receive instructions from their leaders. They consisted of about thirty from Cedar City, about twelve from Washington, and a handful from other places. Dame had not sent any out from Parowan. Three of the militiamen were teenagers: fifteen, eighteen, and nineteen

years of age. A dozen or so were in their early twenties. More than two-thirds of them were a mature twenty-five years or older. All told, this was a seasoned group of men.

Additional instructions were given. The emigrants were to be told that the Indians were determined on their destruction and that the Mormons dared not oppose the Indians, for they (the Mormons) were at their (the Indians) mercy. Instead, if the emigrants would trust themselves in our hands, then the best we could do for them would be to place a few of their belongings—including their guns—in two wagons and escort the emigrants to the settlements. The wagons would also carry the small children and wounded. The emigrant women would follow the wagons and the men next, the troops to stand in readiness on the east side of the road ready to receive them. When Higbee finally gave the signal “Halt,” the militiamen were to kill the emigrant men and older boys, and the Indians were to “dispatch the women and larger children.” Higbee ordered most of the militiamen to put their horses out on the range. He wanted them walking next to their victims, ready to fire at close range. When the plan was finally explained, some of the militiamen were stunned. It is likely a good many objected, but they didn’t dare to say anything.

The Indians were instructed as to their role. The Paiutes were to hide in the sagebrush, scrub oak, and rocks near where the group would be when the “halt” order was to be given. They would then rush out and kill the women and larger children. The number of Indians who participated was subsequently a subject of great debate. It is likely that less than one hundred participated.

At about 10:00 AM on Friday, September 11, some four dozen militiamen began moving toward the emigrant wagon fort in an unstructured fashion. Two wagons were also driven to the emigrant camp. The militiamen were a motley bunch, armed with assorted weapons, including revolvers, jaeger (hunting) rifles, shotguns, Kentucky rifles, flint locks, and every imaginable firearm. After a dusty mile or so, the militia stopped and formed a line on the California road opposite the wagon fort.

With the approach of the militia, the emigrants’ hopes of deliverance seemed about to be realized. After four days of siege, the Indians had disappeared, replaced by citizen soldiers carrying a white flag. Higbee called William Bateman to carry the militia’s white flag and make the first contact with the emigrants. As he crossed the open land between the two groups, a man left the wagon corral and met him halfway with his own “white rag on a stick.” The two men talked briefly. “The emigrant was told we had come to rescue them if they were willing to trust us,” Lee later said. Lee walked out next to join the two. The name of the emigrant representative is uncertain. Alexander Fancher was dead, and Jack Baker was wounded. Lee said the man’s name was “Hamilton.” A Fancher family tradition would hold that the primary negotiator was James Mathew Fancher, Alexander’s twenty-five-year-old cousin. Whoever the man was, he met Lee outside the corral and talked. After about fifteen minutes, Lee motioned for a couple of the militiamen to help him move one of the emigrants’ wagons

to make an open channel into the corral. It was now about noon, and the September sun stood high in the sky.

Lee entered the corral. He saw and smelled the signs of close quarters and paid particular attention to the defenses. The defenders' guns were "mostly Kentucky rifles of the muzzle-loading style." Inside the circle of chained wagons was a "rifle-pit" large enough for the entire company. "I found that the emigrants were strongly fortified," he said. Men, women, and children crowded around Lee. "Some felt that the time of the happy deliverance had come," he said, "while others, though in deep distress, and all in tears, looked upon me with doubt, distrust, and terror." Seeing the emigrant families up close for the first time jolted Lee. "My position was painful, trying and awful . . . as I thought of the cruel, unmanly part that I was acting," Lee remembered. "My tongue refused its office"—but not for long. "I delivered my message."

The emigrants were promised safe conduct to Pinto and then Cedar City, but they must first lay down their weapons. The Indians had "gone off over the hills" but would be watching. If the emigrants displayed their arms, it would be seen as an unfriendly act that might renew the attacks. Second, the emigrants must leave behind their cattle and other belongings as payment to the Indians for ending the siege. Third, Lee promised to carry the wounded, a few children, and whatever other belongings could fit in the two militiamen's wagons. Lee told them to hide their firearms under the bedding and baggage in the wagons, with the wounded on top. The most extraordinary demand was that the emigrants leave the compound in a specific order. The two wagons would lead, followed by the women and children. The men and older boys would then file out in the rear, each escorted by an armed militiaman. No one explained how Lee was able to sell the emigrants on the contrived proposal. Perhaps he argued that the main target of Indian anger was the Arkansas sharpshooters who had wounded and killed Paiute men. By having the men and older boys march together, he could assure the safety of the women and children. Then by putting an armed militiaman next to each emigrant man, he could assure their protection too.

The emigrants feared a trap. Because of their suspicions, Lee faced tough questions from them. They "were afraid they would be killed," he reported. In response, Lee asked a question of his own. Did he look like the kind of man that might betray them? "No," the emigrants replied, but "they were sure that white men had been with the Indians when the attacks had been made" earlier in the week." Despite Lee's assurances, some of his listeners remained suspicious. One emigrant man warned that any agreement with the militia would make them all dead men. He called their companion who conferred with Lee a "fool" for considering the Mormons' proposals.

In the end, it didn't matter much. The talk was less negotiation than dictation. Four days of death, suffering, squalor, and thirst left the emigrants with only desperate options. They finally gave in. Lee offered them hope—the only hope they had.

Both of the militia's wagons were motioned into the camp. They were loaded to their utmost capacity with people and possessions, including firearms. The people included the wounded and small children. Some babies and other youngsters stayed with their walking mothers. A few older women were given the wagon space that was left.

By now Lee had been in the corral for an hour or more. The negotiation and loading took longer than the impatient militia expected. Would their plan hold together? The hiding Paiutes, about a mile up the road were growing uneasy. One of the waiting militiamen was ordered to go into the camp to hurry things up "for fear that the Indians would come back and be upon them." It was another in a string of deceptions.

Finally, the two heavily laden wagons led out through the corral turned north onto the California road. Lee walked along between the two wagons. The emigrants followed in the specified order. The numbers of their walking men were significantly depleted by those killed during the siege and those wounded and riding on the wagons. The column of emigrant men and older boys totaled about two dozen, perhaps a few more.

Finally the women and children reached the place where the Indians lay in wait. Higbee, who was to give the order to halt, hesitated. This caused the Indians to have to scurry to keep up with the women and children and still remain in hiding. The women and children were now about a quarter mile past the planned site of ambush. Higbee, realizing the plan was unraveling, turned his horse across the road and looked back. Finally, he shouted, "Halt!"

The first volley was like "one loud shot," and the firing went on for a minute or two. When the heavy smoke lifted, blood and horror were everywhere. Several of the Mormon men "shed tears at the sight of the dead lying before them. The leaders had planned for possible runaways. Three horsemen were assigned the duty of rounding in those who might try to escape. The fleeing emigrant men did not get far. Some were dead within twenty steps, although one emigrant almost got to the mountains, a half mile off.

As the emigrant men were being killed, another horrific scene played out a few hundred yards up the trail. Moments after Higbee gave his order, the Indians were signaled to fire. They rose up from their hiding places "yelling and whooping." At first the terrified women and children ran back toward their men. The women and children were knocked down with stones, clubs, and gun barrels, and killed with knives, guns, or arrows.

One Indian was seen to use a large rock to crush life from a teenage boy who had fallen. Two or three times, the man raised the rock and crushed it into the boy's chest. One large woman, yelling for her husband and children somehow made it through to the men only to be shot in the back by one of the militiamen. Other women and children who weren't initially struck down ran toward the brush or the two wagons

on the north. One blood-covered girl, perhaps ten or eleven years old, got within about sixty yards of the wagons before an Indian shot her. Another girl was fleeing for her life when an Indian plunged his knife through her. Some of the victims simply clung together in terror. Others fought for their lives. One Indian was seen to kill an infant child with a knife that a woman had in her arms before she fell. Rebecca Dunlap, six years old at the time, remembered the terror. She ran and hid in a cluster of sagebrush near the road. From her hiding place she saw two of her older sisters killed, their bodies falling nearby. She also heard her one-year-old sister, Sarah, crying. She found the infant "entwined" in their dead mother's arms. Sarah had been shot through her right arm, below the elbow, by a large ball, breaking both bones and cutting her arm half off. Rebecca pulled Sarah free and took her back into the sagebrush to hide. She stayed there until she saw a white man and begged him for help. She was spared only because of her young age. Six-year-old John Calvin Miller was near his mother when she was killed. He desperately pulled arrows from her back as she lay dying. Another surviving child recalled, "I remember standing by my mother, holding onto her skirt, while my mother stood with my baby brother in her arms, and when a white man, not an Indian, raised his gun to take the life of my mother, she said: "God, have mercy on my children!" Four-year-old Nancy Saphrona Huff, whose father had died on the plains, remembered that Jack Baker was carrying her when he was shot. Baker may have been one of the wounded men seen walking with the women and children. Or perhaps he was among the wounded riding in the wagons, holding little Nancy in his arms.

A third killing site was at the wagons. Lee and probably the wagon drivers killed the wounded men with rifles, pistols, and even knives and clubs.

For the most part, the massacre of the emigrants was over in a few minutes, probably no more than five. The white men had done most of the killing. Though the plan was to spare the young children, at least a half dozen of the young children became part of the terrible carnage. The Dutchman whose role figured so prominently in Mormon accounts about the emigrants was probably one of the men seen walking with the women and children and was holding an infant when he was found. A single bullet killed both of them, and the double killing became one of the infamous stories told about the massacre. The child was not the Dutchman's but someone else's. The killer was probably John D. Lee.

After the killing there was considerable looting by the militiamen and the Indians. The dead were divested of anything of value, including their clothes. All of the emigrants' possessions remaining in their wagons were also divided up. The cattle and oxen were also divided up among the militia and the Indians. As might be expected, the Indians felt that the white men had not been fair in the distribution.

Some seventeen children were allowed to live. They were initially cared for by Rachel and Jacob Hamblin at Hamblin's ranch, just north of the site of the massacre. Jacob Hamblin had been appointed by Brigham Young to head the church's Indian

mission in southern Utah. The children were then distributed among Mormon families in the area who wanted to care for and even adopt them. In 1859 all seventeen of the children were turned over to federal authorities.

The following day most in the militia stayed to bury the bodies. Most were buried in shallow common graves with several bodies in each. The bodies did not stay buried for long. The scent of rotting flesh in the shallow graves attracted wolves, coyotes, and other scavengers. Within a day or two, many of the bodies had been pulled to the surface, torn into pieces, and scattered across the Meadows. This disinterring of the victims gave rise to a widespread belief that no effort at all was made to bury them.

Haight had remained in Cedar City during the massacre. James Haslam, the express rider Haight had dispatched to carry a letter to Brigham Young requesting instructions, arrived home on Sunday, September 13. He met Haight half way between his house and Haight's. Haight was coming to Haslam's house to see if he had yet arrived home. Haslam handed Haight the unsealed letter from Brigham Young directing him to let the emigrants "go in peace." Haight took the letter, read through it, and broke down. For half an hour, he sobbed "like a child" and could manage only the words, "Too late, too late."

In the first two weeks after the massacre, Lee would tell others of his killings. Then, for the next twenty years, he repeatedly denied taking any life. Shortly before his death, however, he privately acknowledged having "killed five emigrants and possibly six."

There is some evidence to suggest that Lee's relationship with Brigham Young was favorable following the massacre. One wonders how candid Lee was with Brigham in recounting all of the circumstances leading up to the massacre. Elder B. H. Roberts suggested that it wasn't until 1870 when Brigham became fully aware of Lee's actual role in the tragic affair:

In 1870, through some representations made by Elder Erastus Snow and Bishop L. W. Roundy, who had been meantime investigating the crime of the Mountain Meadows, President Brigham Young became convinced of the absolute responsibility of John D. Lee in that affair. Also of Isaac C. Haight's responsibility for failing to restrain Lee and to take prompt action against him, since he was Lee's superior officer in the church. These representations were made to President Brigham Young on the occasion of his visit to the southern settlements in the aforesaid year of 1870; and on his return to Salt Lake City the matter was taken up at the meeting of the twelve apostles, the facts laid before them, and "President Young himself proposed, and all present unanimously voted, to excommunicate John D. Lee and Isaac C. Haight." "President Young gave instructions at that time that John D. Lee should, under no circumstances, ever be again admitted as a member of the church (See

affidavit of Erastus Snow under date of 21st February 1882, in Penrose's *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 67-68). Some mitigating circumstances subsequently were learned respecting Haight's responsibilities in the matter of not restraining Lee, and he was restored to church fellowship (*Comprehensive History of the Church*, 4, 178).

The nation watched closely as John D. Lee was tried for his role in the massacre. The first trial occurred in 1875, some eighteen years after the massacre. It ended in a hung jury, and his second, the following year, saw him convicted. On March 20, 1877, almost twenty years following the massacre, the orders came down with instructions to U.S. Army 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. George T. T. Patterson and detachment from his company at Utah's Fort Cameron, two miles east of Beaver. He was told to proceed with "utmost secrecy" to the "appointed place." There the soldiers were to execute John D. Lee, at the scene of the crime at Mountain Meadows. A posse with Lee in its charge would follow Patterson's company the next day. Reporters from coast to coast were in Cedar City to attend and report his execution.

Hope also lingered that Lee might implicate Brigham Young, the big game for post-massacre hunters who hoped to destroy Young and end Mormonism. For many Americans, it had become almost an article of faith that Young had a hand in virtually everything going on in "hierarchical, tyrannical" Utah. It seemed to follow then, logically, that Young had a role in the massacre as well. Lee himself affirmed just the opposite even though Brigham Young had excommunicated Lee some years previously for "extreme wickedness."

On the execution date Brigham Young had been attending a church conference in St. George, less than forty miles away by the roads of the day. He too wanted to know how the final scene would play out. Young was aging. He would be dead within six months. He asked some men to ride through the night to witness the execution and give him a report. Josiah Rogerson, a stenographer and telegrapher who had reported Lee's first trial, hurried from Beaver. He would provide a record of Lee's last words.

By midmorning Friday, March 23, as many as three hundred onlookers were at the Meadows, many of them Mormons from nearby settlements. Most were kept at a distance.

A grand jury had indicted nine men for their roles in the massacre: John Lee, Isaac Haight, William Dame, John Higbee, Philip Klingensmith, William Stewart, and three lesser known militiamen, George W. Adair, Samuel Jewkes, and Elliott Willden. Most had been arrested. Klingensmith turned state's evidence. Adair, Dame, Jewkes, and Willden were released for lack of evidence. Haight, Higbee, and Stewart spent most of their lives running from deputies and, like their fellow perpetrators, from their own consciences. Only Lee was tried by a jury and asked to pay with his life.

Lee was taken to the site of execution. There he spoke for five minutes, and he was then executed by firing squad while sitting erect and upright on the edge of his

coffin, hands on his head. At exactly 11:00 AM, five balls tore through Lee and left a skipping pattern on the grass behind.

The terrible tragedy of the massacre at Mountain Meadows played out on several levels. The murdered emigrants lost their hopes, their dreams, their property, and their lives. Some lost their very identity, their names forever deleted from human memory. The surviving children were robbed of the warmth and support of parents, brothers, and sisters.

The Paiute participants would bear the brunt of blame for the massacre, shamelessly used by the white men who lured them to the Meadows. For the militiamen who carried out the crime—as well as their families, descendants, and fellow church members—there was another kind of tragedy. It was the gnawing, long anguish that flows from betrayed ideals. The burdens of the massacre would linger far beyond what anyone imagined on the afternoon of September 11, 1857.

## The Process of Translating the Book of Mormon

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This chapter is included in this collection of gospel doctrine writings to provide the reader with a never-to-be-forgotten example of the Lord's willingness to bless his people in remarkable ways and with unimaginable gifts.

Though it is clear our knowledge of the actual technique Joseph used in translating the plates is incomplete, it is fascinating to review what *is* known. It should be no surprise that there remain many unanswered questions. Joseph himself once commented on the Lord's intentions regarding his method of making the book accessible to us: "It was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and . . . it was not expedient for him to relate these things" (*Far West Record*, 13; *HC*, 1:220). As to the particulars of the process by which the plates were translated, unfortunately Joseph left us no details. He said only that the plates were translated "by the gift and power of God" (*HC*, 1:315; see also D&C 1:29; 20:8).

I gratefully acknowledge Dr. Royal J. Skousen, professor of linguistics and English and the editor of the Book of Mormon Critical Text Project at Brigham Young University, for bringing to our awareness many facts about the process of Joseph's translating the Book of Mormon. Through Brother Skousen's meticulous examination of what remains of the original text (about 28% of the original), of the entire printer's manuscript (minus only three lines), and through his correlation of multiple, consistent, and credible eyewitness testimonies, he has provided us a compelling peek into that wonderful and miraculous period of our church's history ("Translating the Book of Mormon, Evidence From the Original Manuscript" in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited, The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, 61-93).

### More about Royal Skousen

In 1988 Dr. Skousen began the critical text project, and he has worked on it full time since then. The two goals of this project were to (1) recover the original English-language text of the Book of Mormon, and (2) determine the history of the text (namely, how it has changed over time). Two kinds of changes have occurred in the text over the period of its existence: (1) accidental errors in the transmission of the text, and (2) the deliberate editing out of nonstandard English, largely by Joseph Smith.

Thus far Brother Skousen has published three major volumes on the project and has nearly completed a fourth:

1. *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text*. This volume contains black-and-white, color, and ultraviolet photographs of fragments of the original manuscript and an exact typescript of the available parts of that manuscript.

2. *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts*. This volume contains eight pages of color photographs of the manuscript and an exact typescript of the entire manuscript.

3. A history of the project he entitled *Uncovering the Original Text of the Book of Mormon: History and Findings of the Critical Text Project*. This volume is a result of a symposium held at Brigham Young University.

4. Volume four is to be a detailed analysis of all the textual variants or changes made between the early manuscripts and the present. Its purpose is to attempt to restore the original English-language text to the extent possible by scholarly analysis.

This volume is a work in progress. As of this writing (April 2009), it consists of five parts or books—each a book of about 650-700 pages. It covers from the beginning of the book through 3 Nephi 18. Dr. Skousen plans to publish the final part by late summer of 2009.

While the actual process by which the book was “translated” was not a primary purpose of the Book of Mormon critical text project, Dr. Skousen has obviously become interested in what is known and has provided us with a fascinating account of that few-month period of time.

### **A Brief History of the Translation**

The prophet Moroni's fifth annual Cumorah visit to Joseph Smith occurred just after midnight, September 21, 1827. On that occasion, Moroni delivered the Book of Mormon plates into Joseph's hands.

Joseph and Emma were unable to find peace in Palmyra after Joseph took possession of the plates. Many wanted to see the plates, and some even sought to steal them. Joseph had been instructed to show them to no one. With some financial help from his wealthy neighbor, Martin Harris, Joseph was able to pay his debts and travel to Harmony, Pennsylvania, in the late fall of 1827. During the trip the plates were hidden in a barrel of beans. Joseph and Emma moved into a small two-room house on Isaac Hale's land, about 150 yards from the main house.

That winter, Joseph was busy trying to eke out a living for his family, and had little time to spend on the plates. He did copy some characters off of the plates and did some translating with Emma acting as scribe.

In March 1828, Martin Harris, after visiting with Joseph in Harmony, traveled to New York to show a few characters Joseph had copied to Professor Charles Anthon at Columbia University. He was satisfied with Dr. Anthon's response and returned to Harmony in April to help with the translation. Between April 12 and June 14, 1828, with Joseph translating and Martin acting as scribe, they completed the translation of the “book of Lehi” from the first part of the plates of Mormon. This resulted in 116 pages of manuscript. He used the interpreters, the Urim and Thummim in his translating. He

either translated directly from the plates or copied characters off the plates and then translated them.

In June, Martin borrowed and lost the entire 116-page manuscript. The plates and other relics were taken from Joseph by Moroni but returned to him in September 1828.

Oliver Cowdery arrived in Harmony the following spring on April 5, 1829, and two days later, on April 7, the two of them began translating full time. While Joseph translated, Oliver acted as scribe. It is probable that Joseph mostly used his seerstone as he translated with Oliver.

By July 1, 1829, they finished the translation of the entire Book of Mormon. They began the translation in Harmony, Pennsylvania, but moved to Fayette, New York, before the translation was completed. The experience of the three witnesses occurred, according to David Whitmer, in Fayette “in June, 1829, the very last part of the month” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 242). The eight witnesses were allowed to see and handle the plates in Palmyra somewhat later.

In August 1829, Oliver began to produce a copy of the original manuscript, subsequently known as the “printer’s manuscript.” This manuscript was produced to provide the printer, E. B. Grandin, with a clean copy for typesetting and to produce a back up copy of the original. John Gilbert, an employee of the printer, added all the punctuation and did the typesetting. Printing began in August 1829. The printer’s manuscript was produced, largely by Oliver Cowdery, as it was needed by the printer. This manuscript was completed early in 1830. By March 1830, the Book of Mormon was printed and ready for distribution.

The original manuscript of the Book of Mormon was placed by Joseph Smith in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House in October 1841. There it remained, exposed to the elements, until September of 1882 when the cornerstone was opened by Lewis Bidamon, the second husband of Emma Smith. The original manuscript had suffered considerable damage. Just over a fourth of it—28%—was recovered and has been available for scholarly study.

The printer’s manuscript was retained by Oliver Cowdery. After his death in 1850, his brother-in-law, David Whitmer, kept it until his death in 1888. In 1903 Whitmer’s grandson sold the manuscript to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which owns it today. It is wholly extant except for three lines at the bottom of the first page. The RLDS Church has made the printer’s manuscript available for scholarly study.

### **Two Instruments Used in the Translation.**

**Seer stone.** Joseph often referred to a “seer stone” he used for translating. This was a stone found by Joseph and kept in his possession. According to Willard Chase, a resident of the Palmyra area, Joseph found the stone in 1822 while digging a well with

his brother Alvin on the Chase property. It was “about the size of a small hen’s egg, in the shape of a high instepped shoe. It was composed of layers of different colors passing diagonally through it. It was very hard and smooth, perhaps from being carried in the pocket” (Kirkham, Francis, W. *A New Witness for Christ in America*, 2:365). Emma Smith once described it as “a small stone, not exactly black, but it was rather a dark color” (unpublished letter of Emma Smith Bidamon to Mrs. George W. Pilgrim, March 27, 1870, *RLDS Archives* P 4 F 20). Historian Andrew Jenson described the stone as an “oval shaped, chocolate colored stone, about the size of an egg but more flat” (*The Historical Record*). According to most accounts, the seer stone was used during all stages of the translation of the Book of Mormon, both before and especially after the loss of the first 116 pages of manuscript. It seems likely that as Joseph and Oliver translated, only the seer stone was used and not the Urim and Thummim.

Following the translation of the Book of Mormon, the seer stone was passed on to Oliver Cowdery who maintained it in his possession until his death. It was then passed to his widow, Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery, who gave it to Phineas Young. Phineas took it to Utah and gave it to his brother, Brigham Young. From that time, with the exception of a brief hiatus when it was purchased by someone else, it has remained in the possession of the First Presidency where it remains today. On May 18, 1888, following a private dedication of the Manti Temple, President Wilford Woodruff wrote that he “consecrated upon the Altar the seers’ [sic] stone that Joseph Smith found by Revelation some 30 feet under the Earth” (*Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833-1898*, entry dated 13th-19th May, 1988).

**Urim and Thummim.** Joseph also spoke of using the Nephite interpreters, the Urim and Thummim or “spectacles” in the translation process. Apparently the Urim and Thummim consisted of two transparent stones resembling glass, set into silver metallic rims which caused the whole unit to look like an overlarge pair of spectacles. The metallic rims are referred to as “silver bows.” Presumably this terminology refers to the fact that the metal rims resembled two “bows” (as in the bow-and-arrow type of bow without the string) placed together to form an ellipse, then pinched or twisted together in the center to form two rough circles which contained the stones. Lucy Mack Smith “examined” the Urim and Thummim and “found that it consisted of two smooth three-cornered diamonds set in glass, and the glasses were set in silver bows, which were connected with each other in much the same way as old fashioned spectacles” (*Lucy’s Book*, 379).

These spectacles were attached by a moveable rod to a breastplate. The following description of this entire device is probably the best we have available to us. In 1891, Joseph’s brother William was interviewed by two brethren who reported:

We asked him what was meant by the expression “two rims of a bow,” which held the former. He said a double silver bow was twisted into the shape of the figure eight, and the two stones were placed literally

between the two rims of a bow. At one end was attached a rod which was connected with the outer edge of the right shoulder of the breastplate. By pressing the head a little forward, the rod held the Urim and Thummim before the eyes much like a pair of spectacles. A pocket was prepared in the breastplate on the left side, immediately over the heart. When not in use the Urim and Thummim was placed in this pocket, the rod being of just the right length to allow it to be so deposited. This instrument could, however, be detached from the breast plate and his brother said Joseph often wore it detached when away from home, but always used it in connection with the breastplate when receiving official communications, and usually so when translating, as it permitted him to have both hands free to hold the plates (J. W. Peterson, "William B. Smith's Last Statement," *Zion's Ensign*, 6).

William Smith is also quoted as saying, in referring to the spectacles: "They were much too large for Joseph and he could only see through one at a time using sometimes one and sometimes the other" (*Early Mormon Documents*, 1:508).

We also have a separate description of the breastplate given by the Prophet's mother, Lucy Mack Smith. She wrote:

It was wrapped in a thin muslin handkerchief, so thin that I could see the glistening metal, and ascertain its proportions without any difficulty.

It was concave on one side and convex on the other, and extended from the neck downward, as far as center of the stomach of a man of extraordinary size. It had four straps of the same material, for the purpose of fastening it to the breast, two of which ran back to go over the shoulders, and the other two were designed to fasten to the hips. They were just the width of two of my fingers (for I measured them), and they had holes in the ends of them, to be convenient in fastening (*Lucy's Book*, 379).

A similar instrument—"the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim"—had been given to Aaron (see Exodus 28:30). Through its power, the high priest had been able to act as judge for the house of Israel. Aaron's instrument was not the same as that provided to Joseph Smith. This latter one had been in the possession of Moroni who buried it with the plates (see Ether 4:5). Earlier, Mosiah had used this instrument to translate the original Jaredite records (see Omni 1:20; Mosiah 8:13; 21:27-28). This Urim and Thummim is likely the one God gave the brother of Jared for the specific purpose of helping later prophets translate his record (see Ether 3:23-224; note on Abraham 3:1).

In addition to translating the Nephite record, Lucy Mack Smith reported that Joseph was able to receive visions through the Urim and Thummim, as well as

“ascertain, at any time, the approach of danger, either to himself or the Record” (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations*, 110). Joseph also used the instrument to inquire of the Lord on behalf of various individuals (see headings of D&C 6; 11; 14; 17), and to learn “whether John, the beloved disciple, tarried in the flesh or had died” (D&C 7 heading).

At times the term “Urim and Thummim” was used in a generic manner to mean either the seer stone or the Nephite interpreters. Emma Smith Bidamon once wrote that Joseph began by using the interpreters and used them to translate the manuscript that Martin Harris lost. After that he used only the seer stone (unpublished letter to Mrs. George W. Pilgrim).

One might well raise the question as to why instruments such as the interpreters and the seer stone were needed in the translation process in the first place. Orson Pratt, who had considered this same question, reported that Joseph told him that the Lord gave him the Urim and Thummim “when he was inexperienced in the spirit of inspiration. But now he had advanced so far that he understood the operation of the Spirit and did not need the assistance of that instrument” (Richard Lloyd Anderson, “The Mature Joseph Smith and Treasure Searching”). Zebedee Coltrin, a friend of the Prophet, related that he had once asked Joseph what he had done with the Urim and Thummim and that “Joseph said that he had no further need of it and he had given it to the angel Moroni. He had the Melchizedek Priesthood and with that priesthood he had the key to all knowledge and intelligence” (*High Priests Record of Spanish Fork Branch*, September, 128). These statements do not provide a complete answer to the question as to why the Lord required Joseph to utilize objects or instruments in the process of translation. I believe we are left with the idea that the seer stone and the Urim and Thummim represented the Lord’s part in the miraculous process, but more was required for the process to work—likely substantial personal preparation and effort were also required by the translator himself. The exact nature of that preparation is unknown.

### **Divine Control of the Process of Translation**

There have been three ideas or theories advanced as to exactly how much divine control was maintained over the Book of Mormon text during the translation:

1. Loose control. Ideas were revealed somehow to Joseph during the translation process, and he put the ideas into his own language. This theory has been advocated by many Book of Mormon scholars over the years.

2. Tight control. Joseph saw specific words written out in English, and he read them off to the scribe. The accuracy of the resulting text depended on the carefulness of Joseph and his scribe.

3. Iron-clad control. Joseph (or the interpreters themselves) would not allow any error to be made by the scribe, including the spelling of common words.

Evidence for the concept of loose control relies on the finding of occasional instances of nonstandard English, including dialectical English, in the text which presumably did not come from the Lord. We would presume that the Lord speaks only “correct” English. One example is Jacob 7:27 where the prophet Jacob is concluding his book. He says, “I bid farewell, hoping that many of my brethren may read my words. Brethren, adieu.” Joseph’s use of the French word *adieu* is easily explainable by his living in upstate New York, close to French-speaking Canadians. *Adieu* would have been part of his vocabulary.

While there are elements of loose control in the text, there is also much evidence for tight control. We will comment on examples of tight control as we proceed. The presence of many errors in both the original and printer’s manuscript eliminate the possibility of iron-clad control.

For the remainder of this chapter, I will briefly consider a few of Dr. Skousen’s major discoveries regarding the process of translation as he has worked on the critical text project.

### **The Translation Sessions Were Initially Closed but Eventually Open**

Early in the translation process, from late 1827 and into 1828, it appears that Joseph first copied some of the characters directly from the plates onto sheets of paper, from which sheets he would then translate his transcribed characters into English by means of the Urim and Thummim. Joseph wrote, referring to his initial arrival in Harmony in the fall of 1827 and to the help he received from Martin Harris:

By this timely aid was I enabled to reach the place of my destination in Pennsylvania, and immediately after my arrival there I commenced copying the characters off the plates. I copied a considerable number of them and by means of the Urim and Thummim I translated some of them (“History, 1839,” in *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:284).

During this early period, the plates were uncovered while Joseph translated (or at least while he copied the characters from the plates onto paper); and since no one was permitted to see the plates until later, Joseph took precautions to prevent anyone from seeing him working directly with the plates. Martin Harris, in a couple of early statements, said that a blanket or curtain separated Joseph from him at the time he (Harris) obtained a sample transcript and translation to take to Professor Anthon in New York City (Milton V. Backman, Jr., *Eyewitness Accounts of the Restoration*, 209-13).

During the translation of the Book of Mormon in 1829, the translation process was an open one, that is, others in the room were able to observe the process. Joseph dictated, and Oliver wrote.

### **Joseph Saw the Divinely-Transmitted Script and Dictated the Original Manuscript Word for Word**

Joseph Smith was literally reading off an already composed English-language text. Dr. Skousen has observed, therefore, that Joseph Smith is not the author of the Book of Mormon. Nor is he actually the translator. Instead, he was the *revelator*. Through him the Lord revealed the English language text. Dr. Skousen believes that the words *translate* and *translation* relative to Joseph's work on the Book of Mormon should be rendered *transmit* and *transmission*.

Samuel W. Richards, in a statement recorded on May 25, 1907, reported that Oliver Cowdery had explained to him during the winter of 1848-49 how Joseph Smith had translated: (1) Every word was distinctly visible even down to every letter; (2) and if Oliver omitted a word or failed to spell a word correctly, the translation remained on the "interpreter" until it was copied correctly (The original typescript signed by Samuel Richards is located in the LDS Church Historical Department [Samuel Whitney Richards Collection, Ms 6576, Box 2, Folder 14]).

Though Joseph largely used the plates and the Urim and Thummim during their period of translation in 1828, apparently, on occasion, Joseph also used his seer stone. Edward Stevenson reported:

By aid of the seer stone, sentences would appear and were read by the Prophet and written by Martin, and when finished he would say, "Written," and if correctly written, that sentence would disappear and another appear in its place, but if not written correctly it remained until corrected, so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates, precisely in the language then used ("One of the Three Witnesses. Incidents in the Life of Martin Harris").

Of course the witnesses could not actually see what Joseph saw, and they were either offering their own conjecture or perhaps they were recalling what Joseph might have told them. We will learn that an examination of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon does not support the idea that Joseph could not continue with the translation until the scribe had written what he had dictated in perfect detail. There are many errors in the original manuscript which have subsequently had to be corrected. These should not be present in the original manuscript had the Lord maintained iron-clad control over the process of translation.

All witnesses of the translation stated that Joseph dictated the text of the Book of Mormon. Royal Skousen has utilized the original manuscript to shed light upon and gather evidence for this idea ("Translating the Book of Mormon, Evidence from the Original Manuscript" in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited, The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, 67-71). He points out that several errors in the original manuscript resulted from the scribe's mishearing what Joseph dictated rather than visually misreading while copying from another manuscript. For example, several specific errors resulted from the scribes' failing to distinguish between *and* and *an*, *weed* and *reed*, *meet* and *beat*, *them* and *him*. This latter error seems to have resulted from the Prophet's pronouncing

both as the unstressed *'em*. Another error resulted when the scribe heard *sons* instead of *son* (Alma 40:20). This occurred when “sons” was followed by a word beginning with an “s.” This made it difficult for Oliver Cowdery to hear any difference between *son see* and *sons see*.

An example of the “mishearing” kind of error is contained in 1 Nephi 13:29 of the original manuscript. The scribe wrote the following: “. . . & because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb & exceeding great many do stumble.” Obviously the scribe misheard “an exceeding great many” as “and exceeding great many.” The scribe’s use of the ampersand (&) shows that the error was not based on visual similarity. Hearing *an*, the scribe interpreted it as the casual speech form *an'* for *and*.

### **Joseph Spelled Out Unfamiliar Proper Names as He Dictated**

Royal Skousen has found clear evidence in his study of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon that Joseph, as he translated, could see the English spelling of names. Witnesses to the translation have indicated that Joseph would sometimes spell out names so that the scribe could get them down correctly. Frequently, in the original manuscript, when a Book of Mormon name first occurs (or has not occurred for some time) that name is first written out in a more phonetic but incorrect spelling, then this incorrect spelling is crossed out and the correct spelling immediately follows. For instance in Alma 33:15 Oliver Cowdery first spells the prophet Zenoch’s name as *Zenock*, then he crosses out the whole name and rewrites it with a “ch” at the end rather than a “ck,” thus indicating that the correct spelling is Zenoch. Similarly in Helaman 1:15 Oliver ends Coriantumr with the spelling *-tummr*. Then he crosses out the whole name and follows it with the correct spelling which ends with *-tumr*.

Emma Smith reported:

When my husband was translating the Book of Mormon, I wrote a part of it, as he dictated each sentence, word for word, and when he came to proper names he could not pronounce, or long words, he spelled them out, and while I was writing them, if I made a mistake in spelling, he would stop me and correct my spelling, although it was impossible for him to see how I was writing them down at the time (John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, “The Translation of the Book of Mormon: Basic Historical Information,” 8).

David Whitmer reportedly said in an interview reported in 1885 in the Chicago Tribune:

In translating the characters, Smith, who was illiterate and but little versed in biblical lore, was oftentimes compelled to spell the words out, not knowing the correct pronunciation (*David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness*, 3).

Joseph Knight: “But if it was not Spelt rite it would not go away till it was rite, so we see it was marvelous” (Dean C. Jessee, “Joseph Knight’s Recollection of Early Mormon History,” 35).

In spite of Joseph’s spelling of proper names and difficult words, there are several long English words in the original manuscript that are misspelled. Consider the following examples from 1 Nephi:

2:3	obedient	7:12	exersise	2:11	immagionations
8:21	concorces				
3:16	inheritence	10:2	dilagence		
4:20	treasurey	10:4	Masiah		
	treashury	11:6	hosana		
4:34	dilligent	11:26	condesension		
4:36	desirus	11:34	apostels		
5:2	inherritance	12:4	tumultius		
5:8	surity	13:5	tortereh		
5:9	sacrafice	13:23	covanants		
5:13	prophasies	15:20	passified		
5:14	jenealeja	16:19	fateagued		
	desendant	17:51	miricles		
6:2	sofiseth	17:30	expediant		
7:1	fammaly	19:10	especiall		
7:8	exampel				

As Emma Smith reported, Joseph likely did spell out long English words, but apparently not consistently, and perhaps he did so largely when Emma was active as scribe at the beginning of the book of Lehi.

### **The Original Text Evidences Remarkable Internal Consistency**

John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone have pointed out an interesting case where the book of Mormon contains the same identical (nonbiblical) quote in widely separate parts of the text. The example they point out is initially found in Lehi’s vision of the tree of life (“Book of Mormon Translation by Joseph Smith,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:210-3):

. . . and he thought he [saw God sitting upon his throne surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God] (1 Nephi 1:8)

. . . and methought I saw even as our father Lehi [saw God sitting upon his throne surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God] (Alma 36:22).

How might we explain the twenty-one word phrase (in brackets) shared by these two verses, particularly since they are separated by hundreds of pages of text, and they were dictated weeks apart? The answer is that it was Alma who looked back in the record and found the quote of father Lehi. It is not surprising that Alma borrowed Lehi's words since Alma had charge of the small plates of Nephi and thus had ready access to the patriarch's words (see Alma 37:2). In describing his own joy, Alma thought of Lehi's experience in 1 Nephi 1:8 and quoted verbatim these twenty-one words. It was not Joseph Smith who looked back. Joseph was merely the translator and not the writer or editor. He was not simply expressing the thought that came into his mind in his own words. This has to be an example of an instance of tight divine control. There are other examples of this same phenomenon in the Book of Mormon. For example, compare Helaman 14:12 with Mosiah 3:8. Also compare 3 Nephi 8:6-23 with 1 Nephi 19:11-12.

Perhaps this observation has not struck you as very interesting. If it has not, then just try quoting any twenty-one words of Lehi without looking! Dr. Welch pointed out that this phrase and others in the Book of Mormon text provide remarkable examples of internal textual consistency in the Book of Mormon ("Textual Consistency," *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 21-23).

Another similar example: King Benjamin established a law containing five proscriptions: murder, plunder, theft, adultery, and any manner of wickedness. This list which first appears in Mosiah 2:13 reappears in seven other verses in the Book of Mormon: Mosiah 29:36; Alma 23:3; 30:10; Helaman 3:13; 6:23; 7:21; and Ether 8:16.

These examples of internal textual consistency are particularly interesting, in the context of the way in which Joseph translated. We will soon discuss the fact that Joseph dictated his translation to a scribe pausing only to allow the scribe to complete the recording. Once recorded, he did not go back and review or revise the text. At the beginning of each translation session, he simply began exactly where he had left off in the previous session without going back to review.

### **The Printer's Manuscript Was Produced by Visual Copying from the Original Manuscript**

In contrast to the errors found in the original manuscript, the errors that are found in the printer's manuscript show that this second manuscript was visually copied. As Oliver Cowdery was copying from the original manuscript onto the printer's manuscript, he sometimes incorrectly read the original manuscript. In many cases, the error leads to a more difficult reading, as the in the following example in Alma 30:52:

original manuscript: yea & I always knew that there was a God

printer's manuscript: yea & I also knew that there was a God

This error was due to visual similarity between the words *always* and *also*. This kind of error does not appear in the original manuscript because the scribes were not copying from another written source but were hearing the words dictated by Joseph.

### **Original Text Includes Expressions Uncharacteristic of English**

One of the interesting complexities of the original English-language text of the Book of Mormon is that it contains expressions that appear to be uncharacteristic of English in all of its dialects and historical stages. These structures also support the notion that Joseph Smith’s translation is a literal one and not simply a reflection of his own dialect. They support the notion that at least tight control was exerted by the Lord in much of the translation process.

For instance, in the original text of the Book of Mormon we find a number of occurrences of a Hebrew-like conditional clause. In English, a typical conditional clause would be “if you come, *then* I will come,” with *then* being optional. In Hebrew this same clause is expressed as “if you come *and* I will come.” It is instructive to note that in the original text of the Book of Mormon, there were at least fourteen occurrences of this non-English expression. One occurrence was accidentally removed in 1 Nephi 17:50 as Oliver Cowdery was producing the printer’s manuscript by copying from the original manuscript: “if he should command me that I should say unto this water be thou earth and it shall be earth.” The remaining thirteen occurrences were all removed by Joseph Smith in his editing for the second edition, including one from the famous passage in Moroni 10:4: “and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart with real intent having faith in Christ and he will manifest the truth of it unto you.”

This use of “and” is not due to scribal error. In one passage in the original manuscript this *if-and* expression occurs seven times (Helaman 12:13-21). Helaman 12:13 was rendered in the original edition: “yea, if he saith unto the earth, Move, and it is moved.” Joseph’s use of the more typical Hebrew construction in his original translation supports the idea that Joseph’s translation was a literal one and not simply a reflection of his own dialect. If the Lord had exercised only loose control over the translation process, then Joseph would have translated these conditional phrases using the *if-then* construction, possibly without the *then*. Thus, we see another example of tight control (Royal Skousen, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, “The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?” 34).

These Hebrew forms were mostly eliminated by Joseph Smith in his editing of the text for the second (1837) edition. Joseph’s editing for the second and third editions (1837 and 1840) represents human editing and not revealed revision of the text.

### **The Vocabulary of the Manuscripts Appears to Derive from the 1500s and 1600s and Not from the 1800s**

A prominent feature of the Book of Mormon translation is its use of early modern English which resembles the language of the King James Version of the Bible. For

example, both books use the archaic inflectional suffixes *-est* and *-eth* as in “sayest” and “maketh.” They both use archaic pronoun forms “thee,” “thou,” “thy,” and “thine.” Also, they both tolerate the formation of questions and negatives in ways that are no longer used in modern English, i.e., “What sayest thou?” (Alma 56:44; cf. John 8:5;) and “they knew not whither they had fled” (Mosiah 21:31; cf. 2 Samuel 30:22).

The original text contains a number of expressions and words with meanings that were lost from the English language by 1700 including the following (the date of their last citation in the Oxford English Dictionary is given in parentheses):

To *require* meant “to request” (1665): Enos 1:18 reads “Thy fathers have also required of me this thing.”

A *sermon* meant “talk, discourse, speech, conversation” (1594): In Mosiah 19, the people of king Noah had just reported to Gideon that they had slain King Noah and that his priests had fled into the wilderness. Mosiah 19:24 should read “after they had ended the sermon” (not the current reading “after they had ended the ceremony”).

To *cast* arrows meant “to shoot arrows” (1609): Alma 49:4 reads “The Lamanites could not cast their stones and their arrows at them.”

To *counsel* meant “to counsel with” (1547): Alma 37:37 originally read “counsel the Lord in all thy doings” (similarly in Alma 39:10).

*But if* meant “unless” (1596): Mosiah 3:19 originally read “For the natural man is an enemy to God . . . and will be forever and ever but if he yieldeth to the enticings of the Holy Spirit.”

To *depart* meant “to part” (1677): Helaman 8:11 originally read “to smite upon the waters of the Red Sea and they departed hither and thither.”

*Extinct* was used to refer to an individual’s death (1675): In Alma 44, captain Moroni has just commanded Zerahemna to deliver up his weapons of war. Alma 44:7 reads “If ye do not this . . . I will command my men that they shall fall upon you, and inflict the wounds of death in your bodies that ye may become extinct.”

*The pleading bar of God* (this expression is not in the Oxford English Dictionary, but three early 1600 citations have been found, including one in a legal context): In Jacob 6, the prophet Jacob bids his people farewell. Jacob 6:13 should read “until I shall meet you before the pleading bar of God,” not “the pleasing bar of God” (similarly in Moroni 10:34).

It is not really known why the Lord chose to reveal the English text of the Book of Mormon employing this early English dialect. Perhaps it had something to do with Joseph Smith’s dialect. Analysis of that dialect might yield insights into the language of the translation. This is true whether the Book of Mormon text was revealed to Joseph through concepts Joseph then put into his own language, or whether it was revealed word for word to him in his own language, or some combination of the two. Unfortunately, there are virtually no extant personal writings by him at the time he translated the Book of Mormon. Joseph’s own dialect of English at that time must

therefore be inferred through an examination of some of his later writings or through the available writings of his local contemporaries. Documents from the general time and area of Joseph Smith's boyhood attest to the presence in the local dialects of some linguistic forms that would seem archaic to people today and that are similar to the language of the King James Bible. Indeed, one could find some lingering use of the pronoun forms "thee," "thou," "thy," and "thine," as well as the archaic *-eth* and *-est* verb inflectional suffixes. Other characteristics found in the King James Bible as well as in the upstate New York area of Joseph Smith's time include "for" in front of verb infinitives (i.e., "for to come") and the use of such forms as "a going."

It is common for rural communities to be conservative in preserving some older forms of speech. Furthermore, some religious groups often deliberately preserve older language forms. By these measures, Palmyra and its surrounding area thus represented a prime region for the presence of many older linguistic forms, because it was not only decidedly rural but contained a substantial number of members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) whose speech, even in normal everyday settings, was highly influenced by older forms of English.

It is difficult but ultimately unnecessary from the standpoint of Joseph Smith's dialectical environment to establish whether the presence of such linguistic forms among speakers in this area is attributable to retained older dialectical forms or to a conscious effort by some religious-minded people to use such forms in their language. Either way, these elements were in the speech of at least some of the people around Joseph Smith. His ability to use these forms would not have to have been exclusively determined by any direct contact with the Bible.

All of this is not to say that Joseph used such archaic forms in his own regular speech. His speech, like that of everyone else, would have had multiple registers that probably varied depending on whether he was addressing a church congregation, relating a story to small children, or telling a joke to a group of friends. But it seems that he likely had a religious register containing features associated with the language of the King James Bible. The language of Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon appropriately matches the religious register associated with the biblical translations then available throughout the English-speaking world. The language of the Book of Mormon translation was likely influenced by Joseph's own language.

### **Joseph Dictated for Long Periods of Time Without Reference to Any Books, Papers, Manuscripts, or Even to the Plates Themselves**

Separate accounts of the process written by David Whitmer and Emma Smith show a surprising similarity. David Whitmer wrote:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man (David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, 12).

Emma's account was contained in an interview with Emma conducted by one of her children in February 1879:

Q. Who were scribes for father when translating the Book of Mormon?

A. Myself, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and my brother Reuben Hale.

Q. Was Alva Hale one?

A. I think not. He may have written some; but if he did, I do not remember it . . .

Q. What is the truth of Mormonism?

A. I know Mormonism to be the truth; and believe the Church to have been established by divine direction. I have complete faith in it. In writing for your father I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close by him. He sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us.

Q. Had he not a book or manuscript from which he read, or dictated to you?

A. He had neither manuscript nor book to read from.

Q. Could he not have had, and you not know it?

A. If he had anything of the kind he could not have concealed it from me.

Q. Are you sure that he had the plates at the time you were writing for him?

A. The plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen table cloth, which I had given him to fold them in. I once felt of the plates, as they thus lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic sound when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book.

Q. Where did father and Oliver Cowdery write?

A. Oliver Cowdery and your father wrote in the room where I was at work.

Q. Could not father have dictated the Book of Mormon to you, Oliver Cowdery, and the others who wrote for him, after having first written it, or having first read it out of some book?

A. Joseph Smith could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon. . . . The larger part of this labour [of translation] was done in my presence and where I could see and know what was being done . . . During no part of it did Joseph Smith have any [manuscripts] or book of any kind from which to read or dictate except the metallic plates which I knew he had. If, he had had anything of the kind he could not have concealed it from me. And, though I was an active participant in the scenes that transpired, it is marvelous to me, “a marvel and a wonder,” as much so as to any one else (Joseph Smith III. “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” *The Saints’ Herald*, 26:289-90).

It is interesting that this process, described by two of Joseph’s contemporaries, does not seem to directly involve the plates, though they were undoubtedly always nearby! It would seem illogical, however, to conclude that the plates were not at times and in some way intimately involved in the translation process. It seems unlikely that the method of translation was as effortless as here implied. Keep in mind that Oliver failed in his attempt to translate because he “took no thought save it was to ask [the Lord]” (D&C 9).

But what kind of effort was involved? It must have been in rendering the ideas on the plates into acceptable English. Part of the divine process by which Joseph worked may have allowed him to think, as it were, in that language, and to understand, by inspiration, the ideas of the language. Then he would have the challenge of expressing the ideas on the plates in suitable English. There is also the considerable effort involved in continuing the process of translation hour after hour and day after day.

The witnesses to the process of translation spoke of words appearing on the seer stone or “translators.” Was there only one correct translation for the ideas found on the plates? Probably not. A “correct” translation can often be improved upon in word choice or in some other manner. Joseph himself seemed to have felt no particular compunctions about revising the Book of Mormon, as evidenced by the numerous changes (mostly of a grammatical nature) made by him in 1837 in the second edition of the Book of Mormon.

Although Joseph was intensely involved in translating an ancient record, he was clearly unschooled in things ancient. For example, early in the work he came across words concerning a wall around Jerusalem and asked Emma if the city indeed had walls. She affirmed what Joseph simply hadn’t known. It is clear that Joseph Smith worked completely without referring to any other sources. None of the twelve people who either participated or merely observed mentioned Joseph’s having any reference

materials present. Emma Smith was emphatic on this very point: “He had neither manuscript nor book to read from, [and] if he had anything of the kind he could not have concealed it from me” (Joseph Smith III, “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” *The Saints’ Herald*, 26:289).

### **Joseph Had Access to Twenty to Thirty Words at a Time as He Dictated**

Royal Skousen has found evidence in the original manuscript to suggest that Joseph dealt with twenty to thirty words at a time as he translated. One piece of evidence is his finding an instance where Joseph’s dictation ran ahead of Oliver’s ability to write. In trying to catch up, Oliver omitted a phrase which later had to be inserted after crossing out the words following the omitted phrase. Thus the number of words Joseph dictated at a time can be estimated. This example is found in Alma 56:41 of the original manuscript:

. . . & it came to pass that again <we saw the Lamanites> when the light of the morning came we saw the Lamanites upon us [the angled brackets refer to a crossout].

This example suggests that Joseph and Oliver started out together, but by the time Oliver finished writing “& it came to pass that again,” Joseph had moved along far enough that he was then dictating “we saw the Lamanites upon us” and Oliver started to write that down. As he did so he realized he had skipped the intervening text (“when the light of the morning came”), so he immediately crossed out “we saw the Lamanites” and wrote the correct sequence, possibly with Joseph repeating the correct text for him. If this explanation is correct, then it indicates that Joseph had at least twenty words in view as he was dictating.

In another instance, a twenty-eight word phrase suddenly appears in Joseph’s handwriting suggesting that Oliver was momentarily indisposed and Joseph had to get down those words he was processing at that moment (Royal Skousen, “Translating the Book of Mormon, Evidence From the Original Manuscript” in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited, The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, 71-74).

### **The Scribe Read Back to Joseph Each Dictated Phrase**

David Whitmer reported that Joseph’s dictation of words was followed by a checking sequence in which the scribe would read back the text to Joseph. If an error was detected, Joseph would presumably read off the text once more until he was satisfied that the scribe had written it down correctly:

Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, 12).

Many corrections in the original manuscript are consistent with this repetition sequence. The majority of changes in the original manuscript were made immediately. Evidence for these immediate corrections include: corrections following on the same line, erasures showing ink smearing (since the ink had not yet dried), and supralinear corrections or insertions made above the line with no change in the level of ink flow or difference in the quill. Some of these may have been made by the scribe himself without Joseph's feedback. There are numerous changes consistent with the process of repeating back. In these instances the original form is complete and the error is usually not obvious. The correction is either supralinear or inserted on the line. There is no erasure—only a cross out of the error.

It should also be noted that there are numerous other corrections in the original manuscript that were made considerably later—often by a different scribe or in a different medium (such as pencil).

Even using this checking process, errors in the original manuscript obviously could and did go undetected.

### **Each Dictation Session Began without Reviewing Where the Previous Session Had Ended**

Emma Smith reported:

The Book of Mormon is of divine authenticity—I have not the slightest doubt of it. I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for, when acting as his scribe, [he] would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he would at once begin where he left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him. This was a usual thing for him to do. It would have been improbable that a learned man could do this; and, for one so ignorant and unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible (Joseph Smith III, "Last Testimony of Sister Emma" in *Saints' Advocate* 26:289-90.)

### **As He Dictated, Joseph Saw Some Visual Indication that a Section Was Ending and a New Section Was Beginning**

This visual indicator could have been a symbol of some type or perhaps just blankness. Recognizing that a section was ending, Joseph then told the scribe to write the word *chapter* with the understanding that the appropriate number would be added later. The word *chapter* and the corresponding chapter numbers were not part of the revealed text. By this scheme the book of 1 Nephi, in the original manuscript, has seven divisions or chapters. Our present chapter system dates back to the 1879 edition wherein Orson Pratt divided 1 Nephi into twenty-two chapters.

Apparently Joseph sometimes realized that he had come to the end of a major division—a “book”—but at other times he knew only that he had come to the end of some type of section of the translation. For example, in the original manuscript, the word *chapter* was placed at the beginning of each of the small books at the end of the small plates (Enos, Jarom, Omni, Words of Mormon), as well as at the beginning of 4 Nephi. The word *chapter* was also placed at the beginning of the Second Book of Nephi, and later, when Oliver was adding the chapter numbers, he first assigned the Roman numeral VIII to this first chapter of 2 Nephi. But when he realized that this was actually the beginning of a new book, he crossed out the whole chapter designation and inserted (with slightly weaker ink flow) “The second Book of Nephi Chapter I.” At the beginning of each of these books, Joseph recognized only that he had come to the end of a section. He could have had no knowledge in advance of the contents or structure of the book that followed.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, we may identify the following steps in the translation process:

1. Joseph saw (in some way) the English text word for word and letter for letter.
2. He then read off the text to the scribe.
3. The scribe heard and wrote down the text.
4. The scribe then read back the text to Joseph.
5. Joseph then gave his approval to the passage of text and continued on with the translation process.

Despite Joseph’s reading off of the text, one should not assume that this process was automatic or easily done. Joseph had to prepare himself mentally and spiritually for this work.

A few additional comments regarding the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon seem pertinent. Critics of the Book of Mormon have sought alternative explanations to account for the book’s existence, arguing that it is a fraud created by Joseph Smith, or by Joseph and someone else, such as Sidney Rigdon. However, the original manuscript gives no aid or comfort to such theories nor, indeed, to any explanations other than the account given by Joseph Smith concerning the coming forth of the book. Under careful examination, the original manuscript shows no evidence of fraud. It is not a compilation of pages worked on over a long period of time. The paper, ink, handwriting, and everything about the collection indicates that it was created within a short time frame. It bears no trace of collaborative committee work. The manuscript is clean and straightforward. It shows no evidence of developmental research or copying from contemporary books or articles. It is not the product of revision and rethinking. It shows no evidence of rewriting to change a modern expression into an archaic-sounding phrase. It does not appear that Joseph reformulated thoughts or reworked the translation to make it sound more plausible. Everything points to a

uniform manner of dictation and production. It really looks like one person read and another copied, much as Joseph Smith described.

What the original manuscript is *not* is quite impressive, especially when one begins to contemplate the number of problems that could have arisen if Joseph Smith had not been telling the truth. The original manuscript is exactly the kind of smoking gun that a prosecuting lawyer would normally love to find in trying to build a case of fraud or deception against an accused. How many mistakes, how many unavoidable problems, how many inevitable inconsistencies would a prosecutor expect to find in such a document? The original manuscript of the Book of Mormon takes us into the workshop of the translator and his scribes; and much to the critic's chagrin, what we see is what we have been told by Joseph Smith and his companions all along. If Joseph had perpetrated a fraud and were trying to cover his tracks, this unforgiving record should have been the last thing he would have kept. Yet Joseph Smith did not dispose of the original manuscript. Despite all the hardships and atrocities the saints experienced in their travel, the original manuscript somehow survived, until it was deposited in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House.

## Book of Mormon Evidences

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I have reproduced here a student body devotional I was invited to deliver on September 28, 2010, at BYU Hawaii. The purpose of my presentation was to provide the students a small sample of the scholarly evidences of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon that have accumulated over the past twenty-five years:

I've been praying that today I may successfully communicate to you a precious secret. This secret is just how you can obtain and keep an unshakable testimony of the gospel that will never fail you for the rest of your life. Please pay close attention. I have chosen to title my remarks: "I Promise You." I promise you I will teach you some of the most important things I know. I promise you that if you do what I ask of you, your life will never be the same.

A little about my background: I am a doctor, a cardiologist, but I'm also an avid student of the scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon. I am not an expert, but after thirty-five years of study and prayer, something remarkable has happened to me. Deep and poignant feelings for this book have grown in my heart—feelings that initially smoldered and sputtered—then they caught fire. In recent years they have become a roaring flame.

About ten years after I began a regular study of the Book of Mormon a profound event occurred in the Church that had a powerful impact on me. It actually had a powerful potential effect on you too, but, as yet, you may not even know of this event. The year was 1985. President Spencer Kimball had just died and was succeeded by Ezra Taft Benson. Almost immediately after assuming leadership of the Church, President Benson received a startling revelation. The Lord told him of a condemnation that was resting upon the Church and its members. The saints were in urgent need of repentance. But why? It was because of the way we were treating the Book of Mormon. We were largely ignoring it! In the very next general conference in April of 1986, President Benson sternly warned the saints and urged them to change—to repent.

The Church did repent. It immediately changed the curriculum for Sunday School and Seminary classes by working the Book of Mormon into a regular four year cycle. Church leaders began using the book more frequently and systematically in sermons and in instructional situations. But another thing happened that would directly impact my life and yours. The large body of able scholars in the Church also repented. These were men and women working in the church universities and in our institutes and seminaries. Many of them began to focus their research and writing on the Book of Mormon. They were specialists, often PhDs, educated in many different fields including biblical studies, archaeology, classics, history, law, linguistics, anthropology, political science, philosophy, Near Eastern studies, literature, and numerous others. They descended on the Book of Mormon and began to subject virtually every aspect of the book to intense and detailed study. Their intent was not to prove that the Book of Mormon is true. Rather, it was to find out the truth about the Book of Mormon. The rate of publications on Book of Mormon topics soared. The quality, objectivity, and credibility of the scholarship and research were solid and undeniable.

A fascinating concept emerged from these scholars' efforts. They began to discover what they came to refer to as "evidences" of the Book of Mormon. It's important that you understand exactly what an "evidence" is. It is a feature or concept in the text of the Book of Mormon that is particularly significant, important, and exciting. But its significance and importance were not appreciated by Joseph Smith or anyone else in 1829, the year the book was translated. Why? Because, as Joseph translated, no one knew or understood anything about that feature or concept. Recent scholarly research, however, has confirmed the importance of many of these concepts. Once their importance is pointed out and explained

by the scholars, we are inclined to say, “How could Joseph have possibly known to include that in the book?” The fact is, Joseph did not know. He simply wrote what the Lord revealed to him. Such a studied and confirmed feature is called an “evidence” of the Book of Mormon.

Today, we are blessed to have access to many fascinating evidences. We are constrained by time here today, but I want to make you aware of just a few.

### Chiastic Parallelism

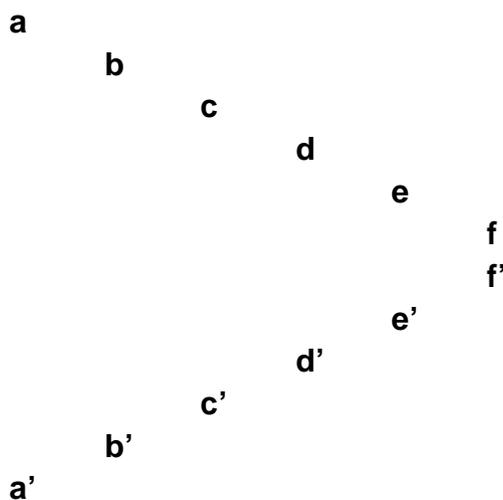
Lehi and his family lived in the area of Jerusalem, where Hebrew was spoken, written, and read. They took their knowledge of Hebrew with them to the New World. The Book of Mormon plates were written in Hebrew, but, to save space on the plates, the Hebrew was recorded using a system of glyphs or symbols patterned after Egyptian writings. We have come to call this combination of Hebrew and Egyptian “reformed Egyptian.” It has been fascinating to learn that there are hundreds of words, phrases, and passages in the Book of Mormon that have an unmistakable Hebrew pattern.

One of the most exciting of these is called “chiastic parallelism” or “chiasmus.” I’ll show you briefly what it is. Then I want to tell you the inspiring story of its discovery a little over forty years ago by a young missionary.

Chiasmus is a form of Hebrew poetry. It was first discovered in the Bible. It tends to be found, not in the everyday descriptions of events, people, and places, but in the formal sermons. It is a way of emphasizing the importance of the central theme of the sermon. Please look carefully at the following diagram. I have represented two lines of scripture in the center as “f” and “f prime.” These two lines both contain the central theme or main idea of the passage. That main idea is repeated twice—once line “f” and again in line “f prime.” Preceding the first mention of the theme is a series of lines containing words or phrases that build up to the central idea. Following the second mention of the theme is the same series of words or phrases, but in reverse order.

In this slide then, each letter represents a line of scripture containing a word or phrase. The lines “f” and “f prime” contain the central theme stated in two consecutive lines. A twelve-line passage is represented:

### Chiastic Parallelism



“Chi” is the Latin word for “X” and this sequence is usefully illustrated as half of an “X.” The first sequence of lines, from “a” to “f” is followed by a second parallel sequence from “f prime” to “a prime”. Thus, this form of poetry is called chiastic parallelism or chiasmus. I hope you get the idea.

I love the story about how chiasmus was discovered in the Book of Mormon. In the summer of 1967, a missionary elder by the name of John W. Welch, who now goes by “Jack,” was serving in Germany. While out proselyting one day, he saw a poster advertising a lecture to be given by a Catholic scholar on the New Testament. Since the lecture was taking place on his preparation day, he and his companion decided to attend. The professor spoke of a form of Hebrew poetry in the Bible known as chiastic parallelism or chiasmus. It was the first time Elder Welch had heard of the topic. He was intrigued and subsequently read a book on the subject recommended by the Catholic lecturer. The book was *The Literary Art in the Gospel of Matthew*, written by a man named Paul Gaechter. I’ll now quote from Brother Welch’s own account:

So far . . . the idea of finding chiasmus in the Book of Mormon had not entered the picture. That discovery occurred on August 16, a few days after I had finished Gaechter’s book and my rereading of Matthew. Early that Wednesday morning, I was awakened by what seemed to me to be a voice, whose words were these: “If it is evidence of Hebrew style in the Bible, it must be evidence of Hebrew style in the Book of Mormon.” . . . I got out of bed. . . . It was still dark. I went over to the desk on the other side of our one-room apartment. Picking up the copy of the German Book of Mormon I had been using that summer, I wondered: If it is here, where? I felt clearly prompted to begin reading where my companion and I had left off the night before, which happened to be in King Benjamin’s speech. I read Mosiah 4. When I turned the page to Mosiah 5, the classic chiastic passage in verses 10-12 jumped off the page. I do not believe that I ever would have found this through my own intellectual efforts (“The Discovery of Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon 40 Years Later,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 16/2: 79).

Here is a diagram showing a diagram of that particular passage.

### Chiastic Parallelism in Mosiah 5:10-12:

- a take upon him the **name** of Christ
  - b must be **called** by some other name
    - c he findeth himself on the **left hand** of God
      - d I would that ye should **remember** also, that this is the name
        - e never should be **blotted out**
          - f except it be through **transgression**
            - f’ take heed that ye do not **transgress**
              - e’ that the name be not be **blotted out** of your hearts
                - d’ I would that ye should **remember**
                  - c’ that he are not found on the **left hand** of God
                    - b’ the voice by which ye shall be **called**
                      - a’ also, **name** by which he shall call you

Note that the central theme in this passage is sin or transgression. Then note the parallel sequences of ideas—one leading up to and one leading away from the central theme.

There are a few other documented instances of chiastic parallelism in the Book of Mormon. The most spectacular was discovered somewhat later by Brother Welch. It is Alma 36:1-30. Just take a quick look at the chiastic diagram of that passage.

### Chiastic Parallelism in Alma 36:1-20 (verses in parentheses)

- a My son give ear to my **words** (1)

- b Keep the commandments and **ye shall prosper in the land** (1)
- c Do as **I have done** (2)
- d Remember the **captivity** of our fathers (2)
- e They were in **bondage** (2)
- f He surely did **deliver them** (2)
- g **Trust in God** (3)
- h **Supported in trials, troubles, and afflictions** (3)
- i **Lifted up at the last day** (3)
- j **I know this not of myself but of God** (4)
- k **Born of God** (5)
- l I **sought to destroy the church** (6-9)
- m My **limbs were paralyzed** (10)
- n Fear of being **in the presence of God** (14-15)
- o **Pains of a damned soul** (16)
- p **Harrowed up by the memory of sins** (17)
- q I remembered **Jesus Christ, a son of God** (17)
- q' I cried, **Jesus, a son of God** (18)
- p' **Harrowed up by the memory of sins no more** (19)
- o' Joy as **exceeding as was the pain** (20)
- n' Long to be **in the presence of God** (22)
- m' My **limbs received strength again** (23)
- l' I **labored to bring souls to repentance** (24)
- k' **Born of God** (26)
- j' Therefore my **knowledge is of God** (26)
- i' and **raise me up at the last day** (28)
- h' **Supported under trials, troubles, and afflictions** (27)
- g' **Trust in him** (27)
- f' He will **deliver me** (27)
- e' As God brought our fathers out of **bondage** and captivity (28-29)
- d' Retain in remembrance their **captivity** (28-29)
- c' Know as **I do know** (30)
- b' Keep the commandments and **ye shall prosper in the land** (30)
- a' This according to his **word** (30)

Note that the central theme of this chiasmus is Jesus Christ. And notice the parallel words and phrases lead up to and away from the central theme.

Well, so what? Joseph Smith must have been just unbelievably lucky. His writing just happened to contain complex examples of chiasmus. It was a pure accident. What do you think? Was it luck? Was it mere accident? What is your opinion? I promise you it had nothing to do with luck. I promise you it was not accident.

Other examples of evidences are made more meaningful by knowing the process by which Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery actually wrote the Book of Mormon. It was a remarkable, flat-out miracle. Joseph later said he translated “by the gift and power of God” (D&C 135:3). You will readily agree when you learn just how it happened. Joseph did not “translate” in the usual sense of the word. He knew nothing about Egyptian writing—nor did anyone in the United States at that time. Joseph was divinely empowered to read and dictate twenty to thirty words of the text at a time. It was like reading writing on the

repeatedly renewing screen of a digital planner. After he dictated a passage, he then paused just long enough for Oliver to write it down and read it back to him. The passage would then disappear and a new one would appear. These sessions were not private. Interested people came and went during the process. Several of them have described exactly what they saw. There was no desk piled with papers. In fact, as Joseph dictated to Oliver, he never read from a paper or manuscript of any kind. Joseph merely peered into his instrument—either the Urim and Thummim or his seerstone—and he read. This process would go on for hours at a time. Once a phrase was written, there was no polishing, revising, or editing. There was no evidence of outside research. When each new session began, following a break, they simply resumed exactly where they had left off. There was never any going back or reminding of what had just been translated (Skousen, Royal J., “Translating the Book of Mormon, Evidence from the Original Manuscript” in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited, The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, 61-93). In this way, they wrote about eight pages of the Book of Mormon per day and completed the entire book in 63 days.

### **Textual Consistency**

Keeping this process in mind, let me point out two examples of what we might call “textual consistency” in the Book of Mormon. In Alma 36:22 the prophet Alma quotes a twenty-one word statement verbatim uttered some 500 years previously by father Lehi. Lehi’s statement is found in 1 Nephi 1:8. Joseph had dictated 1 Nephi chapter 1 a few weeks and hundreds of pages before.

How then might we explain the twenty-one word phrase that is shared by these two verses? Joseph Smith didn’t stop to look back. He just kept on reading. The answer is that it was Alma who looked back in the record and found the quote of father Lehi on the small plates of Nephi. He then included it in his writings. Perhaps this observation has not struck you as very remarkable. If it has not, then just try quoting any twenty-one word passage of Lehi’s without looking!

Another remarkable evidence of textual consistency was pointed out to me recently by Brother Jack Welch. It hasn’t even been published yet. In the first chapter of Ether, the prophet Ether recounts his genealogy from himself back to the brother of Jared. He mentions thirty individuals, in order, including himself and the brother of Jared. Then, in the remainder of the book of Ether, he gives an account of each one of these thirty characters in exactly the reverse order. How did Joseph keep them all straight if he was not able to refer to a list? The answer is: He didn’t need a list! I promise you he didn’t have the names written down anywhere. He was just reading as the Lord revealed the book of Ether to him. It was the prophet Ether who did the writing, editing, and organizing.

### **Complexity of the Book of Mormon Story**

Perhaps the strongest evidence for the antiquity of the Book of Mormon is the amazing depth and complexity of the book. This argument was first developed and perfected by Dr. Hugh Nibley. Brother Nibley reminds us of Joseph Smith’s lack of education. He also reminds us of the way Joseph and Oliver wrote the book as I previously described. Again, they dictated line after line without notes and without ever reviewing what was written previously. Yet despite these circumstances, a large number of complex interrelationships are developed in the book and consistently maintained from beginning to end. Many of these have taken scholars longer to sort out than it took Joseph to translate the entire book.

For example, the Book of Mormon employs at least three independent dating systems with remarkable accuracy. It contains a complex system of religious teachings that is enriched as new sermons are added but is never confused or contradicted. Many instances of non English language forms—like those in Hebrew we have mentioned—are woven seamlessly into the narrative. The book describes complex interactions of different ethnic groups without once losing track of even the most minor ones.

Hundreds of individual characters are successfully introduced and coherently tracked. The geographical data in the text is diverse and complex, yet when carefully analyzed, it is perfectly consistent and matches a limited identifiable portion of the Western Hemisphere (Melvin J. Thorne, "Complexity, Consistency, Ignorance, and Probabilities," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited*, ed. Reynolds, 179-93). Did Joseph write this complex narrative? I promise you he did not.

## **Wordprinting**

Just one final evidence. The Book of Mormon was obviously written by several different authors. Each had his own style of writing. It is true that the prophet Mormon's style would have dominated those parts of the book he abridged. If Joseph Smith or anyone else wrote the book, it would all be in the writing style of that one individual. What if we could analyze the writings of the book and determine if it contains the writings of more than one individual? It turns out we can. There is a technology available called *wordprinting*.

Using statistical models and sophisticated computer technology, scientists have long been able to characterize the writing pattern or wordprint of any given author. Studies have shown that even the most skillful writers cannot change their pattern at will. The wordprinting pattern of one author is statistically different from that of all other authors.

Some years ago, Dr. John L. Hilton, a member of the Church, and several of his PhD associates in Berkley, California, developed an especially rigorous wordprinting model with which to test the Book of Mormon ("On Verifying Wordprint Studies: Book of Mormon Authorship," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited*, ed. Reynolds, 225-54). Brother Hilton compared the writings of Nephi and Alma with one another and with writings of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Solomon Spaulding. Nephi's writings were taken from the small plates of Nephi, and so had not been abridged by Mormon. Alma's writings were abridged. The results unambiguously showed that the writings of Nephi and Alma were distinct from one another and both were quite different from the writings of Joseph, Oliver, and Solomon Spaulding (Hilton, "Verifying Wordprint Studies," 241).

These are only a few of the literally hundreds of evidences now available to us.

If Joseph Smith, or any contemporary of his, had written the book out of his own head and from his own resources, it would have turned out to be, as Dr. Hugh Nibley termed it, "a great potpourri of the most outrageous nonsense" (*The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989], 325-26). It would have been completely unable to withstand the rigorous, scholarly scrutiny that has been brought to bear on the Book of Mormon. Now please hear and understand this. I promise you that when the Book of Mormon was published in 1830, there was not one person alive on the earth that had the qualifications to write a book that could have stood up to the painstaking analyses the Book of Mormon has received.

## **Has the Lord "Fudged" on the Rules?**

It has occurred to me that the Lord has done a peculiar thing with the Book of Mormon. This thing seems uncharacteristic of him. It's almost as if he has broken his own rules for mortality. He is usually careful to maintain a balance between knowledge and faith. He doesn't want to give us so much knowledge that we don't have to exercise faith. But in the case of the Book of Mormon, it almost seems to me he has "fudged" a little on his usual policy. He has given us an overwhelming amount of knowledge in the form of these evidences. He has given to us what seems to be an almost unfair advantage. Let me point out to you that this advantage is available only to the two most recent generations—your generation and mine. My parents and grandparents had no such advantage. The evidences simply were not available to them. They had not yet been discovered.

## **Are Evidences Important?**

Some committed members of the Church have been critical of the idea of evidences of the Book of Mormon. “After all,” they maintain, “it is a *spiritual* witness of the book that is most important.” Are reading, study, knowledge, and logic really all that vital? Are these evidences even worth noting? It is clear that the Lord would have us fortify our testimonies with both prayer and *study*—with both faith and *reason*. Through the prophet Joseph Smith the Lord counseled us: “Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118). The Lord also said, “You must *study* it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right” (D&C 9:8, emphasis added). When you study diligently, the Spirit then delights in providing you a spiritual witness of what you have just studied. The Spirit will not and cannot provide you a testimony when there is nothing in your head of which he may testify.

Scholars in each discipline are always careful to say they cannot actually *prove* the Book of Mormon to be true using secular evidences. However, I would like to go on record here today as saying this: Given the many evidences available to us from all the various disciplines—I believe firmly it is impossibly unlikely that the book is false. Let me say that in another way. I have worked in a scientific field all my life and statistical probabilities have been an integral part of my professional life. The likelihood that the Book of Mormon is true, based only on the evidences is so overwhelming that, in my view, the issue is settled. Then I would add to these evidences the spiritual witnesses I’ve had on so many occasions as I have been studying the book. Often these warm manifestations of the Spirit have come as I have contemplated the many evidences of the book. I promise you that this book is true and authentic. Please listen to me and believe me. I know with all my heart this is so. There is no doubt in my mind. I promise you it cannot be anything else. The Book of Mormon has become the very foundation and anchor of my testimony. It can be the same for you.

## **What is Implied by the Book of Mormon’s Being Absolutely True?**

Now, consider for a moment the implications of this. The Book of Mormon is absolutely true. I promise you that. What does this mean? What does this imply? Does it mean that Moroni actually appeared to young Joseph Smith? Did Joseph just happen upon the plates by chance? The Book of Mormon is true. Does that mean that Joseph actually saw the Father and the Son in the grove? Does it mean that there actually is a life after death and that we will live together forever. It does. It does. Please know that. This is all absolutely true! I promise you!

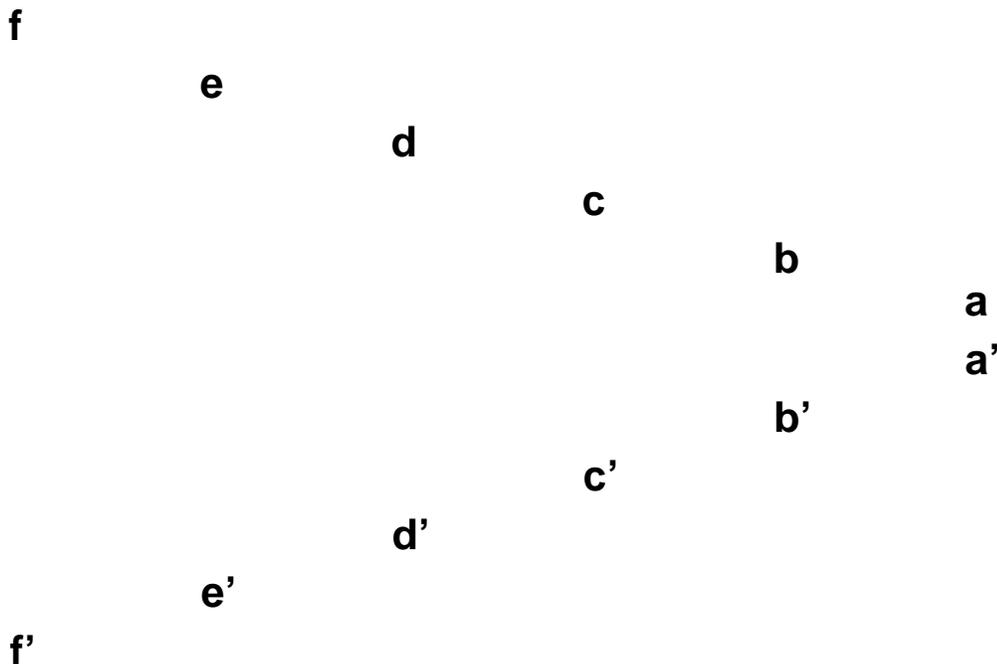
Now, you know we have our detractors. They maintain the book was written in the early nineteenth century by Joseph Smith or one of his contemporaries, and that it consists of a fanciful account of mythical characters, events, and locations. Some of these critics have recently “done us the favor” of allowing that perhaps the book is “inspired fiction.” They are wrong. I promise you that each and every one of these critics has a knowledge of the book that is sadly lacking. There is no need for you to be defensive in any way around these critics. They have closed their minds and have not spent sufficient time studying the book. There is “no free lunch” in acquiring a testimony of the Book of Mormon. It takes real effort. And this applies to you as well. You must read the Book of Mormon regularly.

Now, a bit of important advice: As you read, please never leave a question that occurs to you about the gospel or about the Book of Mormon unanswered. There are those around you who can help. There is no such thing as an inappropriate or unimportant question. There is no question you should not ask. We have more spiritual truth in the Church today than any other religion in the world. Your institute instructors here at BYU Hawaii are happy to help you. I would be flattered if you were to email me any questions about this presentation or about the Book of Mormon. I will leave you with my email address.

I'm not a gospel scholar. I'm a cardiologist. But I'm an enthusiastic student who has spent thousands of hours studying the Book of Mormon and the gospel. I also have ready access to a few scholar friends who are willing to help me. I've called on them before to answer my own questions. If I don't know the answer to your question, I'll get it from someone smarter and better informed than I. I'll do whatever I can to instill in you a love for this powerful book and for the gospel.

Why has he given *your* generation the remarkable gift of these many corroborating evidences? He did not make them available to your grandparents' generation. It is because he does not want to leave you in any way uncertain about the truth of the gospel. He must have you as strong and committed servants. There is much of opposition and even persecution ahead. You are the soldiers in his army. You will live during the earth's last gasp prior to the Lord's glorious second coming. The gospel must be promulgated, and there are many strong people who will fight against you in that cause. You have much to do. The Lord will lean heavily upon you. You are the "cream of the premortal crop"—I promise you! Bless your hearts, every one!

## Chiastic Parallelism





## Chiastic Parallelism in Alma 36:1-30 (verses in parentheses)

- a My son give ear to my **words** (1)
- b Keep the commandments and **ye shall prosper in the land** (1)
- c Do as **I have done** (2)
- d Remember the **captivity** of our fathers (2)
- e They were in **bondage** (2)
- f He surely did **deliver them** (2)
- g **Trust in God** (3)
- h **Supported in trials, troubles, and afflictions** (3)
- i **Lifted up at the last day** (3)
- j **I know this not of myself but of God** (4)
- k **Born of God** (5)
- l I **sought to destroy the church** (6-9)
- m My **limbs were paralyzed** (10)
- n Fear of being **in the presence of God** (14-15)
- o **Pains of a damned soul** (16)
- p **Harrowed up by the memory of sins** (17)
- q I remembered **Jesus Christ, a son of God** (17)
- q' I cried, **Jesus, a son of God** (18)
- p' **Harrowed up by the memory of sins no more** (19)
- o' Joy as **exceeding as was the pain** (20)
- n' Long to be **in the presence of God** (22)
- m' My **limbs received strength again** (23)
- l' I **labored to bring souls to repentance** (24)
- k' **Born of God** (26)
- j' Therefore my **knowledge is of God** (26)
- i' and **raise me up at the last day** (28)
- h' **Supported under trials, troubles, and afflictions** (27)
- g' **Trust in him** (27)
- f' He will **deliver me** (27)
- e' As God brought our fathers out of **bondage** and captivity (28-29)
- d' Retain in remembrance their **captivity** (28-29)
- c' Know as **I do know** (30)
- b' Keep the commandments and **ye shall prosper in the land** (30)
- a' This according to his **word** (30)



## Changes in Joseph Smith's Accounts of his First Vision Experience

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Some who are critical of the Church have noted that as Joseph Smith recounted the story of his first vision, it changed with each retelling. They wonder, "How do you explain that?"

The purpose of this chapter is to track the evolution of our present-day account of Joseph's First Vision. I will utilize sequential accounts taken from Dean C. Jessee's article, "The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision (1831-39)." I will not provide complete reproductions of these. Rather, I will extract pertinent features that allow us to view clearly the way in which they have evolved. For clarity, I will also correct spelling errors and add appropriate punctuation. We will learn that Joseph's re-tellings of his experience did indeed evolve over the years of his life.

### **Kirtland Letter Book Account (1831-32)**

The earliest known account of Joseph's First Vision is recorded in the *Kirtland Letter Book* in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams. It is dated 1831-32. Keep in mind that this earliest account is reported more than ten years after the event:

At about the age of twelve years my mind became seriously impressed with regard to the all-important concerns for the welfare of my immortal soul which led me to searching the scriptures, believing, as I was taught, that they contained the word of God. . . . From the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart concerning the situation of the world of mankind, the contentions and divisions, the wickedness and abominations, and the darkness which pervaded the minds of mankind. My mind became exceedingly distressed, for I became convicted of my sins. By searching the scriptures I found that mankind [had] not come unto the Lord, but that they had apostatized from the true and living faith, and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament.

Joseph makes no mention of the specific scriptural verse James 1:5. His account of the vision experience itself is as follows:

I cried unto the Lord for mercy, for there was none else to whom I could go and obtain mercy, and the Lord heard my cry in the wilderness. And while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord, in the sixteenth year of my age, a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon-day came down from above and rested upon me. And I was filled with the Spirit of God, and the Lord opened the heavens upon me. And I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying, Joseph, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee. Go thy way, walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments. Behold I am

the Lord of glory. I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have eternal life. Behold the world lieth in sin at this time, and none doeth good. No, not one. They have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commandments. They draw near to me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to this ungodliness and to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and apostles. Behold and lo, I come quickly, as it is written of me in the cloud clothed in the glory of my Father. And my soul was filled with love, and for many days I could rejoice with great joy, and the Lord was with me, but [I] could find none that would believe the heavenly vision.

Joseph reports seeing only one personage, “the Lord.” There is no mention of his struggle with satanic forces. He does not record his specific question to the Lord as to which church he should join. Nor does he tell of the Lord’s instructions to join none of them. He makes no mention of the Savior’s specific intentions to restore the completeness of the gospel to the earth. It is also of interest that he misremembered his age. At the time of the First Vision he was fourteen years old, and therefore in his *fifteenth* year.

### **1834-35 Account**

In October 1834 Oliver Cowdery, the editor of the *Messenger and Advocate*, introduced the first published history of the Church. It was written in the form of letters written between Oliver Cowdery and William W. Phelps and contained some of the highlights of the history of the Church to that time. Cowdery and Phelps maintained they had “authentic documents” in their possession which they used as resources, apparently including some of the prophet’s personal journals.

Under the date of November 9, 1835, an interview with a Jewish minister is recorded in which Joseph Smith relates again the account of his First Vision:

Being wrought up in my mind respecting the subject of religion . . . I retired to the silent grove and there bowed down before the Lord, under a realizing sense (if the Bible be true) ask and you shall receive, knock and it shall be opened, seek and you shall find, and again, if any man lack wisdom, let [him ask] of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not. Information was what I most desired at this time, and with a fixed determination to obtain it, I called on the Lord for the first time in the place above stated, or in other words, I made a fruitless attempt to pray. My tongue seemed to be swollen in my mouth, so that I could not utter. I heard a noise behind me like someone walking towards me. I strove again to pray, but could not; the noise of walking seemed to draw nearer.

I sprang upon my feet and looked round, but saw no person or thing that was calculated to produce the noise of walking. I kneeled again. My mouth was opened, and my tongue loosed. I called on the Lord in mighty prayer. A pillar of fire appeared above my head; which presently rested down upon me and filled me with unspeakable joy. A personage appeared in the midst of this pillar of flame, which was spread all around and yet nothing [was] consumed. Another personage soon appeared like unto the first. He said unto me, thy sins are forgiven thee. He testified also unto me that Jesus Christ is the son of God. I saw many angels in this vision. I was about fourteen years old when I received this first communication.

This time Joseph reports the presence of two personages though neither is identified. He also records the presence of “many angels.” He refers to James 1:5, and he reports his struggle with satanic forces. Flame and fire in this verse have replaced light. Again there is no specific conversation about which church he should join. Nor is there any account of the Lord’s intentions to restore the gospel in its fulness.

### **1838-39 Account**

On April 27, 1838, Joseph records in his journal that he spent the day “writing a history of this church from the earliest period of its existence up to this date” (*HC*, 3:25). Just over one year later James Mulholland began writing the manuscript of Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*. He apparently utilized Joseph’s journal of the year prior to create yet another account of the First Vision, this time the official account. We will pick up the account in midstream:

While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse which reads, “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.” Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did, for how to act I did not know. . . . So in accordance with this my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful clear day early in the spring of 1820. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.

The next excerpt begins as Joseph had just reported being by harassed by the forces of darkness:

Just at this moment of great alarm I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me calling me by name and said, pointing to the other, "This is my beloved Son, hear him." My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner therefore did I get possession of myself so as to be able to speak, than I asked the personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right, for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong, and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them for they were all wrong, and the personage who addressed me said that all the creeds were an abomination in his sight, that those professors were all corrupt, that they draw near to me with their lips but their hearts are far from me. They teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness but they deny the power thereof. He again forbade me to join with any of them, and many other things did he say unto me which I cannot write at this time. When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back looking up into heaven.

### **Evolution of Joseph's Accounts**

The fact of the evolution of the account of Joseph's First Vision until it has finally reached its present state has been disquieting to some in the Church who are bothered by the fact that all of his accounts are not virtually identical. There are simple and plausible explanations for this evolution.

It seems likely the experiences of the First Vision were overwhelming to an academically unsophisticated fourteen-year-old boy. His early attempts to relate the experiences to those outside his own family were aggressively rebuffed and derided, and they resulted in his being persecuted. He had received no formal directive to remember or write his experience. He thus failed to preserve a written account between 1820 and 1830.

He made no serious attempt to recall or record his vision until after he was directed by an 1830 revelation to keep a history (see D&C 21:1). Subsequently, he eventually undertook in earnest the project of chronicling the events of his life, including his First Vision experience. His recollections and understandings of the particulars and significance of what he had witnessed, and what was said during the experience, likely deepened and clarified themselves as he repeatedly wrote his recollections between

1831 and 1839. Obviously, his incrementally growing insights were enabled by the Spirit of God and revelation.

There are no contradictions in the early accounts of the experience, though they were incomplete. The differences in Joseph's accounts are actually a testimony of Joseph's truthfulness. His accounts were simply his honest efforts at the time to provide an account of his experience. It is clear he did not memorize a story and pass it along in exact detail.

An interesting parallel to help us understand how difficult it is to accurately report an observed experience is the Bible itself. There we find several inconsistencies in the accounts of well-intentioned observers. For example, the gospel writers were each eyewitnesses of Jesus's expressions and miracles, yet each recorded those events differently. The accounts about the experience in Gethsemane and the resurrection are recorded by these apostles, but each account disagrees on such details as the number of angels present and whether they were standing or sitting, and on the number of women present at the tomb. Consider also the account of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Peter writes in Acts 9:7: "And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man." Acts 22:9, on the other hand says, "They that were with me saw indeed the light . . . but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." In another example of inconsistency in the Bible, the description in Matthew 27:5 of Judas Iscariot's death is different from that in Acts 1:18. The Matthew account reports, "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself." The account in Acts was different: "Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." All four gospel writers report a different superscription written on the sign placed over the Savior's head on the cross. These vary from "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Matthew 27:37), to "THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Mark 15:26), to "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Luke 23:38), and to "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS" (John 19:19). We read in Matthew 27:9-10 where Matthew quotes Jeremiah's prophecy of the thirty pieces of silver, and yet the Old Testament makes it clear that it was not Jeremiah but Zechariah who made that prophecy (Zechariah 11).

Latter-day Saints, in general, and your author in particular, regard Joseph's experience in the sacred grove as literally true in every respect. It is the sacred foundation of my religious convictions.

## DNA and the Book of Mormon

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### A Basic Introduction to the Science of DNA

Before we actually undertake a discussion of DNA and the Book of Mormon, it is important that you come to understand some of the fundamentals of DNA. Though the field of genetics has evolved to become a complex subject, I have endeavored to keep this explanation simple and logical. I have attempted to adapt it specifically to the interested lay person.

**DNA.** The blueprint for every human being, in fact for every animal, is contained in material in the nucleus of every cell. The material is called DNA. DNA determines our physical attributes and appearance. DNA functions by serving as a pattern or template for the manufacture of proteins by the body's cells. Each of the various types of tissues of the body is made up of cells. Each cell becomes a "specialist" by a mysterious process called "differentiation." A cell may "differentiate" into a muscle cell a brain cell, a cell that manufactures bone, a cell that receives light in the retina of the eye, a skin cell, or any number of other cells. There are about 250 different types of cells in the human body. Each cell becomes a specialist by manufacturing specific proteins that become available to the cell and allow it to perform specific functions. This is mysterious since each and every cell in the body contains the blueprint or pattern for all the cells in the entire body. By the mysterious process of differentiation, a certain cell is told to read only a small part of its DNA to begin making specific proteins that allow it to function in its specialty.

The basic unit of DNA is called a gene. Each gene is made up of sequences of four different chemicals called nucleotides. The nucleotides are: Adenine (A), Thymine (T), Cytosine (C) and Guanine (G),. These nucleotides are strung together in strands. Each gene is unique as determined by the particular sequence of the nucleotides A, T, C, and G. Each gene codes for, or serves as a template for, a specific protein. There are an estimated twenty to thirty thousand genes in human DNA. All of these genes are grouped into twenty-three structures called chromosomes.

When human conception occurs the male sperm cell contributes twenty-three chromosomes. These twenty-three chromosomes contain a complete set of genes. The female ovum also contributes twenty-three chromosomes, and each set also contains a complete set of genes. Thus each of the baby's cells (and each cell of all human beings) has two complete sets of virtually the same genes in twenty-three pairs of chromosomes. One pair of chromosomes is referred to as the "sex chromosomes." The female human has two identical sex chromosomes. Each is called an "X chromosome." The male has a pair of sex chromosomes consisting of one "X chromosome" and another type of chromosome called a "Y chromosome."

I reiterate that each of the human being's cells contains, in its center or nucleus, two sets of twenty-three chromosomes. The only exceptions are the ova and the sperm cells which have only one set of twenty-three chromosomes each.

The sex characteristic is passed along as follows. Each and every female ovum contains one complete set chromosomes and the sex chromosome of that set contains an "X Chromosome." Each male sperm cell also contains just one set of twenty-three chromosomes, but half of the sperm cells contain an "X chromosome" as part of the set, and the other half of the sperm cells contain a "Y chromosome." Thus, it is the sperm cell that determines the sex of the baby. If the sperm cell that fertilizes the egg contains an "X chromosome," the baby is female (each of the two sets of twenty-three chromosomes in the fertilized ovum has an X Chromosome. If the sperm cell that fertilizes the egg contains a "Y chromosome," the baby will be male (one of the sets of twenty-three chromosomes in the fertilized ovum has an "X chromosome" from the female's ovum and the other set contains a "Y chromosome" from the male sperm cell.

**The use of DNA in forensic analyses.** We are about to consider the use of DNA in crime and law enforcement. Two other concepts about DNA are vital to understanding its use in any type of forensic study.

1. We have already discussed that most all of the DNA in a human cell is contained in the nucleus of the cell, but there is another type of DNA in each cell that is different from the DNA in the nucleus. This type of DNA does not function in the process of passing on inherited characteristics. This type of DNA is found in structures in the body's cells called "mitochondria." Mitochondria are special structures within the cytoplasm (inside the cell but outside the nucleus) that serve as power sources for the cell's metabolism. This DNA is called, not surprisingly, "mitochondrial DNA."

2. 99.9% of all human DNA is shared in common with all other humans. That is, 99.9% of each person's DNA is identical to 99.9% of DNA from every other human. This DNA is referred to as "constant" DNA. This means that 0.1% of a person's DNA is unique to that particular individual and has properties that are shared by no other individual. The only exception is an identical twin. This DNA is referred to as "variable" DNA. In this part of the DNA are found genes (sequences of nucleotides) that determine race and all individual characteristics. These are genes or nucleotide sequences that are shared by no other individual. Like the DNA found in the cell's nucleus ("nuclear" DNA) a small part of mitochondrial DNA is also unique to the individual and is used in forensic DNA studies.

The uniqueness of each person's DNA has led to some helpful uses of DNA. Medical science has available the technology to determine the exact sequence of the nucleotides in the DNA. This has given rise to the science of genetic fingerprinting or DNA profiling.

We all have learned that crime labs can take any type of body tissue from a crime scene (blood, saliva, sperm, perspiration, and even hair) and determine whether

or not it originates with a given individual. This is done by analyzing that 0.1% of “variable” DNA in the sample and comparing it with the 0.1% of “variable” DNA taken from a suspect. This information is often used in court cases. The lay public has been taught that this procedure is usually very accurate and almost infallible. It is indeed a highly developed and reliable technique. Most of us, then, have the tendency to assume that any form of DNA analysis is done with a great deal of accuracy and reliability. Again, both mitochondrial DNA and nuclear DNA are utilized in this type of analysis.

**Population genetics.** Another application of DNA analysis is that of “population genetics,” wherein the DNA characteristics of a given population can be categorized and the genetic material of any given individual can be compared with that population. The likelihood that the individual is related to that population can then be assessed.

Two specific types of DNA are utilized in doing population studies. These are mitochondrial DNA described above and the DNA from the “Y chromosome” of the male. Though it is not intuitively obvious, it is important to know that mitochondrial DNA is passed only by the female, but it is received by both female and male offspring. The male, however, cannot pass on his mitochondrial DNA to any of his offspring. Hence, mitochondrial DNA of every individual was received from the individual’s mother. If you stop and think about the “Y chromosome” it will become apparent that the Y chromosome DNA (or “Y DNA”) is only passed along by the male and is only received by the male.

In doing population studies, scientists are not interested in matching one ancestor with one particular descendant. Rather the emphasis is comparing or matching *groups* of individuals. In analyzing both mitochondrial DNA and Y chromosome DNA, it has been found that there are several complex groups of identifiable “markers” on both types of DNA. These markers are found in that small portion of the cell’s DNA (0.1% of the total) that contains the individual’s unique characteristics—the “variable DNA.” Each “marker” does not depend, for its identification, on only one sequence of nucleotides. Rather, each sample is analyzed for several different sequences. And the particular group into which the marker fits depends on the analysis of these several sequences. There are about twenty-six different identifiable markers found in mitochondrial DNA. These are designated with capital letters “A” through “Z.” Each of these types, however, has its subtypes. There are about twenty different identifiable markers on the male’s Y chromosome. These are also designated by capital letters “A: through “T.” Again, there are also subtypes.

This allows separation of each sample into different groups which share similar characteristics. These groups are called “haplogroups” and the pattern which each group possesses is referred to as its “haplotype.” Thus, a given haplogroup may be referred to as “A,” “B,” or “C” . . . all the way to “Z” for the mitochondrial DNA markers and “A,” “B,” or “C” . . . all the way to “T” for the Y chromosome markers.

Keep in mind that mitochondrial DNA is passed on only by the female to both her male and female offspring. The ovum from the female contains mitochondrial DNA. The sperm cell contains virtually no mitochondrial DNA. The Y chromosome is passed on only by the male, as the female does not possess a Y chromosome. It is inherited only by a son, and not a daughter.

All of these identifiable markers, both on the mitochondrial DNA and on the Y chromosome, theoretically should be stable and unchanging through several generations—even for thousands of years. The theoretical durability of these markers notwithstanding, these markers can, however, change. They may sometimes change within a generation or two, but particularly over long periods of time.

An interesting example of the phenomenon of this change was reported in the June 2003 issue of the *American Journal of Human Genetics* (72:1370-1388). This study employed extensive recorded genealogies of people from Iceland combined with probably the most massive population genetics study every undertaken. The investigators traced the maternal and paternal ancestry of 131,060 Icelanders born after 1972 to two families of ancestors, one born between 1848 and 1892 (about 150 years ago) and the other between 1742 and 1798 (about 250 years ago). These relationships were confirmed by available genealogical records. Samples containing the mitochondrial and Y DNA markers were obtained and analyzed from all of these 131,060 individuals. If there had been no changes in the genetic markers, then a high proportion of these 131,060 individuals would have demonstrated their relationship to one of the two 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century families. Their mitochondrial DNA and Y chromosome DNA markers would have fit into two groups and associated each individual with one of the two families.

However, the vast majority of those born after 1972 whose DNA markers were analyzed showed no identifiable DNA relationship to their early family (75-80% of those related to the 19<sup>th</sup> century family and 90-95% of those related to the 18<sup>th</sup> century family). In other words, the vast majority of those born after 1972 could not be demonstrated to be related to either of the two early families who lived 150-250 years previously.

### **The Beginning of the Book of Mormon DNA Controversy**

In August of 1998, an Australian plant geneticist, Simon Southerton, suddenly concluded that he could no longer believe in the Book of Mormon because of what he claimed to be DNA evidence that the American Indians did not descend from Israelite ancestors. He had been reading population genetic studies which support an Asian, as opposed to an ancient Near Eastern origin for Native Americans and Polynesians. Southerton had previously been a missionary for the Church and was also a former bishop in the Church. Subsequently he has become a vocal opponent of the Church loudly and widely claiming that the Book of Mormon is strictly a fictitious invention composed and orchestrated by Joseph Smith—with no inspiration, no angels, no

revelation. His stand is summarized in his book *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005). He stands behind a strictly scientific rationale in support of his feelings. While there can be no question about his deeply held anti-Mormon leanings, we will learn that Simon Southerton's ability to interpret scientific studies is questionable.

### **The Enthusiasm of the “DNA” Anti-Mormons**

Since 1998 other anti-Mormons have jumped on the DNA bandwagon. In August of 2000 in Salt Lake City, Brent Lee Metcalfe, a Utah Web designer and the author or editor of several publications critical of fundamental Latter-day Saint beliefs, moderated a Sunstone symposium panel which considered the Book of Mormon in light of recent scientific discoveries concerning DNA. In his concluding remarks, Metcalfe alluded to a “Galileo event” that he saw “on the horizon.” By a “Galileo event” he was referring, of course, to the Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), whose astronomical discoveries contradicted the leadership of the Catholic Church in his day. His discoveries ultimately led to the replacement of an ancient religiophilosophical view of the cosmos by a modern scientific view. The previous view was that the earth was the center of the universe, and the sun revolves around the earth. Galileo discovered that the earth is not the center of the universe, and the earth revolves around the sun. Metcalfe explained that he was referring to “an event where the cognitive dissonance between science and religion becomes so severe that the religion abandons the tradition, acquiescing to science.” He had, he told the audience, been reading quite a few articles about population genetics, and his reading had spoken to him with startling clarity. “You do not have Middle Eastern, Near Eastern, influence among Native Americans,” Metcalfe declared. “It simply is not there.” Then, even growing somewhat emotional at one state, Metcalfe told of his own personal response to his reading. “I felt my heart start pounding. I felt uncomfortable. I didn't want to read it anymore.” Although he said that he disliked the term because of what he described as its “political baggage,” Metcalfe identified himself to his listeners as an “atheist.” That word, he told them, “would aptly describe where I am in relationship to God.” Nonetheless, he reported, he was surprised by his own reaction to what he had read:

All of a sudden I felt this discomfort for my family and friends, that we could be going down a road where, effectively, people like . . . myself could become the rule in Mormonism, and not the exception. Not only do I think a “Galileo event” is on the horizon—in many ways, if it opens our minds, I hope it is (Mark D. Thomas, *Digging in Cumorah: Reclaiming Book of Mormon Narratives* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999]).

Another self-styled expert in genetic population studies is Thomas W. Murphy, an anthropologist, college teacher, and anthropology department chair in the state of Washington. He is a member of the Church who is anxious to announce to anyone who

will listen how science has now definitively proven the Book of Mormon historically untenable. “Tom Murphy is the Galileo for Mormons,” Maxine Hanks, a former Latter-day Saint, told the *Los Angeles Times* (William Lobdell and Larry B. Stammer, “Mormon Scientist, Church Clash over DNA Test: Anthropologist May Be Ousted for Questioning Teachings about Native American Ancestry,” *Los Angeles Times*, 8 December 2002, A21). Some internet postings suggest that Murphy’s own students have called him “the Mormon Galileo,” and Murphy himself seems to have accepted that role. “The Mormon faith is going to survive one way or another,” he told the same reporters who had interviewed Maxine Hanks. “The Catholic Church survived Galileo, but they first had to admit they were wrong” (*Ibid.*).

The Book of Mormon is clearly an offense to Murphy. His comments on it have been anything but temperate, as a pair of examples should sufficiently illustrate: “Through publication of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith accomplished, via writing and representation, the same sort of erasure that Bishop Landa sought through brutality, torture, and consuming fire when he destroyed most of the Mayan codices that had survived the initial stages of the conquest” (“Laban’s Ghost: On Writing and Transgression,” *Dialogue* 30/2 [1997]: 118). Thus, Murphy metaphorically equates Joseph Smith with a Spanish Conquest torturer and book burner. At one point in Murphy’s anti-Mormon career, he was scheduled to come before a stake disciplinary council, but it was later postponed. After learning of the delay, Murphy sent an open letter to his supporters in which he declared:

The postponement of this disciplinary council is truly a victory for all those who favor an honest search for truth and are willing to speak out against the injustices of racism, sexism, homophobia, and anti-intellectualism. . . . The belief that American Indians came from Israel is paramount [sic—Murphy probably intended *tantamount*] to claiming the earth is flat. . . . Scientific evidence, to be outlined in future publications, likewise indicates the absurdity of the Book of Mormon’s claim that a dark skin is a curse from God for wickedness. . . . I sincerely hope that the conciliatory approach taken by my stake president means that the LDS Church is willing to consider the possibility that Lamanites may not be the principal ancestors of the American Indians, that a dark skin is not a curse from God, and that scholars may now openly discuss the Book of Mormon as nineteenth-century fiction.

Going far beyond his purported expertise on Amerindian DNA in a August 2003 *Sunstone* presentation in Salt Lake City, Murphy assaulted both the Church in general and Brigham Young University in particular for an allegedly “repressive social atmosphere,” “a stifling social atmosphere which is destructive to free inquiry and honest introspection,” as well as for “intellectual intimidation,” “character assassination,” and “ecclesiastical abuse” (“Simply Implausible: DNA and a Meso-American Setting for

the Book of Mormon,” *Dialogue* 36/4 [2003]:130). Appealing to the public’s confidence in forensic DNA profiling and demonstrating a basic lack of understanding of population genetics, Murphy announced: “The DNA evidence, the same type of evidence that they use in criminal court cases, clearly discredits the Book of Mormon. If Joseph Smith was [sic] being charged with fraud in a court of law today and the DNA evidence was there, the DNA evidence would, in a sense, implicate him in a fraud. In other words, the Book of Mormon would not stand up in a court of law today (DNA vs. the Book of Mormon, videocassette [Brigham City, Utah: Living Hope Ministries], 2003).

One Southern Baptist pastor Dennis A. Wright characterized Murphy as a devoutly pious laboratory DNA researcher shocked by his own cutting-edge results and tragically persecuted by an ecclesiastical hierarchy that fears the truth. It would be closer to the truth to view him as an inactive, apostate Mormon and an armchair consumer of articles published by others on DNA research (“DNA vs. the Book of Mormon,” *Evangel* 50/5 [2003]:2). Merely surveying several articles on the subject of DNA does not an expert make.

Dr. Michael Whiting, a respected DNA researcher at Brigham Young University has addressed the issue of Murphy’s being “the Galileo of Mormonism”: “It’s an inappropriate comparison,” he told the *Los Angeles Times*. “The difference is Galileo got the science right. I don’t think Murphy has” (as cited in Lobdell and Stammer, “Mormon Scientist, Church Clash over DNA Test”).

In the remainder of this article, we will evaluate the question of whether or not Southerton and his fellow anti-Mormons are justified in their claims against the Book of Mormon.

### **The Essential Questions**

Now, what of the fact that Amerindians (Native Indians from North, Central, and South America) have haplotypes that are most commonly found today in Asia and not as much in the Near East? Should this be a cause of doubt among the Latter-day Saints that the Book of Mormon is an authentic ancient document? Is there a type of genetic pattern, a haplotype, which if found among the Amerindians today would offer positive evidence of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon? These questions may be quite easily and simply answered.

Regardless of the type of mitochondrial DNA or the type of Y chromosome DNA we find among today’s Amerindians, it would not offer significant evidence for or against the truth of the Book of Mormon as an authentic ancient record. This seems a surprising conclusion. Why is this so? Let us consider the several important reasons.

## **Reasons Why the Genetic Patterns Found Among Today's Amerindians Have Little Relevance to the Authenticity of the Book of Mormon**

**Mutations.** Genetic mutations are changes in the nucleotide sequences in genes that occur spontaneously and often randomly. Mutations are known to occur in all DNA. This produces a change called "genetic drift." By this process an individual may lose or change the genetic markers present on his mitochondrial or Y chromosome DNA that, before the mutation, demonstrated his association with a specific group.

**Bottlenecks.** In a given haplogroup, there are limitations to the persistence of the characteristic pattern of its mitochondrial DNA and Y chromosome DNA. For example, mothers pass their mitochondrial DNA haplotype on to their sons and daughters. However, only daughters hold the potential to further perpetuate this name by having their own daughters. A similar principle holds true for the Y chromosome, which persists through generations only by father-to-son transmission. If there is a generation or a family with a minimal number of children or with no children of the appropriate sex, then the family haplotype pattern may be quickly erased by nature. This is known as a genetic bottleneck. Once a specific haplotype is lost, it leaves no record of ever having existed. Indeed, over time, the fate of most mitochondrial DNA and Y chromosomal DNA lineages is extinction through bottlenecks. Hence, as one's ancestors fade into the remote past, there is an ever-increasing chance that those ancestors will become totally irrelevant in the genetic sense in that they leave no trace in the genetic characteristics (the genome) of their descendants of today.

**Diluted Blood.** Intuitively, it is easy to sense the importance of the *size* of the original ancestral reference population. If one were to begin, even in the ancient past with a large population of genetically uniform individuals, then the likelihood of their haplotype pattern's persisting through the centuries and being identifiable today would be reasonably high, particularly if that population did not mix with other populations by intermarriage. But what if only a handful of individuals with a distinct haplotype name were injected into a large population? And what if the handful of people intermarried and mixed with the large population? Would it be more difficult to identify the distinct haplotype of that small group of people in the population today? Indeed it would be.

Did this happen to the Lehites? We know that both the Nephite and Mulekite groups were relatively small. And, was there mixing by intermarriage of the Book of Mormon immigrants with native peoples? Several lines of evidence in the Book of Mormon suggest strongly there was. One of the most telling passages in the record of Nephi relates the confrontation of Sherem and Jacob. By the time Sherem showed up in the first Nephite settlement, the maximum population that could have resulted from the most rapid conceivable natural descent from Nephi and his fellow settlers would not have exceeded a few dozen adults. Yet Sherem had never met Jacob, the chief Nephite priest (see Jacob 7:1-26), and he had come from some other settlement. Questions about population actually arise still earlier in the story. We find Nephi setting

out to build a temple when his adult male relatives in the little colony in the land of Nephi apparently would have numbered only three: Nephi, Sam, and Zoram (plus Jacob and Joseph if they were old enough). So few men could not have put up much of a temple. Furthermore, what kind of wars could the group have fought against the Lamanites with the miniscule “army” that the handful of immigrants could have mustered at the end of 25 years in the land (see 2 Nephi 5:34)? Without increases in the early population of the two factions (Nephites and Lamanites), that can only be explained by the accretion of people from a resident population, reference to “wars” could not be a significant reality.

We who are confident of the historicity of the Book of Mormon are assured from these incidents and other textual references that substantial numbers of local “native” residents had joined with the immigrant parties by intermarriage. If we had the plates of Nephi that reported the more historical part of their story (the 116 pages of lost manuscript), perhaps we would find on them explicit information about such contacts with resident populations.

Other statements in the Book of Mormon also indicate that the writers were familiar with, rather than surprised by, the idea of non-Israelites living among the Nephites. The only example I will cite is when Alma visited the city of Ammonihah and Amulek introduced himself with the words, “I am a Nephite” (Alma 8:20). Since the city was nominally under Nephite rule (see Alma 8:11-12, 24) and was a part of the land of Zarahemla at the time, Amulek’s statement seems nonsensical, unless many, perhaps most, of the people in the land of Ammonihah did not consider themselves to be Nephites, by whatever criteria. Intuitively, it is easy to see why a small group introduced into a large existing population will eventually lapse into genetic oblivion by the process of dilution in addition to mutation and bottlenecks.

Preservation of a constant haplotype in a relatively small group of people would require a policy that strictly forbade intermarrying outside the small group. This would solve the problem of dilution but not the problem of mutations or bottlenecks. But this “no intermarrying” policy would pose another threat to the progeny of the small group because of otherwise silent (recessive) negative genetic characteristics made overt through inbreeding. Generally small family-associated groups, without outside genetic contribution, digress to extinction because recessive, disease-associated genes become prevalent among their descendants. A policy of no intermarrying with an outside population would surely be fatal to the identity of that small group.

It is well demonstrated that all of these changes—mutations, bottlenecks, and blood dilution occur over time. They are especially pertinent when scientists are trying to draw a connection between a present-day population and a population in the ancient past. If Icelandic descendants of documented ancestors of 250 years ago cannot be shown to have mitochondrial and Y chromosome DNA markers that were present in those ancestors, then the possibility certainly exists that the genetic signatures of

people reported in the Book of Mormon to have migrated to the Americas over 2600 years ago would not be detectable in the population today.

**Few, if any, of the native Amerindian inhabitants of North America descended from Nephite/Lamanite ancestors.** Let us say that we wished to perform DNA studies on a certain people today that were most likely to be descendants of the Book of Mormon peoples? Which group of people would we choose? Are all of the Amerindians of today Book of Mormon descendants? Are any of them? And if there are some, which are they?

Latter-day Saints plausibly suppose that at least a few Nephite/Lamanite (Israelite) genes could have spread out from the Mesoamerican core, but archaeologists cannot presently identify precisely any of other peoples as being clearly “Book of Mormon peoples.”

In the early 20th century, the concept developed and was widely accepted among anthropologists that all American Indians formed a monolithic “race” whose ancestors came from northern Asia. This extreme view is no longer held, and it has become clear that substantial variation exists among so-called Native Americans. Among all of the native Indian peoples of North and South America, many ethnic origins are evident, especially in the clay figurines of these people which have been discovered. Some specific ethnicities which are obvious in these carved likenesses include: African blacks, Southeast Asians, Chinese, perhaps Koreans, possibly Japanese, and Mediterranean people. Of special interest is a whole class of “Semitic” or “Jewish” or “Uncle Sam” faces, so called by some archaeologists or art historians because of the large aquiline noses and beards. Beards are generally sparse or absent among most American Indian groups.

**The specific haplotype that existed among the members of the families of Lehi and Ishmael is completely unknown.** One of the great difficulties for those expecting Native Americans to appear, from a genetic sense, as ancient Near Eastern populations is that the genetic characteristics of these ancient Near Eastern populations remain unknown. While the DNA of the people of present-day Israel can easily be determined, there exists no known “ancient israelite-like DNA.”

Father Lehi found on the plates of brass recovered from Laban a genealogy of his fathers where he learned that he was a descendant of ancient Joseph, the son of Jacob or Israel (1 Nephi 5:14), specifically from the tribe of Manasseh (Alma 10:3). In the Church, it has long been held that Ishmael’s ancestry also went back to Ephraim, the son of Joseph. This tradition is based on a discourse delivered by an apostle, Elder Erastus Snow, in the Logan tabernacle in Logan, Utah, on May 6, 1882. Elder Snow said, “The Prophet Joseph informed us that the record of Lehi was contained on the 116 pages that were first translated and subsequently stolen, and of which an abridgment is given us in the first Book of Nephi [1 Nephi chapters 1 through 8], which is the record of Nephi individually, he himself being of the lineage of Manasseh; but that Ishmael was of

the lineage of Ephraim, and that his sons [had] married into Lehi's family, and Lehi's sons married Ishmael's daughters" (*JD*, 23:184). So perhaps we might expect to find genetic material among the Native Indians resembling that of the tribe of Joseph. But wait just a moment! A couple of questions seem most pertinent here.

1. First, would the haplotypes of Lehi and Ishmael have pervaded the Book of Mormon lands? For one thing we know nothing about the haplotypes of Sariah, and that of the wife of Ishmael. And what about the haplotypes of the wives of the two sons of Ishmael and the haplotype of Zoram? Also there were other migrations into the Book of Mormon story. Mulek is mentioned in Helaman 8:21 as a son of Zedekiah who was king of Judah when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians (2 Kings 25:7). But what about the haplotypes of those who brought Mulek to the New World? Who were they? Some have suggested that likely candidates for those who brought Mulek to the New World by ship may have been the Phoenicians. What about them? What was their haplotype? The Jaredites descended from multiple families who were led by the Lord from the Tower of Babel to the Promised Land (Ether 1:33). Might they have brought a few other haplotypes entirely unrelated to the other immigrants to the Promised Land?

We have already mentioned the likelihood that whatever haplotype Lehi and his extended family brought into the New World might have been greatly diluted by the large indigenous population of the previous immigrants.

2. Another pertinent question is whether or not the haplotype of the tribe of Joseph is known. The fact is that it is not. And what might have happened to that haplotype during the twelve hundred or so years between the time of ancient Joseph and that of father Lehi? Was there an admixture with other groups, say the Egyptians? And what about the haplotype of the tribal (tribe of Judah) Jews that lived in Jerusalem? Was it the same as that of Lehi and Ishmael? We are therefore left without a reference haplotype against which to compare the Amerindians of today. Then, we have pointed out that even if we had the specific haplotype of Lehi and Ishmael, would it have persisted though twenty-six centuries of mutations, bottlenecks, and intermarrings?

A successful effort to track an ancient population and elaborate its present-day correlates requires the comparison of "archaeologically well-defined ancient populations in an archaeological context representative of the groups intended for comparison. Even in instances in which comparative ancient and contemporary data exist, specific and detailed conclusions are often difficult to construct. For example, much work has been done in the American Southwest toward a general reconstruction of ancient haplogroup frequencies, using both modern and ancient data. These studies demonstrate continuity in pre-Columbian haplogroup patterns in North America as far back as the time of Christ; however, patterns before this date are uncertain" (see Malhi et al., "Structure of Diversity," 906, and references therein). The challenges from an archaeological standpoint of clearly defining a reference population are immense: "Distribution, burial patterns, time intervals, preservation, and the cultural context of

ancient human remains are not always clear. In addition, the ideal of obtaining samples from a continuous biological inbreeding population is rarely, if ever, met. However, consistent origins, reliable dating methods, and proper archaeological context indicate that the sample set is representative of the intended population. Once this information is ensured, an arduous and lengthy task remains to extract accurate and meaningful information from ancient human remains. Only those experienced with ancient DNA analyses appreciate these challenges” (Frederika A. Kaestle and K. Ann Horsburgh, “Ancient DNA in Anthropology,” *Yearbook of Physical Anthropology* 45 [2002]: 92-130).

It has often been asserted by anti-Mormons: “The American Indians clearly did not descend from Hebrews.” As for the category “Hebrews,” there is absolutely no significant information which can be used to characterize ancient “Hebrews” in terms of DNA. There thus exists no archaeologically well-defined population representative of Lehi and Ishmael. There is no clearly defined reference population.

## **Conclusion**

The Book of Mormon is an authentic ancient record the contents of which were made available to the prophet Joseph Smith by divine miraculous intervention. We know this by literally a freight load of evidences, both spiritual and secular. I have said many times, and still maintain that the only people who do not believe in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon are those who don’t know enough about it. Based on this premise, I would conclude that Southerton, Metcalfe, Murphy—though they are certainly self-styled intellectuals—are deficient not only in their understanding of the particulars of DNA population studies, but they are also lacking in knowledge of the Book of Mormon itself and the corroborative evidences of the book now available. For those who have studied the Book of Mormon in depth, their faith easily lifts them above the sophistry of the book’s critics.

Techniques for evaluating the movement of ancient populations have come and gone including lexicostatistics (“glottochronology”) and blood typing. Thus far the discipline of DNA population studies is in an early state of its development. Major challenges exist in the reliability of the technique. Whether or not those challenges spell the inevitable demise of the discipline remain to be seen. It is certain today, however, that the science can neither confirm or negate the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, and the chances are slim that it will be able to do either in the future.

Nothing found in the Book of Mormon precludes an Asian ancestry for Native Americans. This does not mean that genetic markers of an ancient Near Eastern origin will never be found in the genetic record of some Native Americans. However, there are compelling reasons to expect and accept their absence. There will always be those who must have every detail before them prior to any acceptance of truth. This view always generates a cascade of doubt that ends in an appeal to the secular judge of science. However, in this particular instance, as amply outlined above, the insistence

that the haplotypes of small groups from the ancient Near East must absolutely be present in the current genetic record of Native Americans, as a means of testing the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, is an unrealistic expectation.

I must conclude with a note of sympathy for the likes of Simon Southerton. A review of his works and directions reveals an obviously bitter estrangement from a religion he cannot now leave alone. When the dust finally settles on this mortal existence, he will realize that he has been wrong, which realization will be especially poignant and painful in the face of such overwhelming and readily available present-day evidence of the Book of Mormon's authenticity. Dr. Henry Eyring wrote, pertinently: "I have trouble understanding why people drift away from the Church. . . . There are all kinds of contradictions that I don't understand, but I find the same kind of contradictions in science, and I haven't decided to apostatize from science" (*Reflections of a Scientist*, 47).

## B. H. Roberts' Questions about the Book of Mormon

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Some contemporary members of the Church have “heard rumors” that one of the nearly legendary general authorities of the Church, Elder B. H. Roberts (1857–1933), may have had some doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. In this chapter I will attempt tell the real story of Elder Roberts’ alleged misgivings. As resources for this chapter, I am indebted to the following authors and their books and articles: (1) Richard C. Roberts’ article “View of the Hebrews” in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*; (2) *Roberts: Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Brigham D. Madsen, ed., Urbana, Illinois, 1985); (3) *B. H. Roberts: His Final Decade* (Truman G. Madsen, comp., Provo, Utah, 1985); and (4) John W. Welch’s article “B. H. Roberts: Seeker After Truth” (*Ensign* 16 [March 1986]:56-62).

This story actually began with a book titled *View of the Hebrews* written by Ethan Smith (no relation to the prophet Joseph), a pastor in the Congregational Church, in 1823 in Poultney, Vermont. A second enlarged edition was published in 1825. At one point in our church history, it was suggested by critics of the Church that the Book of Mormon was not, in fact, an authentic ancient document. Rather, it was written by Joseph Smith himself who borrowed heavily from Ethan Smith’s book.

Let us quickly lay to rest the idea that Smith’s book contributed in any way to the Book of Mormon. Substantial evidence favors the position that there is little in common between the ideas and statements in *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon. The book combines scriptural citations and reports from various observers among American Indians and Jews to support the claim that the Indians were the descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel. It is one of several books reflecting the popular fascination at the time of Joseph Smith with the question of Indian origins. Otherwise, there are no similarities.

The full title of the 1825 edition is *View of the Hebrews; or the Tribes of Israel in America. Exhibiting the Destruction of Jerusalem; the Certain Restoration of Judah and Israel; the Present State of Judah and Israel; and an Address of the Prophet Isaiah to the United States Relative to Their Restoration.*

The first chapter deals with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the Romans, as referred to in scriptural prophecy and historical sources. The second chapter tells of the literal expulsion of the ten tribes of Israel between 732 and 722 BC and the establishment of the kingdom of Judah. It also maintains that the restoration of both of these kingdoms will be literal, and it quotes heavily from Isaiah. The third chapter summarizes the scattered condition of Israel in 1823. It also argues that the natives of America are “the descendants of Israel” and propounds that all pre-Columbian Americans had one origin, that their language appears originally to have been Hebrew, that they had an ark of the covenant, that they practiced circumcision,

that they acknowledged one and only one God, that their tribal structure was similar to Hebrew organization, that they had cities of refuge, and that they manifest a variety of Hebraic traits of prophetic character and tradition. The fourth chapter emphasizes the restoration of Israel, quoting from Isaiah and using Isaiah chapter 18 to create an "Address" to the United States to save Israel. In conclusion, Ethan Smith pleads that the "suppliants of God in the West" be faithful and helpful in bringing scattered Israel "to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the Mount Zion."

Alleged relationships of *View of the Hebrews* to the Book of Mormon have attracted interest periodically through the years. The book was published in the county in Vermont just west of Windsor County, Vermont, where Joseph Smith was born and lived from 1805 to 1811. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that Joseph Smith ever knew anything about this book. Detractors have pointed to several "parallels" between the two books, but others point to numerous "un-parallels."

I. Woodbridge Riley in 1902 was the first author to suggest a relationship between *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon (*The Founder of Mormonism*, New York, 1902, 124-26). In 1921 LDS Church authorities were asked to reply to questions posed by a Mr. Couch of Washington, D.C., regarding Native American origins, linguistics, technology, and archaeology. B. H. Roberts, a member of the First Quorum of Seventy, was assigned to undertake a study of Couch's issues. He received some assistance from a committee of other general authorities. Roberts' first report, in December 1921, was a 145 page paper entitled "Book of Mormon Difficulties." However, he was not satisfied with that work and later delved more deeply into other critical questions about Book of Mormon origins, which led him to a major analysis of *View of the Hebrews*.

Around March-May 1922, Roberts completed a 291 page document, "A Book of Mormon Study," and an eighteen-point summary entitled "A Parallel." In the "Study" Roberts looked candidly at the possibility that Joseph Smith could have been acquainted with Ethan Smith's book and could have used it as a source of the structure and some ideas in the Book of Mormon. He cited some twenty-six similarities between the two books. In all his writings, Roberts did not draw any conclusions that Joseph Smith used Ethan Smith's work to write the Book of Mormon, but rather posed questions that believers in the Book of Mormon should be aware of and for which they ought to continue to search for answers. Roberts' faith in the Book of Mormon, as divinely revealed scripture, seems to have been unshaken by his studies.

Roberts' papers were never published during his lifetime. Following his death in 1933, his family donated them to the University of Utah in 1979 and 1981. Since that time, they have been available for review. They were published in 1985. This again stirred an interest in the relationship of *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon, especially since the editorial "Introduction" concluded that "the record is mixed" as to whether Roberts kept his faith in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon after making

his studies. Subsequent research, however, strongly indicates that Roberts remained committed to the full claims of the origin and doctrine of the Book of Mormon to the end of his life.

I will reproduced here a helpful article by John W. Welch, a Professor of Law at the Brigham Young University College of Law and a prolific writer on scriptural and church history topics. His article is referenced above.

I first seriously encountered the writings of Elder B. H. Roberts of the First Council of the Seventy (1857–1933) when I was a college student. I was impressed by the stimulating analysis of LDS religious concepts in his *Seventy's Course in Theology* (1907–1919). I was caught up by the personally passionate historical prose in his *Missouri Persecutions* (1900), *The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo* (1900), and in his *Comprehensive History of the Church* (1930). There was fire-power and electrifying conviction in his words. He called his faith “unshakable.”

Recently, that faith has been drawn into question in the minds of some people. This is because of a set of papers about the Book of Mormon that B. H. Roberts wrote in 1922. In these papers, Elder Roberts bluntly lists many Book of Mormon “problems” and raises many arguments that he contemplated could be made against the Book of Mormon. As I read these papers, it became apparent that many people would misunderstand. For those who may be interested, here are the questions I think some people may ask about Elder Roberts’ Book of Mormon studies, and here are answers which recent research now provides [I have added the numbers to these questions].

1. What kind of a person was B. H. Roberts? He was fiercely loyal to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He had strong personal opinions, and on most occasions was outspoken and bluntly forthright.

All his life, B. H. Roberts sought after truth—spiritually and intellectually. For Brother Roberts—president of the Eastern States Mission from 1922 to 1927 and one of the seven presidents of the Seventy from 1888 until his death in 1933—the search for truth was an all-consuming passion. He faced historical facts fearlessly. He confronted scientific theories confidently. He squared off in debate spontaneously.

2. Did B. H. Roberts think scientific evidence could prove or disprove the Book of Mormon? No. He felt that scientific evidence was interesting and significant, but not infallible or controlling. Elder Roberts uncompromisingly recognized and openly acknowledged the Holy Ghost as the teacher of all truth. As he said in 1909:

This [power of the Holy Ghost] must ever be the chief source of evidence for the truth of the Book of Mormon. All other evidence is secondary to this, the primary and infallible. No arrangement of evidence, however skillfully ordered; no argument, however adroitly made, can ever take its place; for this witness of the Holy Spirit to the soul of man for the truth of the Nephite volume of scripture, is God’s evidence to the truth; and

will ever be the chief reliance of those who accept the Book of Mormon, and expect to see its acceptance extended throughout the world.

Thus, he was not afraid to ask questions about the Book of Mormon or anything else. "I am taking the position that our faith is not only unshaken but unshakable in the Book of Mormon, and therefore we can look without fear upon all that can be said against it," Elder Roberts wrote upon completion of his Book of Mormon studies.

3. Did B. H. Roberts think he had all the answers? Brother Roberts knew that he had certain answers to many historical, scientific, and gospel questions. He also knew that he did not have them all. A rational person will not seek more truth if he thinks he already has it all. Elder Roberts continued exploring, reading, thinking, and writing books, articles, tracts and pamphlets until he died in September 1933 at the age of seventy-six.

His knowledge about the Book of Mormon was no different. He was one of the first people ever to make a scholarly study of the Book of Mormon. His exploratory investigations found many things in the Book of Mormon which he considered "master strokes of philosophy" (as he writes in 1928) and sure signs of "divine origin" (as he speaks in 1932). Still, he knew that there were questions for which he had no answers. Yet he "most humbly prayed" and "most anxiously" awaited the "further development of knowledge that will make it possible for us to give a reasonable answer to those who question us concerning [these] matters" (as he wrote in 1921).

4. How long have B. H. Roberts' papers on Book of Mormon "difficulties" been around? The papers, most of which were never given by Elder Roberts to anyone, have been in the hands of his family. They were donated to the University of Utah in 1979 and 1981, since which time copies have been made available.

How have critics of the Church reacted to these papers? For critics of the Book of Mormon, Roberts' notes have appeared to be a bonanza. Here is one of the most intellectual General Authorities of his day seeming to expose all the evidentiary weaknesses of his own case. It is like a military officer writing an intelligence report telling the enemy where his own troops are most vulnerable. In his *Study*, Brother Roberts is blunt. He states a case against the Book of Mormon in tough terms. It is clear that Elder Roberts recognizes there may be no answers to some of his hard questions, but that does not deter him from asking the questions.

5. Why did Elder Roberts write such things? First, the project grew out of committee assignments Elder Roberts was given in 1921 by Elder James E. Talmage and President Heber J. Grant. The committee was asked to respond to several questions about Book of Mormon archaeology. B. H. Roberts pursued the assignment vigorously.

Second, Elder Roberts loved to debate. He knew how to argue a case toe-to-toe and believed that much good could emerge. Even as a mission president, B. H. Roberts, who was an outspoken character all his life, would dress up in street clothes

and go out to debate on the street corners of New York. When he saw unresolved problems, he would try to state those problems as clearly and as strongly as possible, then pursue the controversy.

Third, he was loyal. He wanted to help the Church wherever he could. He knew that future generations would probably face these issues and he wanted them to be prepared. In 1927 he said of his *Study*, “Such a question as that may possibly arise some day, and if it does, it would be greatly to the advantage of our future Defenders of the Faith, if they had in hand a thorough digest of the subject matter.” To have presented these issues any less forcefully or dramatically would have been uncharacteristic of Brother Roberts.

6. What is Elder Roberts’ “Study of the Book of Mormon”? The *Study* is twenty typewritten chapters (each about fifteen pages long). The first fourteen chapters discuss similarities between the Book of Mormon and a book by Ethan Smith published in Vermont in 1823 (second edition in 1825) entitled *View of the Hebrews or the Tribes of Israel in America*. The last six chapters consider the proposition that the Book of Mormon is of human rather than divine origin.

The *Study* is sometimes confused with a shorter, 145-page paper entitled “Book of Mormon Difficulties” which is what B. H. Roberts initially wrote by way of committee assignment from Elder James E. Talmage in 1921. In that paper, B. H. Roberts pointed out the difficulties he ran into as he was responding to five questions asked about the Book of Mormon by a Mr. Couch from Washington, D.C. Brother Roberts found in his research that the prevailing scientific theories about Indian origins and pre-Columbian fauna, flora, and technology differed from what he believed about such things.

7. Do we know exactly when B. H. Roberts wrote the second work, “Study of the Book of Mormon”? Yes. The first page of the original typescript says that the *Study* was written thirteen years “to be exact” after the publication of *New Witnesses for God* (which appeared in 1909). Due to this and several other telltale changes Roberts made on the typescript, we can date the typing of the *Study* to before he left to serve as mission president in New York on 29 May 1922. Most of his proofreading changes were made before that time as well. This means—contrary to assertions some people have made—that Elder Roberts did not write the *Study* during his mission presidency.

8. Did Brother Roberts consider the *Study* a finished piece? No. He never submitted it to church authorities and, uncharacteristically, only proofread it lightly.

9. What did B. H. Roberts think of the *Study*? In 1932 he called it an “awful” book. He said that he had not written it for publication.

10. Did Elder Roberts draw any conclusions from the *Study*? No. He said in an unsent cover letter accompanying the *Study*, “I do not say my conclusions, for they are undrawn. . . . What is herein set forth does not represent any conclusions of mine.” Throughout the *Study* Elder Roberts asks questions. They are tough rhetorical questions, but still they are just questions, not assertions nor conclusions. They are

questions he expects opponents to be asking. To these he puzzles: "What shall our answer be?" "What is to be our general standing before the enlightened opinion of mankind?" These problems he calls "legitimate queries." He says they would be powerful weapons "in the hands of a skillful opponent," and aimed to blunt them by paying attention to them.

11. Did Elder Roberts worry that people would misunderstand his *Study*? Yes. He wrote, "Let me say once for all, so as to avoid what might otherwise call for repeated explanation, that what is herein set forth does not represent any conclusions of mine."

12. Why in his *Study* does Elder Roberts not suggest any answers to the problems he is raising? The *Study* is not an answer book. It is a question book. Many of the questions he had answered before and others he would answer in the future. For example, he raises the objection that the small party of Nephites could not possibly have constructed a temple like the large and opulent temple of Solomon. Brother Roberts had already answered that question in 1909.

As another example, he poses the question of whether Joseph Smith's powers of imagination were sufficient to have written the Book of Mormon. Elder Roberts regularly preached in the 1930s that the "perfect" sacrament prayers in Moroni 4–5 are evidence that the Book of Mormon was not written by Joseph Smith.

Some of the questions require no answer, such as the bogus suggestion that Joseph Smith got the name "Ether" from the name "Ethan Smith." Elder Roberts himself says in the *Study*, "Do not take the idea too seriously."

13. How careful was B. H. Roberts in this research? Not very. This particular research shows signs of haste and remained unfinished. In fact, the *Study* was written inside of a few months. Much of it consists of long quotes from other sources, given with little analysis. Even Elder Roberts' reading of the Book of Mormon was not always as careful as it could have been. Several of his problems arise because of assumptions he has made about the Book of Mormon. For example, Brother Roberts assumed that the lands of the Book of Mormon were all relatively flat. He apparently overlooked many contrary statements, such as Alma 47:9, which speaks of a large mountain and valley.

14. Would B. H. Roberts feel embarrassed to know that some of his research was incomplete or flawed? Absolutely not. He wrote that "the generations who succeed us in unfolding in a larger way some of the yet unlearned truths of the Gospel, will find that we have had some misconceptions and made some wrong deductions in our day and time. The book of knowledge is never a sealed book. It is never 'completed and forever closed;' rather it is an eternally open book, in which one may go on constantly discovering new truths and modifying our knowledge of old ones." This observation pertains equally today to our continuing efforts to know the Book of Mormon better, both through study and also by faith.

15. Did the *Study* change Elder Roberts' use of the Book of Mormon? No. Before and after the *Study* he used the Book of Mormon as the focus of his missionary

programs. He voluntarily chose to speak on Book of Mormon subjects again and again in conferences and in the media. Over fifty-six major talks or statements were made by B. H. Roberts after the *Study* in which he affirms his faith in the Book of Mormon. After the *Study*, Elder Roberts may have taken less interest in archaeology and placed more emphasis on the doctrinal and philosophical strengths of the Book of Mormon, but in no way did he ever doubt or reject the historicity of this “ancient American volume of scripture,” as he called it on many occasions.

16. Did Elder Roberts, perhaps knowing that his *Study* would be troublesome to people, affirm his testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon after he wrote the *Study*? He wrote in May 1922 of “the tremendous truth” of the Book of Mormon. He said in 1924 that the Saints should build upon the Book of Mormon “wherein is no darkness or doubt.” He spoke at general conference in April 1928 of the “hundred more such glorious things that have come to the world in that book to enlighten the children of men.” He speaks repeatedly of the historicity of the Book.

Nevertheless, Brother Roberts knew that he had been abrasive and challenging at times during his many years of service to the Church. At October general conference, 1929, Elder Roberts may have had the *Book of Mormon Study* in mind when he remarked:

I happened to be reminded today that next April it will be fifty years since I commenced my public ministry in the Church. . . . I am mentioning some of these things in order that my profession of faith that I have made here today may be supported by the evidence of steady, persistent effort on my part to develop and to advocate and to establish this great work of God.

But this is my object, and my object alone; that after bearing testimony to the fundamental things of this work, and my confidence in it, I hope that if anywhere along the line I have caused any of you to doubt my faith in this work, then let this testimony and my indicated life’s work be a correction of it. I make reference to these personal things in fifty years of service so that you may know that my testimony has some sanctions for it in the life of service I have given to the cause.

17. Is it possible that B. H. Roberts had a faithful facade which he wore in public but in private was a skeptical doubter? If Elder Roberts was anything, he was outspoken and honest. It is extremely difficult to believe that he was two-faced. In his April 1928 general conference talk, Elder Roberts emotionally spoke of the Book of Mormon and of the appearance of the resurrected Jesus Christ among the Nephites gathered at the temple in Bountiful. He said: “And now, O Lord Jesus, if thou couldst but come into the consciousness of our souls this day, as thou didst come into the vision of the ancient Nephites in the Land of Bountiful, we would join their great song of praise and worship, saying—‘Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most

High God!' And we, like them, would fall down at the feet of Jesus and worship him this Easter day! Amen." In powerful statements like this one, Elder Roberts revealed his deep-felt faith in the Book of Mormon.

18. Did B. H. Roberts ever say anything after 1922 that could lead someone to think that he had lost faith in the Book of Mormon? Yes, on one known occasion. Elder Roberts had a conversation with Wesley Lloyd, one of his former missionaries, in Salt Lake on 7 August 1933, six weeks before his death. He began this conversation, if reported correctly by Brother Lloyd, complaining that his unpublished book *The Way, The Truth, The Life* had been subjected to "severe criticism" and rejected by the Brethren. He thought he had been personally attacked. He then took issue with a new church policy of not sending missionaries into the field without financial backing. He next complained about Brigham Young. Finally, he turned to the Book of Mormon, complaining that back in 1922 a "crisis had arisen where revelation was necessary" but that no answer had been forthcoming.

No doubt, Brother Roberts voiced some complaints that day. The important thing is that he did not resign his church position as he said he might do. He did not cease working on his missionary correspondence course. He did not give up on the Church. And he did not give up on the Book of Mormon. These supposed complaints are not representative of his more fundamental attitudes and beliefs.

In actual fact, the Wesley Lloyd journal is inaccurate and not reliable in many factual respects. Brother Lloyd says that Roberts "shifted his base on the Book of Mormon." Shifting bases, however, does not mean abandoning. In reality, we know how Elder Roberts shifted: In his later years, B. H. Roberts found his doctrinal approach of the Book of Mormon's divinity more satisfying. Brother Lloyd says that Elder Roberts thought that the Book of Mormon was in need of "the more bolstering." Needing "more" bolstering was always B. H. Roberts' position.

It may also be relevant that Elder Roberts, at seventy-six, was in ill health. He had lost a foot, spent several months near death's door in hospitals, and suffered from the advanced stages of the diabetes that would kill him a few weeks later. Undoubtedly, Elder Roberts also felt a great loss due to the death of Elder James Talmage on 27 July 1933, about a week before this conversation with Lloyd.

These facts help place in context what the old fighter was feeling that day as he conversed with his young friend. After that conversation, Elder Roberts went to Chicago to represent the Church at a world conference of religious leaders. He also told Jack Christensen (another of his missionaries), sometime around 1 September 1933, "Ethan Smith played no part in the formation of the Book of Mormon. You accept Joseph Smith and all the scriptures!"

19. Is it necessary for members of the Church today to read B. H. Roberts' *Study* to be up to date on Book of Mormon studies? No. In fact, the *Study* is now to a considerable extent out of date. Most of his questions have since found answers.

The Study marks a beginning stage in the history of Book of Mormon studies. With Roberts, students of the Book of Mormon began to think more deeply about shallow and inadequate archaeological explanations or “proofs” of the Book of Mormon. With Roberts, scholars like Elder John A. Widtsoe, and a few years later Hugh Nibley and Sidney Sperry, began to expand our approaches to the study of the Book of Mormon.

What were Elder Roberts’ main questions? Elder Roberts raised questions in five areas.

1. He found that the prevailing theory in the 1920s about the origin of the American Indian was that they all came long ago over the Bering Strait, not across the sea.

2. He pointed out the apparent absence of a credible relationship of the Book of Mormon account to the archaeology of the 1920s.

On these first two matters, we, along with science, still await definitive answers. As President Anthony W. Ivins, a counselor to President Heber J. Grant, said in general conference, April, 1929, “Where was the City of Zarahemla? . . . It does not make any difference to us. There has never been anything yet set forth that definitely settles that question. So the Church says we are just waiting until we discover the truth. All kinds of theories have been advanced.” Plausible answers, however, have recently been developed. One such scientific and scholarly theory recently advanced is John L. Sorenson’s *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*. For example, in B. H. Roberts’ day there was no evidence of pre-Columbian domesticated barley in the Americas; today there is.

3. Elder Roberts pointed out certain seemingly absurd or erroneous passages in the Book of Mormon.

4. He suggested similarities between Book of Mormon conversion stories and early nineteenth-century spiritual experiences.

Today, many of these alleged absurdities, on closer examination, turn out to be strengths rather than weaknesses. For example, Alma 46 says that Captain Moroni waved the “rent” of his coat in the air. This seems impossible in English, since one cannot wave the “tear.” But in Hebrew the expression is a natural one. The similarity between the Nephites’ falling down during King Benjamin’s speech and Methodists falling down at revival meetings in Joseph Smith’s day is superficial. More extensive are the similarities between King Benjamin’s speech and ancient Israelite festival and coronation celebrations.

5. B. H. Roberts displayed a list of twenty-six purported “parallels” between the Book of Mormon and a book written in 1823 (second edition 1825). That book, *View of the Hebrews* (VH), argues that the American Indians were descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel (a theory which Elder Roberts rightly wrote in 1932 is not the theory of the Book of Mormon). Since the alleged points of contact between VH and the Book of

Mormon are scattered throughout *VH* and in some cases are supposedly quite specific, the hypothesis that Joseph Smith directly relied on *VH* becomes plausible only if one assumes that Joseph Smith knew *VH* quite well and accepted it as correct. If this were so, then he should have followed it—or at least not contradicted it—on its major points. But this does not turn out to be the case. Consider the following “unparallels”:

a. *VH* begins with a chapter on the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. It has nothing to say, however, about the much earlier destruction of Jerusalem in Lehi’s day by the Babylonians.

b. Chapter 3 comprises most of *VH*. It produces numerous “distinguished Hebraisms” as “proof” that the American Indians are Israelites. But few of these points are found in the Book of Mormon, as one would expect if Joseph Smith were using *VH* or trying to make his book persuasive. For example: *VH* asserts repeatedly that the Ten Tribes came to America via the Bering Strait, which they crossed on “dry land.” According to *VH*, this opinion is unquestionable, supported by all the authorities. From there *VH* documents that the Israelites spread from north to east and then to the south at a very late date. These are critical points for *VH*, in whose view Amos 8:11–12 prophesies that the tribes would go from the north to the east. Significant population migrations in the Book of Mormon, however, follow a crossing of the ocean and then always move from south to north.

c. *VH* reports that the Indians are Israelites because they use the word “Hallelujah.” Here is one of *VH*’s favorite proofs, a dead give-away that the Indians are Israelites. Yet this word is not used in the Book of Mormon.

Furthermore, a table showing thirty-four Indian words or sentence fragments with claimed Hebrew equivalents appears in *VH* (2nd edition, 90–91). No reader of the book could have easily missed this chart. If Joseph Smith had wanted to make up names to use in the Book of Mormon which would substantiate his claim that he had found some authentic Western Hemisphere Hebrew words, he would have looked hard at such a ready-made list. Yet none of these thirty-four Hebrew/Indian words (Keah, Lani, Uwoh, Phale, Kurbet, etc.) resemble any of the 175 words which appear for the first time in the Book of Mormon.

d. *VH* says that the Indians are Israelites because they carry small boxes with them into battle. These are to protect them against injury. In *VH*, they are considered sure signs that the Indians’ ancestors knew of the Ark of the Covenant. If Joseph Smith were depending on *VH*, he would not likely have passed up such a distinguished and oft-attested “Hebraism” as this. Yet in all Book of Mormon battle scenes, there is no such ark, box, or bag serving as a military fetish.

e. The Indians are Israelites because the Mohawk tribe, a tribe held in great reverence by all the others, was paid tribute. To *VH*, the conclusion was that the Mohawks are the vestiges of the tribe of Levi, Israel’s tribe of priests. If Joseph Smith

were relying on such a belief, one might think that he would have provided something about Levites in the Book of Mormon, but he did not.

f. *VH* claims that the righteous Indians quickly lost knowledge that they were all from the same family, were active “for a long time” well into recent times, and that their destruction occurred about AD 1400, as evidenced by tree ring counts near some of the fortifications of these people. The Book of Mormon rejects these notions, reporting that tribal affiliations were maintained for almost a thousand years and that the destruction of the Nephites occurred in the fourth century AD.

g. *VH* argues that the Indians are Israelites because they knew the legends of Quetzalcoatl. But the surprise here is that *VH* argues that Quetzalcoatl was none other than—not Jesus—but Moses! “Who could this be but Moses, the ancient legislator in Israel?” (*VH*, 2nd. edition, 206). He was white, gave laws, required penance (strict obedience), had a serpent with green plumage (brazen, fiery-flying serpent in the wilderness), appeased God’s wrath (by sacrifices), was associated with a great famine (in Egypt), spoke from a volcano (Sinai), walked barefoot (removed his shoes), and opened a golden age (seven years of plenty in Egypt—which has nothing to do with Moses, by the way). If *VH* provided inspiration for the Book of Mormon, it did not provide much. Besides the fact that *VH* sees Quetzalcoatl as Moses, none of these hallmark details associated with Quetzalcoatl are incorporated into the account of Christ’s visit to Bountiful in 3 Nephi.

The foregoing seven points [a. through g.] can be multiplied literally twelve times over. In the face of such differences, the few similarities pale. Both works speak of long migrations for religious reasons. Both report wars. Both say the people knew how to write and work with metals. And both praise generosity and denounce pride. *VH* speaks of Indian lore that they left a “lost book” back in Palestine and buried other records with their chiefs. B. H. Roberts asks the question: “Can such numerous and startling points of resemblance and suggestive contact be merely coincidence?” One can answer “yes,” for the differences outweigh the similarities and most of the similarities lose force upon examination. If Joseph Smith had given *VH* basic credence, he would not have contradicted and ignored it in so many ways.

Do we have all the answers to Book of Mormon questions? No. We may never have all the answers to questions about the Book of Mormon. But in the last sixty years since B. H. Roberts made his Study, many things which he thought someone might say were weak or odd about the Book of Mormon have turned out to strengthen its credibility.

The Lord apparently does not intend the Book of Mormon to be an open-and-shut case intellectually, either pro or con. If he had intended this, he would have left more concrete evidences. Instead, the Lord has given us the opportunity to address the Book of Mormon as a matter of faith, as a modern-day miracle, a product of divine revelation. As such, it serves, through revelation, as a keystone of the Restoration and as a sacred

testimony of Jesus Christ. Like B. H. Roberts, all readers of the Book of Mormon should take the Holy Ghost—not a list of preconceived, self-limiting issues—as their guide.

Few have sensed the will of the Lord in this regard more keenly than B. H. Roberts, who for many years was the “lightning rod” among the general authorities to absorb the strikes against the Book of Mormon and supply answers whenever he could. Often he had good replies, but sometimes he had none. He never expected or claimed to have all the answers.

Today, while we have better answers, we still do not have all the answers; we should not expect or need to have. But this does not mean that we lose faith in the Book of Mormon.

Elder Roberts, in fact, is an inspiring example of one who kept the faith in the face of serious questions for which he did not have the answers. If in his works we find some things that on the surface seem confusing, we should remember his words in October 1929: “If anywhere along the line I have caused any of you to doubt my faith in this work, then let this testimony and my indicated life’s work be a correction of it.” So let it be.

The above comments on available answers to B. H. Roberts’ Book of Mormon questions represents John Welch’s views at the time his article was written in 1986. I believe if John Welch were to have written the article in 2011, he would have concluded differently. In another chapter (*Book of Mormon Evidences*, chapter ), I commented on the virtual explosion of scholarly knowledge and evidences that have been discovered occurred since President Ezra Taft Benson called the Church to repentance in 1985-86 soon after he became president of the Church. He felt we, as a Church, had been paying insufficient attention to the Book of Mormon. While all members of the Church did repent, the particular element that repented most dramatically was the scholarly community. Today, as never before, we are blessed with literally hundreds of compelling evidences on every aspect of the Book of Mormon. I believe I can safely say that all of B. H. Roberts’ questions have been answered along with many that he never thought to ask. While faith in the Book of Mormon—based on a spiritual witness—is still vitally important, the amount of secular knowledge now available to help build that faith is now unprecedented.

## Early Modern English and the Translation of the Book of Mormon

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### Introduction

Fundamental to the introduction of this topic is a knowledge of the exact process by which the Book of Mormon was translated. If you are not completely comfortable with just how that translation took place, see appendix A of volume two in *Ye Shall Know of the doctrine*.

For several years, scholars interested in the process of the translation of the Book of Mormon have entertained three ideas or theories as to exactly how much divine control was exerted over the Book of Mormon text during the translation. These have included the following:

- **Iron-clad control.** The Lord (or the interpretive process itself) would not allow any error to be made by the dictator, the scribe, or the typesetter, including the spelling of words. In other words, the Lord would not have allowed any imperfection in the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon.

It has been easy to eliminate the validity of the theory of iron-clad control because of the presence of many errors in both the original and printer's manuscripts. In addition, there were no punctuations or paragraph divisions in the printer's manuscript.

- **Loose control.** Ideas or concepts were somehow revealed to Joseph during the translation process, and he put the ideas into his own language. This theory has been widely advocated by several Church authorities and Book of Mormon scholars over the years. These have included B. H. Roberts ("The Translation of the Book of Mormon", *Improvement Era*, April 1906, 428–29), John A. Widtsoe (*Joseph Smith: Seeker after Truth, Prophet of God*, Salt Lake City, Deseret News, 1951, 42), Sidney B. Sperry (*Answers to Book of Mormon Questions*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967, 184–86), Daniel H. Ludlow (*A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1976), 141–42, 163), Robert L. Millett ("The Book of Mormon, Historicity, and Faith", *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2.2, 1993: 1–13, 5), Brant Gardner (*The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford, 2011), 187), and Orson Scott Card ("Joseph Smith: Reader or Translator?" *Vigor: Advice & Commentary on Mormon Life* 16 [extra], September 1998).

Those who have advocated the idea of loose control have pointed out many instances of nonstandard English in the text which presumably did not come from the Lord. We would presume, would we not, that the Lord would speak only "correct" English? Advocates of the loose control theory have suggested that these many instances of nonstandard English ("grammatical errors") originated with Joseph Smith's level of education and his own vernacular. Even Elder B. H. Roberts expressed puzzlement as to the nonstandard English in the earliest edition of the Book of Mormon.

Again, the idea of the loose control theory is that at times during the translation process, the Lord seems to have instilled into Joseph Smith's mind certain ideas and simply allowed Joseph to express them in his own words. One example is Jacob 7:27 where the prophet Jacob is concluding his book. He says, "I bid farewell, hoping that many of my brethren may read my words. Brethren, adieu." Joseph's use of the French word *adieu*, according to these advocates is easily explainable by his living in upstate New York, close to French-speaking Canadians. *Adieu* would have been part of his vocabulary.

Dr. Stanford Carmack has compellingly addressed the arguments of Brant Gardner and Orson Scott Card and effectively discredited their arguments, and the arguments of anyone else advocating for the "loose control" theory in Carmack's article "Joseph Smith Read the Words," (*Interpreter, A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, volume 18:41-64, 2016).

- **Tight control.** Joseph saw specific words written out in English, and he read them off to the scribe. The accuracy of the resulting text depended on the care taken by Joseph, his scribe and the typesetter.

Due to relatively recent and most exciting discoveries, our idea has changed regarding the theory of just how much control the Lord maintained over the process of translation. It is now clear that the Lord did, in fact, maintain tight control over the process. But, then, how do we explain the many embarrassing examples nonstandard English in the book? And why would the Lord have used the French word "adieu" in the text? We will learn in this chapter that the specific language used and provided to Joseph during the process of "translation" was not the English vernacular of Joseph Smith's day—of the early nineteenth century. Rather it was provided to Joseph word for word in a completely correct earlier form of English, largely "Early Modern English." Also, there are words and phrases of "Middle English" and even some non-English, Hebrew-like constructions.

Middle English was spoken and written beginning in the early 1300s and extended to sometime in the late 1400s. Early Modern English was spoken and written from about 1500 to 1700 (some scholars say 1470 to 1700).

It's also important to note that these language forms are used, in many cases, independently of the King James Bible. That is, while some of these early English forms are included in the King James Bible, the earliest text of the Book of Mormon contains a greater array of examples of these early language forms, including some particulars of the early English language forms that are not found in the King James Bible.

The word "adieu" is now known to be part of Early Modern English, in fact it is often heard in some of Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare was born in 1564 and died in 1616. Hence he spoke and wrote Early Modern English.

It is also obvious that the “tight control” theory is fully compatible with the process of translation described by Dr. Royal Skousen.

### **The Resources for This Article**

The material in this chapter is gratefully attributed to Dr. Royal Skousen (see a brief biography of Dr. Skousen in *The Process of Translating the Book of Mormon*, volume 2, appendix A in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*) and Dr. Stanford Carmack. Dr. Carmack has a law degree and a bachelor’s degree in linguistics from Stanford University, and a PhD in Hispanic Languages and Literature from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Dr. Skousen has long and painstakingly researched and published what he refers to as the “Earliest Text” of the Book of Mormon. This text is *The Book of Mormon, The Earliest Text* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2009). In this chapter, Skousen’s book will be used as the reference work for the original manuscript. It, of course, contains none of the emendations made in the book by Joseph Smith and others over the past one hundred and fifty years. These emendations have been made, ostensibly to “bring up to a modern standard” the book’s English language. In the remainder of this chapter, we will refer to this work of Dr. Skousen’s as the “Yale edition.” Again, all Book of Mormon quotes in this chapter will be taken from the Yale edition and not from our present-day, emended version.

### **Early English Language Forms**

Just why the Lord chose to give Joseph and Oliver the Book of Mormon text in these early English language forms is not entirely clear, but the extensive inclusion in the original and printer’s manuscript of these sophisticated and complex language forms provides compelling evidence of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Neither Joseph nor Oliver, nor anyone in their environment, could have known anything of these complex language forms. It is obvious that God deliberately chose the language variety that was delivered to Joseph Smith, despite its archaic and obsolete character, consistent with his divine purposes.

Dr. Carmack has speculated about what he calls a “divine faculty” in the celestial heaven that may have been assigned to make an English translation of the Book of Mormon plates (the plates of Mormon and the small plates of Nephi). It is logical to suppose that this translation had to be made prior to revealing the English translation to Joseph Smith.

A private musing of mine, for which I certainly claim no divine inspiration, pertains to just who it might have been that the Lord called upon to make such a translation. Who better to chair that committee, which would bring an important new English scripture to the world, than William Tyndale (1494–1536), a true Christian hero for

daring to make the first English translation of the Greek Bible at the expense of his life. It is notable that Tyndale, while on earth spoke Early Modern English.

There is a significant irony that surrounds the question of the early English language forms used in the “translation” of the Book of Mormon. It is that if the Lord intended this language for the Book of Mormon text as a profound evidence for the authenticity of the book, then the repeated emendations made to the Book of Mormon since its initial publication in 1830 by Joseph Smith and others have tended to obscure that particular “evidence.” It is obvious that Joseph and the others were inspired, or at least allowed, to make these emendations, by the Lord or perhaps by Moroni, but they have certainly obscured our ability to see that the text of the Book of Mormon was given to Joseph, in an early English syntax (*syntax* means pattern of formation of sentences and phrases from words).

The early reviews of the English in the Book of Mormon were highly critical and even poked fun at the book for its nonstandard English forms. (See, for example, E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* [sic] (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 23–24; Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (Hartford, CT: American, 1872), 127–28, 135; and Bernard DeVoto, “The Centennial of Mormonism.” *The American Mercury* 19.73 (1930: 5); and compare E. B. T. Spencer “Note on the Book of Mormon.” *The Methodist Review*. Ed. William V. Kelley. Vol. 87—5th series, Vol. 21. New York: Eaton & Mains, (1905: 33–38).

All of these made many specific criticisms but they all clearly reveal a lack of knowledge of any early English language forms or Hebrew language forms. Even Elder B. H. Roberts (1857-1933), one of the seven presidents of the First Council of Seventy of the Church had some misgivings about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. He wrote a series of articles on the Book of Mormon which were not published until after his death in 1985. He raised several misgivings about the book, one of which was the several incidents of substandard English in the first edition of the book. No one who ever lived has, I’m sure, been more thrilled with the many scholarly corroborations of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon than Elder Roberts.

### **Specific Examples of “Nonstandard” Modern English in the Book of Mormon**

My intent, for the remainder of this chapter is to provide some representative examples of phrases and expressions from the earliest Book of Mormon text—the Yale edition—along with either explanations of those examples or examples of the use of those phrases and expressions written in the days when the early English languages were spoken (Middle English and Early Modern English). I will not attempt to provide a comprehensive comparison between the Yale edition and examples of the early English forms. For that I would refer you to a series of articles written by Stanford Carmack and published in *Interpreter, A Journal of Mormon Scripture*. These are found in volume 11, 2014, 209-62; volume 13, 2015, 175-217; volume 14, 2015, 119-86; volume 18, 2016, 79-108; and volume 18, 2016, 109-37.

First, I will provide some representative examples of words and phrases from the Yale edition (BOM) alongside examples of those same words and phrases in the early English languages written in the days that version of English was spoken and written (EME).

BOM Helaman 7:8; 13:37 “in *them* days”

EME “To Samaria and them partes” H. Clapham *Bible History* 92, 1596

“The warres and weapons are now altered from them days” Barret *Theor. Warres* i. i. 4, 1598. Ainsworth *Annot. Pentat. Gen.* xviii. 6, 1621

BOM 1 Nephi 4:19; Alma 20:30; Ether 15:31 “I had *smote*”

EME “He Caused . . . the Citie of the Priests to be smote with the edge of the sword” Beard *Theatre God’s Judgment* (1612) 309, 1597

“The goose-quill hath smote antichrist under the fifth rib.” Manton *Exp. Jude* verse 3. Wks., V. 98, 1658

BOM 1 Nephi 4:4; Mosiah 18:17; 29:36; Alma 9:31; 9:32 “they was yet wroth”

EME “About this time [sc. 1656] I was moved to sett uppe ye mens Quarterly meetinges throughout ye nation though in ye north they was settled before.” G. Fox Jrnl. (1911) I. 267, 1675–7

“Which Veyns and Mines, if they was . . . Set to Work, by any that understands them, Would . . . prove as Rich.” T. Houghton *Royal Instit.* Ded. A 3, 1694

“You was our drowrie and our days darling.” Henryson *Mor. Fab.* 19, 1450

“In dud frese ye was schryned With better frese lynyd.” Skelton *Poems agst. Garnesche* 46, 1529

BOM “*hid up*” found 10 times in the Book of Mormon, including twice in the title page.

EME “That so his sublime and recondite doctrine might be the better hid up *therein*” J. Smith *Sel. Disc.* vi. 200, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1652

BOM 1 Nephi 17:6 “we was”; Alma 7:18 “Ye was”

EME “About this time [sc. 1656] I was moved to sett uppe ye mens Quarterly meetinges throughout ye nation though in ye north they was settled before.” G. Fox Jrnl. (1911) I. 267, 1675–7.

“Which Veyns and Mines, if they was. . . Set to Work, by any that understands them, would . . . prove as Rich.” T. Houghton *Royal Instit.* Ded. A 3, 1694

“You was our drowrie and our days darling.” 30 Henryson *Mor. Fab.* 19, 1450

“In dud frese **ye was** schryned With better frese lynyd.” Skelton *Poems agst. Garnesche* 46, 1529

BOM Alma 7:18 “I had much desire that ye was not in the state of dilemma”

1 Nephi 18:25 “there was beasts in the forests of every kind”

Alma 4:9 “there was envyings and strifes”

Mormon 9:19 “if there was miracles wrought”

Ether 13:26 “there was robbers”

3 Nephi 4:4 “Therefore there were no *chance* for the robbers to plunder and to obtain food”

3 Nephi 11:31 “Nevertheless . . . it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there were no *part* of their frame that it did not cause to quake”

Mormon 1:2 “peace did remain for the space of about four years, that there were no *bloodshed*”

EME “Whereoff there were no dowte but that right haboundant stremys shuld from his most liberall magnyfysence be dereuyed . . .” Cromwell in Merriman *Life & Lett.* (1902) I. 30, 1523

“Put the case that we neither loued her nor her kynne, yet there were no cause why [etc.]” Hall *Chron., Edw. V9*, 1548

“There were no way . . . to be compared vnto it, neither for the truenesse, easinesse, nor readinesse of working thereby.” Blundevil *Exerc. v.* (1636) 592, 1594

“I and my Watch going my morning Rounds, and finding your door open, made bold to enter to see there were no danger.” Otway *Soldier’s Fort. v.* (1687) 61, 1681

BOM 1 Nephi 18:25 “there was beasts in the forests of every kind”

Alma 4:9 “there was envyings and strifes”

Mormon 9:19 “if there was miracles wrought”

Ether 13:26 “there was robbers”

3 Nephi 4:4 “... and they were in one body. Therefore there were no *chance* for the robbers to plunder and to obtain food save it were to come up in open battle against the Nephites”

EME “Whereoff there were no dowte but that right haboundant stremys shuld from his most liberall magnyfysence be dereuyed...” Cromwell in Merriman *Life & Lett.* (1902) I. 30, 1523

“Put the case that we neither loued her nor her kynne, yet there were no cause why [etc.]” Hall *Chron., Edw. V9*, 1548

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### **Noun Phrases and Plural or Singular Verbs**

Several “noun phrases” are found in the Book of Mormon. An example is: “arms of mercy” (Mosiah 16:12). In this phrase the “head” or initial noun is “arms.” Nowadays in our modern English, we base the plurality or singularity of the following verb on the head noun. In EME, there is a tendency to base the plurality or singularity of the verb of some of these noun phrases on the second noun—the noun that is nearest (proximate) to the verb.

Examples of this usage in the Book of Mormon (the earliest text) include:

1 Nephi 18:15 “the judgments of God was upon them”

Mosiah 27:8 “the sons of Mosiah was numbered among the unbelievers

Alma 25:9 “the words of Abinadi was brought to pass”

Ether 12:1 “the days of Ether was in the days of Coriantumr”

3 Nephi 7:6 “the regulations of the government was destroyed”

In each of these phrases, the initial or “head” noun precedes the second noun.

Two corresponding noun phrases in EME include:

“The assautes of *deth* was fyers and sharpe.” Fisher *Wks.* (1876) 279, 1508

“All the pippes of *it* was of Sylver to be sleaven on a long speare staffe.” *Rites & Mon. Church of Durham* (Surtees) 79, 1593

In the earliest text of the Book of Mormon there are also several noun phrases that base the plurality / singularity of the verb on the head noun. And this “variable use” of the verb tenses is also found in EME.

### **Has / Hath Pattern**

Excluding biblical passages and the witness statements, *hath* occurs 724 times (91%) in the Yale edition, but *has* only 76 times (9.5%). With the several emendations the Book of Mormon has undergone, *hath* occurs only 288 times (36%) and *has* 512 times (64%). The highest rate of use of *has* is in Mosiah and Alma, the lowest rate is in the small plates. The King James Bible doesn't use *has* (not even the original 1611 text).

So, is the presence of *has* in the Book of Mormon an instance of bad grammar? No. On the contrary, it is directly in line with pre-Shakespearean Early Modern English usage. The Oxford English Dictionary indicates that at the middle of the Early Modern English period the *has* usage rate was 7.5%. Hence, the Book of Mormon Yale edition is right at home with 16<sup>th</sup> century *has* / *hath* usage rates.

### **Faith On the Lord**

The Book of Mormon uniquely and consistently uses the phrase “faith *on* the Lord” (*Jesus Christ*). This phrase is not found in the King James Bible which only uses “faith *in*.” The Book of Mormon also uses “faith *on* the name of the Lord” several times.

Royal Skousen has found these relevant 17<sup>th</sup> century examples in *Early English Books Online* (EEBO):

“by faith on his name wee may haue life Johann Gerhard,” *The conquest of temptations*, 1614

“and when all faile, renew thy faith on his Name,” Thomas Godwin, *A child of light walking in darknesse*, 1636

“They are altogether sufficient for that, inasmuch as Faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience to his Commandments . . .” *The Racovian Catechism*, 1652

“he makes them to see their sins, and bewail them, and raise them by renewing and strengthening faith on the Lord Jesus Christ,” Obadiah Sedgwich, *The bowels of tender mercy sealed in the everlasting covenant*, 1661

### **If It So Be (That)**

The emphatic hypothetical “if it so be (that)” is used 41 times in the Book of Mormon (almost always with *that*).

It isn’t found in the King James Bible. In the biblical text “if so be” is used almost 20 times (half the time with *that*), and the verbal phrase *if it be so / if it were so* (which is more like Modern English syntax) is found three times, never with *that*.

In view of this, is *if it so be* an error on the part of the Book of Mormon? No, on the contrary, the hypothetical phrase *if it so be (that)* is well-attested in the Oxford English Dictionary (8 times), the last time in 1534. Quotations include two by these famous authors:

“If it so be thou wolt with-outhe slouthe Bileue aright.” Chaucer *2nd Nun’s T.* 258, ca. 1386

“If it so be [that] a man . . . perceiue that in welth & authoritie he doth his own soule harme. . . .” More *Comf. agst. Trib.* ii. Wks. 1200/2, 1534

The structure found in the Book of Mormon constitutes evidence of the independence of the book’s language vis-a-vis the King James Bible and testifies to the historical depth of its syntax.

### **Impersonal Verb Phrase—“It sorroweth me”**

“It sorroweth me” is found four times in the Book of Mormon but is not found in the King James Bible.

Early Modern English examples:

“me supposeth that they toke that vyce of kynge Hardekunt,” Caxton *polychronicon*, 1482

“It sorroweth me to thinke of the Ministers of England,” Adam Hill, *The crie of England*, 1595

“The ague that held you, sorroweth me.” Hellowes Gueuara’s *Fam. Ep.* (1577) 189, 1574

“It sorrows me that you misprize my love.” Heywood *Royall King* ii. iv, 1637

The presence of this impersonal verb phrase in the Book of Mormon is an indication of the historical range of the book’s language.

### **Past Participle of the Verb Arrive—Arriven**

Arriven is found five times in the Book of Mormon. The verb *arrive* is not used in the King James Bible.

There are two relevant late ME entries in the Oxford English Dictionary with *aryven*:

“In a forest she *is* aryven.” *Torr. Portugal* Fragm., 1435

“To morwen schole ȝe hem alle se To londe aryven. . .” [Tomorrow you will see them all arrived to land]. Lovelich *Grail* xlv. 113, 1450

### **The “more part of” the people**

The obsolete though transparent phrase “the more part of” occurs 24 times in the Book of Mormon but is not found in that exact form in the King James Bible. It is, however, used twice without “of” (Acts 19:32; 27:12). *More* as used in this phrase carries a sense of “greater in number,” which became obsolete in the 17th century.

The OED provides several examples with “the more part of” from the late ME period and the Early Modern English period (from 1380 to 1610). Here are two quotations from the 16<sup>th</sup> century:

“The more part of their temptynge spretes they haue made she deuyls.” Bale Eng. Votaries Pref. A iij, 1546

“Palm trees: of the fruit of which trees, the more part of the inhabitants . . . are nourished.” T. Washington tr. Nicholay’s *Voy.* i. xviii, 1585

The phrase fell out of use at the beginning of the Modern English period.

### **The people “having loved Nephi exceedingly”**

This type of construction goes by the rather awkward name of nominative absolute construction. The Book of Mormon uses this type of construction frequently, clearly, and differently from the King James Bible.

Jacob 2:10-11 “The people having loved Nephi exceedingly—he having been a great protector for them, having wielded the sword of Laban in their defence, and having labored in all his days for their welfare—wherefore the people were desirous to retain in remembrance his name.

The clarity of the syntax is heightened in the Book of Mormon because almost always (1) an overt subject precedes the present participle (“I Nephi having been born,” “the people having loved Nephi”), (2) a logical, adverbial connector (therefore / wherefore) is used between the clauses, and (3) even if the subject of the main clause is the same as the one in the nominative absolute clause, it is repeated following the logical connector (“therefore I was taught,” “wherefore the people were desirous”).

Here is a biblical example taken from the Oxford English Dictionary, also showing the way the Book of Mormon might have expressed it:

Now Iacobs Well was there. Iesus therefore, being wearied with his iourney, sate thus on the Well 1611 Bible John iv.

Book of Mormon style: Jesus being wearied with his journey, therefore he sat thus on the well.

Here are two more examples from the King James Bible which demonstrate the relative clarity of Book of Mormon nominative absolute style because of the overt initial subject and the use of *therefore* at the clausal junction:

Acts 2:33: *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.*

Book of Mormon style: *He being . . . exalted, and having received . . . the promise of the Holy Ghost, therefore he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.*

Romans 5:1: *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

Book of Mormon style: *We being justified by faith, therefore we have peace . . .*

### **The verb *beseech* used with the personal preposition *of***

The King James Bible and the Book of Mormon differ in the following way in their use of the archaic verb *beseech*:

King James Bible: *I beseech you / thee* (46 times)

Book of Mormon: *I beseech of you / of thee* (4 times—Jacob 6:5; Alma 34:33; 36:3; Moroni 7:19.)

Is this use of *beseech* defective syntax on the part of the Book of Mormon? Is it a bad imitation of the King James Bible? No. The use of the personal preposition is old syntax found in both the late Middle English period and in Early Modern English, and the personal preposition can come before or after the verb.

“[He] of hyme besekys To ansuere .e alyenes wyth austerene wordes.” Morte Arth. 305, 1400

Mirr. Mag. Induct. xliv. 7, 1563 “And to be yong againe of Joue [he would] beseke.”

This use of *of* before the person who is besought may seem like a minor, inconsequential difference, yet the Oxford English Dictionary clearly distinguishes between these constructions and declares the one used in the Book of Mormon to be obsolete. Furthermore, the usage in the texts is distinct and consistent. The most rigorous statistical test for this pattern of usage gives the odds that this difference in the texts occurred by chance at five in one million.

### **The use of *should* following *beseech***

What about the use of *should* in the clause that follows besought in the following Book of Mormon passage? This specific usage is absent in the King James Bible: Now

when [Korihor] had said this, he besought that Alma should pray unto God that the curse might be taken from him (Alma 30:54—see also Moroni 7:19).

In the King James Bible only *would* (cf. Alma 15:5) or *might* is used after besought (15 uses in the New Testament). And when present-tense *beseech* is used, then only *will* and *may* are used, never *shall*. This King James Bible usage is consistent with the meaning of the verb as: to supplicate, beg earnestly . The auxiliary will / would in particular, with its notion of voluntary action, is a good semantic fit for the clause following beseech because the meaning of the full verb directly implies that notion.

On the other hand, when the auxiliary *should* is used with beseech, the meaning is somewhat different since there is a combination of some degree of compulsion or command as well as supplication.

Nevertheless, the usage of *should* following beseech is found in 14<sup>th</sup>- and 15<sup>th</sup>-century quotations. The important thing to notice in these quotations is the co-occurrence of *besought* and *should* (a rough translation for the first two excerpts is given below):

“Unto the god ferst thei besoughten As to the substaunce of her Scole, That thei ne scholden nocht befole Her wit upon none ertly werkes, Which were ayein thestat of clerkes, And that thei myhten fle the vice Which Simon hath in his office.” Gower Conf. l. 10, 1390. This passage seems to say that the clergy besought God so they wouldn’t foolishly squander (scholden nocht befole) their intellect on earthly matters, and so they’d be able to avoid (myhten fle) the corruption of Simon Magus (Acts 8:18–24). Interestingly, both *should* and *might* are used in the same syntactic sequence after besought; both these auxiliaries are also used immediately after besought in Alma 30:54—one in the same way [should], the other in a related purposive clause [might].) In the 1390 quotation the clergy themselves wanted God to compel them to engage in worthy study (should), and also evinced a desire to have the ability to avoid corruption (might).

“Thanne the quene after kneled tofore her lorde, and besought hym that men schulde do semble iustice to Amon the seneschall.” Knt. de la Tour 87, 1450. In this excerpt a queen knelt before her lord and besought him to compel others to similarly show deference to a steward.

“A notable historie containing foure voyages ... which aboute all thinges besought vs that none of our men should come neere their lodgings nor their Gardens.” The passage is quoted from Richard Hakluyt (1599) *The principal nauigations, voyages, traffiques and discoveries of the English nation*, from *Early English Books Online*.

As a result of these findings, we learn that the use of *should* with beseech in the Book of Mormon reflects a well-formed early structure found in both late Middle English and in Early Modern English. And we also learn that Korihor made a forceful plea to Alma (even perhaps one of a commanding nature). Otherwise the auxiliary *would*

would have been used (as used in Alma 15:5 with Zeezrom). The use of should with besought, like the use of beseech of, reveals the depth of Book of Mormon language.

### **The variable grammatical mood following “if”**

The hypothetical word “if” can introduce two types of verbs or “moods.” The first type is subjunctive verbs—verbs that suppose something is true but is not. The second type is indicative verbs—a command verb that states a realistic possibility. An example of the subjunctive is, If I were you. An example of an indicative verb is, If you come, I will be pleased.

Subjunctive verbs can be identified by being simple, present tense verbs such as confess, repent, cry, be, do

Indicative verbs, on the other hand, are present tense verbs with “-eth” or “-iest” added to the verb. Examples include: confesseth, repenteth, criest, is, doest

The use of these two moods is well standardized in Early Modern English and should be found in the Book of Mormon. Some of these specific standards include:

**Passages may include both patterns in phrases containing “if.”** Three book of Mormon passages illustrate this phenomenon. It should be noted that the second “if” in these verses may be simply implied. This will be pointed out. Such a missing but implied if is referred to as an ellipsis or an elliptic “if.” These three verses are:

1. Mosiah 26:29: “. . . And if he confess his sins before thee and me and [if he] repenteth in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive.”

Note that the bracketed words are the ellipped “if.” Note also that the first “if” is followed by a subjunctive verb (“confess”) and the second elliptic “if” is followed by an indicative verb (“repenteth”). This sequence, when there are two “ifs” in the passage is always the subjunctive first and the indicative second—never the indicative first and the subjunctive second. The ellipped second “if” renders it more likely that the second expression is indicative. Both statements, however, might be indicative or both subjunctive. In this case, we note that the Book of Mormon verse is true to this Early Modern English rule.

2. Helaman 13:26: “. . . if a prophet come among you and [if he] declareth unto you the word of the Lord . . .”

Note that the same comments apply for this verse as applied for Mosiah 26:29. Again, the Book of Mormon is true to the pattern of Early Modern English.

3. 3 Nephi 27:11: But if it be not built upon my gospel and [if it] is built upon the works of men or upon the works of the devil . . .”

The ellipped second “if” renders it more likely that the second expression is indicative.

Here is an example that seems to break the above rules. It is Alma 22:16: “But Aaron saith unto him: If thou desirest this thing, if thou will bow down before God—yea, if thou repent of all thy sins and [if thou] will bow down before God and [if thou] call on

his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive—then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.”

Again, note the ellipsed words in brackets. In this doctrinally powerful verse there is one instance of the indicative after “if” at the outset (“desirest”), and then four cases of the subjunctive—bow down, repent, bow down, call. Lamoni’s father has just indicated his desire to Aaron, and so desirest, in the indicative, conveys that Aaron entertains no adverse opinion as to the truth of the statement. The hypothetical if therefore conveys a notion akin to “given or granted that or supposing that.” After that, however, the subjunctive is used four times, conveying the notion that Aaron is faced with a normal lack of certainty surrounding the realization of his statements. This is therefore a good example of the Earliest Text elucidating meaning, while well-intentioned (conjectural) emendations have obscured it. It also tells us that at a deep level the Book of Mormon is an intelligently crafted, sophisticated text.

### ***Much* horses or *many* horses?**

How about the strange use of the adjective *much* found in the Yale edition with plural nouns? Taken collectively: much afflictions / much fruits / much threatenings / much horses / much contentions / much provisions. Is this a reflection of nonstandard U.S. dialectal use?

No, usage in the 16th and 17th centuries definitively says otherwise. Half of the above phrases have been emended through the years, with the noun usually suffering the change and thereby affecting nuance. Perhaps the motivation for emendation was because the King James Bible clearly shows this use only once (“much goods” in Luke 12:19), or perhaps because it’s nonstandard Modern English. Yet the 16th-century textual record has many examples of this use. For example:

“The same Emperour after much disputations and conferences had with the Arrians . . . commanded [etc.]” Stapleton tr. Bede’s Hist. Ch. Eng. Ded., 1565

“You. . . . haue through so much enuiengs . . . perseuered in your attempts.” J. Hooker Ireland Ep. Ded. in Holinshed Chron., 1586

Many of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century examples use both *much* and *many*. In fact most Early Modern English quotes used *many* more frequently than *much*. Helaman 3:3 nicely illustrates this variation in use: “. . . there were much contentions and many dissensions. . . .”

### **Did go or didst Go**

Let’s consider this late 16<sup>th</sup> century quotation taken from the Oxford English Dictionary:

“Many of the Gentlemen of the cittie did go vnto the Spaniards to visite them . . . in the which visitation they spent all the whole day.” Parke tr. Mendoza’s Hist. China 190, 1588

“Did go” is found in the Book of Mormon but not in the King James Bible. This particular wording is a grammatical structure that is familiar to any serious reader of the Book of Mormon and is currently used in modern English for emphasis and contrast. Back in the 1500s and early 1600s *did go* could be used without indicating any emphasis at all. When it was used in that way, it simply conveyed the same meaning as *went*. “Did go” appears many times in the Book of Mormon. And it is used 54 times with the infinitive *go*, either as *did go* or *didst go*.

On the other hand, the King James Bible uses *went* or *wentest* more than 1,400 times, but never *did(st) go*. There are a few usages of *did eat* in the King James Bible. The Early Modern English usage of expressing *did* plus an infinitive peaked in the latter half of the 16th century. This is additional evidence that the Book of Mormon’s syntactic center of gravity is this time period.

### **In the which**

Look again at the late 16<sup>th</sup> century quotation taken from the Oxford English Dictionary:

“Many of the Gentlemen of the cittie did go vnto the Spaniards to visite them . . . in the which visitation they spent all the whole day.” Parke tr. Mendoza’s *Hist. China* 190, 1588

Although “in the which” is found in the King James Bible, it is not used with a linked noun as it is with *visitation* in the 1588 quotation above. This occurs a handful of times in the Book of Mormon: *in the which things* / *in the which rebellion* / *in the which strength* / *in the which alliance* / *in the which time*.

More than a dozen examples of this prepositional phrase with the adjective *which* are to be found in the Oxford English Dictionary. The earliest ones noted in that dictionary come from the late Middle English period. The Book of Mormon has both *in the which things* and *for the which things*.

Consider the following examples:

“In the which thing Itrowe . . . at god dispensith.”Chaucer *Boeth. iv. pr. vi.* 109 (Camb. MS.), 1374

“In the which . . . mese . . . the Chapelayn . . . shold haue a dwellyng to serue by the tymys succedyng.” *Godstow Reg.* 352, 1450

“Preamble, In the which Acte . . . the seid Francis Lovell was ignorauntly lefte oute and omitted.” *Act 11 Hen. VII, c. 63*, 1495

“In the which wound, we must impose a silvern or goulden pipe.”A. M. tr. Guillemeau’s *Fr. Chirurg.* 26/3, 1597

“Which bedds are deuised of Cotten wooll, and hung vp betweene two trees . . . in the which flagging downe in the middle, men and their wiues and their children doe lie together.”*Abp. Abbot Descr. World, Peru V iv*, 1617

### **All the (your) whole**

Yet again look at the late 16<sup>th</sup> century quotation taken from the Oxford English Dictionary above:

“Many of the Gentlemen of the cittie did go vnto the Spaniards to visite them . . . in the which visitation they spent all the whole day.” Parke tr. Mendoza’s Hist. China 190, 1588

Note the expression: “all the whole day.” This same syntactic form occurs once in the Book of Mormon in Mosiah 2:21—“all your whole soul.”

### **By the way of Gentile**

One item in the title page of the Book of Mormon is worth mentioning here. The phrase “by the way of Gentile” is an obsolete use of *way*. The use of *way* in this phrase is noted in the Oxford English Dictionary but only one 16<sup>th</sup> century example is provided:

“The 29th of October last, I wrote to you from Paris by the waye of Monsieur de Chantonet.” Sir N. Throgmorton in Wright Q. Eliz. I. 49, 1560

“By the way of” is frequent in the King James Bible but it is used exclusively in locative expressions and is not used with persons. So “by the way of” used with a person or people with the meaning of “through the medium of” is non-King James Bible Early Modern English, and perhaps rare, if the scarcity of examples in the OED is any indication.

### **Command Syntax**

The term “command syntax” refers to the ways the Lord’s commands in the Book of Mormon and the King James Bible are expressed—the patterns of wordings and phrases that are used to express them. The command syntax in the Book of Mormon is sophisticated, complex, and principled, and uses patterns clearly seen in Early Modern English. All the evidence indicates that Joseph Smith did not attempt to produce the patterns found in the King James Bible, nor did he use the patterns from his own early 1900s language. The overall patterns of command syntax seen in the Book of Mormon strongly support the view that the Lord revealed specific words to Joseph Smith, not simply ideas—again, a pattern consistent with the “tight control” model.

We will consider carefully the systematic use of the verb *command* when it governs another verb, in both the 1829 Book of Mormon, and later we’ll look the patterns used in the 1611 King James Bible. We will learn that there are more than 150 instances of command syntax in each text, but there are profound differences between the two scriptural texts.

We will learn that the specific form of English used in expressing the instances of the command expressions of the Book of Mormon plates is Early Modern English. But by the time of the translation of the early documents from which the King James Bible

was translated, the language had begun to change and the specific command sequences used in the Book of Mormon began to become extinct and hence in some ways the specific language of the Book of Mormon differs from that of the King James Bible.

We will learn that the Book of Mormon is a relatively strong match with an important 1483 English translation out of Latin of a document called *Legenda Aurea* by the early printer/publisher/translator William Caxton. From this match we can conclude that the Book of Mormon's systematic use of command syntax is not unheard of in the annals of English literature. Yet, in the mid portion of the Early Modern English period the pattern began to change so the specific patterns of command sequence in the Book of Mormon are not commonly found in the examples of Modern English.

**The complex vocabulary associated with the command syntax.** Linguists have a vocabulary all their own, and we non-linguist readers can struggle to understand it. I will attempt here to introduce the reader to this vocabulary. I will utilize examples of command syntax taken from the Book of Mormon and other Early Modern English sources to illustrate the features of command syntax. My goal is to enable the reader to become familiar and comfortable with how linguists think, talk and write.

**Two most common forms of command syntax.** I will begin by providing hypothetical illustrations of the two most common forms of command syntax in the King James Bible and the Book of Mormon. I will then provide and discuss examples of each.

**Infinitival command syntax.** The first of the two common types is found more commonly in the King James Bible. Its pattern is as follows:

X commanded Y to do something.

In most of the command syntax examples there are two clauses. The main clause is "X commanded." The second clause is called the embedded clause. Here it consists of "Y to do something." An *embedded* clause is a group of words that includes a subject and a verb, and the embedded clause is the direct object of the main clause. Information related to the sentence topic is placed into this embedded clause to give the reader more information and enhance the sentence.

This example gets its name "infinitival" from the infinitive ("to" plus a verb) found in the embedded clause. "X" is the subject of the main clause. "Commanded" (past tense, active voice) is its verb. If the verb "commanded" were in the passive voice, it would be "is commanded" or "are commanded." The embedded clause is the direct object of the verb, in the main clause, "commanded." In the embedded clause, the subject is Y, and the verb is "do" which is an active voice verb and part of the infinitive ("to do"). The direct object of the embedded clause is "something."

**Finite command syntax.** This second type is the most common type found in the Book of Mormon. Its pattern is as follows:

X commanded Y that Y/Z should do something.

Again, there are two clauses. The main clause is “X commanded Y.” The embedded clause is “that Y/Z should do something.”

The name of this type, “finite,” reflects the idea that the verb in the embedded clause is not an infinitive. In the main clause, X is the subject and “commanded” (again, active voice) is the verb. In this case the verb has both an indirect object (“Y”) and a direct object clause—the embedded clause—which begins with the word “that.”

In the embedded clause, the “Y” or “Z” is the embedded subject of the clause, “do” is the verb, and the embedded direct object of the clause is “something.”

If the indirect object of the main clause and the subject of the embedded clause refer to the same person (for example, they may be, in order, “me” and “I”), the scriptural passage is said to be “layered.” This is because the two pronouns refer to the same person, and each reference has a different function in the passage.

The “should” in the embedded clause is called an *auxiliary* indicating compulsion, a notion inherent in the semantics of command syntax. The auxiliary is sometimes rendered as “shall.”

The word “that”—the first word in the embedded clause—is referred to as a complementizer and may or may not be found in the command syntax passages.

**Examples of command sequence.** 3 Nephi 20:14: “the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you this land for your inheritance”

More than half of the occurrences of command syntax in the Book of Mormon have this general structure. This is typical of the finite pattern we discussed above. Note the following features of this passage, and these terms should now be familiar to you. If they are not, please review the above discussion.

“the Father” (subject) hath commanded (present-perfect verb, active voice) me (indirect object) that I should give unto you this land (direct object clause, called the embedded clause).” Note also that the passage is finite. Why is it called finite? Unlike what is commonly encountered in Modern English and in the King James Bible, an *infinitive* is not employed in this clause. Hence, a *finite* clause is one that employs no infinitive— no “to” followed by a verb.

The embedded clause in 3 Nephi 20:14 has a verb, a direct object, and an indirect object: “that (the complementizer) I (embedded subject) should (the auxiliary) give (verb) unto you (embedded indirect object) this land (embedded direct object).

Note that both “I” and “me” refer to the same individual. Hence, the embedded clause is a layered clause.

If this verse had used an infinitive, it would have simply read: “the Father hath commanded me to give unto you this land for your inheritance” (note the infinitive “to give”). The construction with an infinitive is more compact.

Here is another example from the Alma 52:4: “he [Ammoron] did command that his people should maintain those cities which they had taken.” Note that the direct

object clause is embedded, finite, and layered (considering “he” to be the same as “his people”). Again, this is the most common Book of Mormon type.

Occasionally in the Book of Mormon, an infinitival clause, or one that includes an infinitive is acceptable in clauses with command syntax. For example, see Helaman 4:22: “or that which the Lord commanded him to give unto the people.”

We may then summarize the syntax associated with the verb command in the Book of Mormon. It mostly contains embedded clauses that are finite. It prefers the auxiliary “should” but occasionally uses the auxiliary “shall.” It prefers layered syntax. It also may occasionally include infinitival, embedded, direct-object clauses, particularly after passive commands.

Here is an example of an Early Modern English statement included in the Oxford English Dictionary that has the word “to” preceding the indirect object in the main clause. It is from around the year 1400 (spelling modernized): “He commanded to all that they should forsake all that they had.” Mandeville (Roxb.) xxiv. 110. The King James Bible uses the preposition “to” prior to the main clause indirect object only once (in Daniel 3:4: “To you it is commanded”). The Book of Mormon never does use this form.

Here is a verse in the Book of Mormon with complicated command syntax that Joseph could hardly have created or even understood:

1 Nephi 19:4 “this have I done and commanded my people that they should do after that I was gone and that these plates should be handed down”

This syntax is complex. It consists of a main clause: “I commanded my people” and two embedded clauses.

First, there are three clauses in this sentence and the first has nothing to do with a command sequence. The first is “this have I done.” Or, we might reorder this phrase as “I have done this.” Note the main clause of the command sequence is “[I] commanded my people.” Note also that the subject of this main clause is “I.” This “I” is implied but not actually stated. Thus, the “I” is said to be elliptical—that is, it is implied but not actually written. The other features of the main clause include the verb, “have commanded” and the indirect object: “my people.” There are two direct objects of this main command clause. They are the two embedded clauses: “that they should do after that I was gone” and “that these plates should be handed down.” Note that the main clause is understood to be repeated between “and” and “that” in the verse, but it is elliptical and not written. If it were not elliptical, that main clause and the second of the embedded clauses would read: “[I] commanded my people that these plates should be handed down. Note also that the direct object of the first embedded clause is also elliptical. If it had been written in the first embedded command clause, that clause would have read: “that they should do [this]. The word *this* is found in the first, non-command clause of the sentence, “this have I done.” Note also that the verb in the second embedded clause “be handed down” is in the passive voice.

Indeed, a deep native speaker knowledge of Early Modern English was required to achieve the regulated patterns of use found in this very complex command passage in the Book of Mormon. Joseph could not have constructed this complex command sequence sentence on his own.

**Summary of King James Bible command syntax.** The variety of command syntax found in the Book of Mormon is quite different from what is seen in the King James Bible. The King James Bible includes more modern syntax some of which is found in Modern English that was spoken in 1829. In addition, the King James Bible syntax has a strong preference for infinitival syntax.

In contexts where both verbs in the main and embedded clauses are in the active voice, the Book of Mormon has 84 instances of this layered syntax while the King James Bible has only nine—two in one Old Testament verse. This verse, Nehemiah 13:22, contains the last-dated example of layered syntax that is listed in the Oxford English Dictionary. That suggests that the King James Bible’s use of the structure was a vestige of an older syntax about to become obsolete.

Nehemiah 13:22: “And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day.”

The other seven biblical instances of active-voice, obsolete layered syntax are shown below, along with two in passive constructions. First, the active-voice examples:

Genesis 3:11 “Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?”

Exodus 27:20 “thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light”

Lamentations 1:10 “whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation”

Mark 6:8 “And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey”

Acts 1:4 “Jesus . . . commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father

Acts 5:28 “Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name?”

Acts 24:23 “he commanded a centurion . . . that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him”

There are two examples where the main-clause command verb is in the passive voice. You note in these two passage that they have two have passive command verbs in the main clauses (“is commanded” and “was commanded”) whose grammatical subject is the “it”:

Daniel 3:4–5 “Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp,

sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up. “

Revelation 9:4 “it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree”

The next example is different from the others since it involves an embedded passive verb phrase “should be stoned.”

John 8:5 “Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned.”

The embedded clause subject “such” is not related to the indirect object “us” in the same way the features in the other verses are related to each other. This verse is the only time in the King James Bible that the embedded clause subject is different from the indirect object.

Joseph and Oliver both knew King James Bible syntax. Both the King James Bible command syntax and the American usage of modern English in their day would have led them to use infinitival command sequence in the Book of Mormon had they been left to their own devices.

**Overview of command syntax in the Book of Mormon and the King James Bible.** According to the counts carried out for this study, there are 163 instances of command syntax in the Book of Mormon, and 170 in the King James Bible. Overall, the Book of Mormon has 92 cases of layered command syntax and the King James Bible has only 12. Consequently, had the King James Bible used layered syntax as often as the Book of Mormon, there would have been more than 300 of them in the 1611 text. Thus, the Book of Mormon is markedly different from the King James Bible in terms of rate of use of this obsolete structure. Yet because layered syntax is found in the King James Bible, the construction does not constitute evidence on its own that the Book of Mormon is independent of the King James Bible in relation to command syntax. It is the totality of usage patterns that points to independence, as is amply evident from a comprehensive analysis of the construction.

The following table breaks down command syntax in the Book of Mormon and King James Bible according to whether the embedded clause is finite or strictly infinitival:

### **A Comparison of Command Syntax in the 1829 Book of Mormon and the 1611 King James Bible**

| <b>Embedded syntax</b> | <b>BofM</b> | <b>KJB</b> |
|------------------------|-------------|------------|
| finite                 | 129         | 32         |
| infinitival            | 34          | 138        |
| finite rate            | 79%         | 19%        |

The Book of Mormon uses finite command syntax nearly 80% of the time, while the King James Bible prefers compact infinitival syntax, using it slightly more than 80%

of the time. In addition, the Book of Mormon uses command syntax at 2.5 times the rate of the King James Bible. Statistically speaking, there is a significant difference in usage between the two texts that almost certainly did not arise by accident. So either Joseph Smith consciously preferred and used the less-common biblical syntax, or he dictated specific, revealed words to his scribes. The latter is more plausible.

**Another type of command syntax in the Book of Mormon—finite, simple.**

Let us now review another type of finite command syntax used less often in the Book of Mormon. It is the active voice, simple (not layered) finite syntax:

X commands that Y should/shall do something

The main clause is “X commands”. The embedded clause is: “that Y should/shall do something”. Note that the embedded clause is not layered, as there is no indirect object in the main clause that is repeated as the subject of the embedded clause.

The finite command syntax (and layered syntax) quickly became obsolete after the early 1500s and was replaced by the infinitival simple syntax. Remember that the finite or infinitival syntax is seen in the embedded clause and not in the main clause. Actually, the infinitival command syntax appeared on the scene very early—as early as the mid-1300s. By the time the King James Bible was written, the finite, layered syntax was rapidly becoming obsolete. This explains the less common use of the finite and layered command syntax in the King James Bible. Infinitival usage persists to this day and is the nearly the exclusive type. Infinitival commands are now often expressed with a different word order, as in “I was ordered to pay the fine.”

Infinitival embedded clauses are also found in the Book of Mormon, about 20% of the time as shown in the chart above.

Now let us look at some early English passages and test our knowledge of the complexity of the command syntax:

“He urgently commanded his subjects that they should let me see all the places.”  
Mandeville (Roxb.) xi. 41, 1400

“The university heads commanded the servants that they should neither buy nor sell with him” in W. H. Turner Select. Rec. Oxford 80, 1530

“He commanded that he should go home to his fellows without any harm.” Prose Life Alex. 41 & 76, 1420. Note that this passage is not layered because there is no indirect object in the main clause.

The use of “that” (the complementizer) in finite command syntax was optional through the centuries. The following Oxford English Dictionary quotations show the use of “should” (the auxiliary) without “that.” These have embedded passive verbs.

“Antonius . . . commanded his head and his hands should . . . be set up over the pulpit.” North Plutarch (1676) 729, 1580.

“I commanded the sleeves should be cut out, and sow’d vp againe.” Shakes. Tam. Shr. iv. iii. 148, 1596.

“Priam commanded none should mourne.” Chapman Iliad vii. 357, 1611.

This same syntax (without the complementizer “that”) at least three times in the Book of Mormon, but not in the King James Bible. The first one we consider is the following:

Mosiah 18:23 “he commanded them that they should observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, and also every day they should give thanks to the Lord their God.

The other two Book of Mormon examples without “that” are:

Alma 63:12 “save it were those parts which [had been commanded by Alma] should not go forth.”

Helaman 6:25 “it is these secret oaths and covenants which [Alma commanded his son] should not go forth unto the world.”

The Book of Mormon clearly favors the use of the “that” complementizer. Its absence in these three instances strongly suggests knowledgeable Early Modern English authorship.

As further evidence that the archaic command sequence of the Book of Mormon (finite, layered sequences, with the complementizer “that,” and the auxiliary “should” or “shall”) was obsolete by the early nineteenth century, Joseph Smith’s day, both in Britain and in America, we note that the Scottish author Walter Scott (1814-1831) and the American author James Fenimore Cooper (1820-1851) used the archaic form only 6% and 2% of the time respectively. The rest of the time they used the infinitival form.

So it is almost certain that Joseph Smith’s spoken and written language was predominantly infinitival (see JS–History 1:49,70; 1:29,48,50). And this is directly in line with what is found in the 1611 King James Bible. As a result, it is highly likely that Joseph Smith would have used infinitival command syntax at a 90% rate or higher had he been responsible for the language of the text of the Book of Mormon. Therefore, the heavy use of obsolete and archaic finite syntax in the Book of Mormon, argues strongly against inexpert 1820s authorship. It is a virtual certainty that a non-scholarly author could not have produced this mix of syntactic structures.

One other contrast between the Book of Mormon and the King James Bible is in the use of the auxiliary “shall” in embedded clauses of the finite type. The Book of Mormon uses it seven times, and there are no usages of “shall” in the King James Bible. The uses in the Book of Mormon include:

Alma 37:2 “I also command you that ye shall keep a record of this people, according as I have done.”

Alma 44:7 “I will command my men that they shall fall upon you and inflict the wounds of death in your bodies.”

Alma 61:13 “he doth not command us that we shall subject ourselves to our enemies.”

Helaman 10:11 “I command you that ye shall go and declare unto this people.”

3 Nephi 3:8 “on the morrow month I will command that my armies shall come down against you.”

3 Nephi 16:4 “I command you that ye shall write these sayings after that I am gone.”

**The use of “did” + “command” in the main clause.** Both the King James Bible and the Book of Mormon use did + command as part of command syntax. It is also attested in Early Modern English:

Lamentations 1:10 “whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation.”

3 Nephi 15:16 “This much did the Father command me that I should tell unto them.”

“yet our Sauour did commaund that they should pay him tribute,” Rishton / Allen, tr., 1575.

This feature is yet another contrast between the Book of Mormon and the King James Bible, however. Did + command is characteristic of the Book of Mormon and is used more than 25% of the time to express the simple past, but less than 2% of the time in the King James Bible. The latter uses “did” + “command” noticeably only with the verb eat (and never for instance with the verb “go”). The Book of Mormon employs the syntax at a high rate and with many different verbs (about 50 times with “did go”). This is further evidence that the Book of Mormon is a mid–16th-century Early Modern English text. This usage is something Joseph Smith would not have been aware of from the King James Bible.

**Instances where the indirect object in the main clause is different from the subject of the embedded clause.** There are six instances in the Book of Mormon where this pattern is seen.

1 Nephi 3:2 “the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall return to Jerusalem.”

1 Nephi 3:4 “the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brothers should go unto the house of Laban and seek the records and bring them down hither into the wilderness.”

1 Nephi 7:2 “the Lord commanded him that I Nephi and my brethren should again return into the land of Jerusalem and bring down Ishmael and his family into the wilderness.”

Mosiah 18:21 “he commanded them that there should be no contention one with another.”

Mosiah 18:24 “he also commanded them that the priests which he had ordained *should* labor with their own hands for their support.”

Mosiah 19:11 “the king commanded them that all the men should leave their wives and their children and flee before the Lamanites.”

Here is an Early Modern English example with a passive command verb:

“Ciriacus . . . was commanded that he and his fellows should delve the earth,” Caxton, tr. Golden Legend [spelling modernized], 1483

**Mixed infinitival and finite syntax.** Here is an interesting example where both infinitival and finite syntax are used after a single command verb. The following Book of Mormon passage shifts from infinitival to finite, focusing the command Mosiah makes about not having a king (the infinitives and finite verb are bolded):

Mosiah 29:30 “I commanded you **to do** these things in the fear of the Lord; and I commanded you **to do** these things and that ye **have** no king.

**Embedded clause verbs used without an auxiliary.** Embedded clause finite verbs are used without an auxiliary (should or shall) only 7% of the time in the Book of Mormon. Some examples are:

1 Nephi 17:48 “I command you that ye touch me not”

Mosiah 29:30 I commanded you . . . that ye have no king”

Alma 5:61 “I Alma do command you in the language of him who hath commanded me that ye observe to do the words which I have spoken unto you”

Alma 37:1 “I command you that ye take the records which have been entrusted with me”

Alma 37:27 “I command you that ye retain all their oaths and their covenants and their agreements in their secret abominations”

Alma 39:12 “I command you, my son, in the fear of God, that ye refrain from your iniquities, that ye turn to the Lord with all your mind, might, and strength, that ye lead away the hearts of no more to do wickedly, but rather return unto them and acknowledge your faults and repair that wrong which ye have done”

### **Caxton’s Golden Legend (1483)**

We have shown how the Book of Mormon is systematically different from the King James Bible in terms of command syntax. A prominent Early Modern English text is significantly closer to the Book of Mormon in this regard. This book—titled *Legenda aurea sanctorum*—is a spiritual work. Caxton published a translation in 1483 that he made from the original Latin. The book went through many editions before the middle of the 16th century. We have seen several examples from this text in the course of this discussion.

Both the Book of Mormon and this Caxton translation employ command syntax at a rate of 600 instances per million words. And both texts show a remarkable similarity along quite a few different dimensions.

### **Summary of command syntax in the Book of Mormon and the King James Bible:**

- Book of Mormon active command verb finite rate = 86%;
- King James Bible active command verb finite rate = 18%
- Book of Mormon passive command verb finite rate = 35%;
- King James Bible passive command verb finite rate = 40%
- Layered syntax in active verb contexts:

Book of Mormon = 84 times (73% of finite-clause instances)

King James Bible = 9 times (38% of finite-clause instances)

- Finite-clause auxiliary usage:

Book of Mormon = 93%; King James Bible = 78% (never uses *shall*)

Book of Mormon *shall* usage = 7 times.

**Conclusions of command syntax.** Command syntax in the Book of Mormon and the King James Bible is markedly different. Caxton's 1483 usage profile is significantly closer to the Book of Mormon's. The principal difference between the scriptural texts lies in their rates of finite and infinitival patterns in the embedded clauses. They are opposites in this regard.

Both texts display a number of statistically significant usage patterns, and the Book of Mormon does so to an impressive degree. It prefers layered finite syntax with the auxiliary *should*, occasionally employing *shall* as an auxiliary—a less common Early Modern English usage notably absent in the King James Bible. In spite of its heavy use of finite syntax, the Book of Mormon is consistent with the strong Early Modern English preference for infinitival complementation after passive command verbs.

The Book of Mormon represents a late 15th-century form of command syntax that is less modern in construction than most of what is found in the King James Bible. It certainly does not systematically match the King James Bible in most instances, yet it incontrovertibly evinces principled usage of the grammatical construction. A linguistically unsophisticated author could not have produced the array of syntactic structures found in the Book of Mormon. Deep, native-speaker knowledge of Early Modern English was required to achieve the regulated patterns of use found in the Book of Mormon. Those involved in putting the text into writing in the late 1820s were not Early Modern English scholars but were familiar with the King James Bible. Had they composed the Book of Mormon themselves, they naturally would have used the King James Bible as a template not only to make it sound “scriptural,” as Twain put it back in 1872, but in order to fashion complex syntactic structures such as the ones this article has examined. Moreover, since the majority infinitival usage of the King James Bible was largely consistent with their own native speaker intuitions, that is exactly what they would have employed extensively, not the linguistically distant and obscure usage from more than three centuries earlier that is so prevalent in the Book of Mormon. Both the King James Bible and 19th-century American usage would have led them to adopt infinitival command syntax as the default case for the Book of Mormon because that was the most obvious feature of the King James Bible and that was also the predominant feature of their own language.

Therefore, in order to maintain a belief that Joseph Smith authored the Book of Mormon, one must assume that he chose to consciously and independently adopt an obsolete finite-clause construction as the main form of command syntax, against the King James Bible and his own language. One must also ascribe to him the ability to

follow principled usage patterns not found in the King James Bible and incapable of being derived from a normal reading of that text. These include: favoring active finite and passive infinitival verb patterns, as well as heavy doses of layered syntax (both obscure phenomena to be found mainly at the beginning of the Early Modern English period).

Because syntactic knowledge is largely thought to be intuitively understood, Joseph Smith would have been unaware of such linguistic fine points, just as we are today. And because much of this language was inaccessible to him, it is possible to assert with confidence that he would have been incapable of implementing this complex syntax in the remarkably consistent fashion the text presents.

In summary, a scrutiny of command syntax in the 1829 Book of Mormon, the 1611 KJB, and Caxton's 1483 translation of *Legenda aurea* (and in Early Modern English generally) emphatically tells us that the Book of Mormon is an advanced Early Modern English text in terms of its syntactic structure and that linguistic competence in earlier forms of English was necessary for its elaboration. Thus, we have further evidence in favor of Skousen's view that Joseph Smith received specific, revealed words from the Lord. Had Smith received distinct ideas and put them in his own language or in biblical language, he would have used infinitival embedded clauses heavily, and any infrequent finite syntax would not have been predominantly of the layered variety.

The many obsolete Early Modern English aspects of the text (including command syntax in its richness and diversity) suggest that the process of translation, as we usually understand the term, occurred without mortal human participation. Yet translation—in the sense of conveyance from one condition to another—did indeed occur with human participation, by the gift and power of God. In our sphere, Joseph Smith (and his scribes) required faith, receptivity, and concentration in order to receive and set down in writing the Book of Mormon in a divinely sanctioned form. It was no easy task.

### **The Implications of Past-Tense Syntax in the Book of Mormon (The Use of the Auxiliary Did)**

In the mid-1500s there was a short-lived surge in the use of the auxiliary *did* to express the past tense in English, as in Alma 52:18: "Moroni did arrive with his army to the land of Bountiful."

The 1829 Book of Mormon contains nearly 2,000 instances of this particular syntax, using it 27% of the time in past-tense passages. The 1611 King James Bible employs this syntax less than 2% of the time. While the Book of Mormon's rate is significantly higher than the Bible's, it is close to what is found in other English-language texts written mainly in the mid- to late 1500s. And the usage died out in the 1700s. So

the Book of Mormon is unique for its time—this is especially apparent when features of adjacency, inversion, and intervening adverbial use are considered. These will be explained later in this section. Textual evidence and syntactic analysis argue strongly against both 19th-century composition and an imitative effort based on familiarity with King James English.

Syntax resists manipulation—that is, when a person is consciously speaking a language his or her mind is primarily concerned with the content of expression, not the form. Since native-speaker linguistic knowledge is mostly tacit (intuitively understood without knowing and being able to describe the associated step-wise logic of the syntax), the form of expression is largely the result of subconscious production. As a result, syntax is extremely difficult to fake and can provide strong evidence of authorial origins.

Book of Mormon past-tense syntax could have been achieved only by following the use of largely inaccessible 16th-century writings. But mimicry of lost syntax is difficult if not impossible, and so later writers who consciously sought to imitate biblical style failed to match its “did” usage at a systematic level. This includes Ethan Smith who in 1823 wrote *View of the Hebrews*, a text very different from both the Bible and the Book of Mormon in this respect.

If Joseph Smith or anyone else in his day had authored the Book of Mormon, it would not have been a book with a remarkable number of Early Modern English features.

It may surprise some to learn that much can be gleaned from an examination of past-tense syntax in the Book of Mormon. But this is true, especially when we compare the text closely to patterns of use found in Early Modern English. Among other things, this section will point out the close syntactic match between the distinctive use of *did* in the Book of Mormon and during a short, identifiable period of time in Early Modern English. This means that the large doses of *did* found in the text apparently arose from an early form of English. All the evidence presents a picture of the Book of Mormon as an Early Modern English text that is difficult to refute.

**Explanations of terminology.** When the past tense *did* is used with what appears to be a present verb, the effect is a past tense verb. For example, “I did go” means the same as “I went.” The apparent present tense verb is not actually the verb being used in the present tense. Rather, it is the verb in its infinitive form.

There are two types of infinitives, “to-infinitives” and “bare infinitive.” A to-infinitive is, of course a verb used with preceding “to.” But an infinitive-form verb can be used without the marker “to.” These are verbs used after the auxiliaries *do* and *did*. There are also many other auxiliaries that may precede a verb that appears to be in its present sense but it is actually a bare infinitive.

Dr. Carmack, for convenience, has used abbreviations to refer to uses of *did*, *do*, and *does* as auxiliaries. It is “ADP *did*” or “ADP *do*” or “ADP *does*.” The “A” stands for

affirmative—it confirms the truth or validity of an event. The “D” stands for declarative—it states emphatically. The “P” stands for *periphrastic*. This word means something like “roundabout.” Here it refers to two words being used in place of one available and appropriate word (“did go” instead of “went”). So, in the case of an expression like “he did go,” Dr. Carmack, for convenience, refers to this as an “ADP *did*.” Similarly, in the case of an expression like “I do go,” Dr. Carmack refers to this as an “ADP *do*.” And “he does go” is an “ADP *does*.”

Some additional terms that will be used in this section include the following:

- **Adjacency**—This refers to the adjacency of the auxiliary *did* to its infinitive verb form. This adjacency is particularly seen in the mid-1500s high rate period.

Examples:

Mosiah 25:18 “Alma did go forth into the water and did baptize them”

Mormon 4:23 “I did go to the hill Shim and did take up all the records”

- **Inversion (did + subject + infinitive)**—This refers to the subject being introduced between the *did* and the infinitive verb.

Examples:

Mosiah 9:17 “in the strength of the Lord did we go forth to battle against the Lamanites”

Alma 16:15 “thus did Alma and Amulek go forth, and also many more which had been chosen”

- **Intervening adverbial expression (did + adverb or adverbial phrase + infinitive)**—This refers to an adverb (or adverbial phrase) being introduced between the *did* and the infinitive verb.

1 Nephi 7:3 “I Nephi did again with my brethren go forth into the wilderness” (the phrase “again with my brethren” is an adverbial phrase).

- **Ellipsis**—This refers to the *did*'s carrying through to a second infinitive but not actually being written before that second infinitive.

Examples:

He did see and hear everything.

1 Nephi 16:14 “we did take our bows and our arrows and go forth into the wilderness”

### **Comparison of patterns between the King James Bible and the Book of Mormon.**

|                         | <b>KJB</b> | <b>BofM</b> |
|-------------------------|------------|-------------|
| ADP <i>did</i> counts   | 515        | 1,846       |
| Simple past tense       | 29,780     | 4,951       |
| ADP <i>did</i> rate     | 1.7%       | 27.2%       |
| <br>Breakdown of syntax |            |             |
| Adjacency               | 61.0%      | 91.3%       |

|                       |       |      |
|-----------------------|-------|------|
| Non-adjacency         |       |      |
| Inversion             | 31.0% | 5.0% |
| Intervening adverbial | 8.0%  | 3.7% |
| Ellipses              | 5.7%  | 3.7% |

There is little possibility that these two ADP *did* rates are accidentally different. Still, there is overlap in usage between the texts, and similar examples exist—some of these are presented in this section. But it would be wrong to seize on the occasional overlap and assert that Book of Mormon usage is based on the King James Bible. The above rates and patterns of use strongly indicate independence, and these systematic differences point to distinct stages of Early Modern English. Yet it is interesting that these periods are close in time—only decades apart.

**Some examples of concentrated of ADP *did* usage in the Book of Mormon:**

1 Nephi 16:39–17:1 “And it came to pass that the Lord was with us, yea, even the voice of the Lord came and did speak many words unto them and did chasten them exceedingly. And after that they were chastened by the voice of the Lord, they did turn away their anger and did repent of their sins, insomuch that the Lord did bless us again with food that we did not perish. And it came to pass that we did again take our journey in the wilderness. And we did travel nearly eastward from that time forth. And we did travel and wade through much affliction in the wilderness, and our women bare children in the wilderness.”

There are 9 instances of ADP *did* in this passage. Only “did not perish” is expected in modern English. One instance has an intervening adverb (“again”). Note the ellipsis ( a missing *did*) between “women” and “bare.”

3 Nephi 10:9–10 “And it was in the morning, and the darkness dispersed from off the face of the land and the earth did cease to tremble and the rocks did cease to rend and the dreadful groanings did cease and all the tumultuous noises did pass away. And the earth did cleave together again, that it stood. And the mourning and the weeping and the wailing of the people which were spared alive did cease”

There are 6 instances of ADP *did*, all adjacent.

3 Nephi 11:3 “it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there were no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake. Yea, it did pierce them to the very soul and did cause their hearts to burn.”

There are 4 instances of ADP *did*, plus 1 negative declarative.

Mormon 4:13–14 “the Lamanites did take possession of the city Desolation—and this because their number did exceed the number of the Nephites. And they did also march forward against the city Teancum and did drive the inhabitants forth out of her and did take many prisoners of women and of children and did offer them up as sacrifices unto their idol gods.”

There are 6 instances of ADP *did* (1 adverb “also”).

Were there any texts in Early Modern English that had such heavy, sustained ADP *did* usage? Or is the Book of Mormon a thing apart in this regard? Yes, there are texts with such *did* usage. No, the Book of Mormon is not an isolated specimen in relation to this syntax. Here are two illustrative excerpts from a 1500s religious text.

“If we dyd vnderstand how the sinne which we dyd commit against God in the beginning dyd leaue vs, after it had once gotten power and emperye ouer vs, we should vnderstand aswel how great the loue and goodnesse of him was, that dyd redeeme and [dyd] take vs out of the same, and [dyd] deliuer vs from the condempnacion, so iustly due vnto vs for it. The diuell by sinne dyd breake in and [dyd] destroy all goodnesse that God had indued vs with, by the which we were cléerely knowen to be his owne workmanship, he did blot out the Image of god which was grauen in our soules so that the likenes of him by whom we were created, was taken quite from vs.” John Daniel tr. An excellent comfort to all Christians [Span. orig. by J. Pérez] (London: Wm. Norton), pages 11–12, 1576.

There are 9 instances of ADP *did* (3 elliptical).

“Euen so euer sithens the first hower that the worde of God, and the true light thereof, entred into Iermany, England, France, and this our realm of Spaine, and dyd begin to shine as the Sunne, there were persecutours which did abhorre it, and so doo continewe vntill this daye, most mortally and cruelly: and dyd, and dooe, kill all Christians, which are quickned thereby with most extremitie. They dyd alwayes will and [dyd alwayes] wish that which now they doo most wickedly.” John Daniel, page 141, 1576.

There are 7 instances of ADP *do/did* (1 elliptical).

The occurrence of ADP *do* did emerge in the mid 1500s. They are less common in the Book of Mormon than the ADP *dids*. While the ADP *dids* gives the verb expression a past tense meaning. The ADP *dos*, when used, gives the verb expression a present tense meaning.

Here is a variety of examples of ADP *dids/dos* from both Early Modern English and the Book of Mormon and the King James Bible:

“Alas, doo they not remembre me, I byleve better ye[a] than nay.” Caxton Sonnes of Aymon xxiv. 511, 1489

“Dyd not kyng Davyd a lyons jawe tere?” Hawes Past. Pleas. xliii. (Percy Soc.) 210, 1509

“He wyll saye vnto vs: why dyd ye not then beleve hym?” Tindale Matt. xxi. 25, 1526

“Did he not once for altogether . . . take awaie all autoritie from the priestes?” Udall etc. Erasm. Paraphr. Luke xxiv. 44, 1548

Moroni 10:27 “Did I not declare my words unto you, which was written by this man . . . ?”

“Dry figges and old, . . . as some do suppose, do ingender lyce, and also anoyeth the lyuer and the splene.” Elyot Castel of Helth H J, 1537

Mosiah 25:18 “Yea, and as many as he did baptize did belong to the church of God”

3 Nephi 19:14 “And the multitude did witness it and do bear record. And angels did come down out of heaven and did minister unto them.”

**Positive questions:**

“But I aske of Tyndall no such farre fet whyes, but a why of hys owne dede . . . I aske hym thys why: Why dydde he translate the same by thys englyshe woorde elder?” More Confut. Tindale Wks. 427/1, 1532 Why did thei take it? Hall Chron., Hen. V (an. 8) 72 b, 1548

“Why did the Jewish people muse, Seeing all is but vaine?” Sternhold & H. Ps. ii. 1, 1549–62

Alma 30:51 “In whom did ye desire that Alma should shew forth his sign?”

**Negative declaratives:**

“I departed fro my londe poure & exyled but I dyd not care for it.” Caxton Sonnes of Aymon vi. 139, 1489

“Wymen comynly do not entremete but to spyne on the distaf.” Caxton Faytes of A. i. i. 2. 1489

“Albeit she dyd not receyue in to her house our sauour in his owne persone . . . she neuertheles receyued them that dothe represent his persone.” Fisher Fun. Serm. C’tess Richmond Wks. (1876) 297, 1509

Ether 10:13 “And it came to pass that Kim did not reign in righteousness”

**Positive declaratives:**

Alma 39:3 “for thou didst forsake the ministry and did go over into the land of Siron”

Isaiah 57:9 “thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell”

Amos 1:11 “because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever”

Mosiah 6:6 “king Mosiah did walk in the ways of the Lord and did observe his judgments and his statutes and did keep his commandments”

Alma 35:9 “And they did nourish them and did clothe them and did give unto them lands for their inheritance”

**Elliptical ADP *did* (the ellipses are marked with [e]):**

Psalms 14:2 “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and [e] seek God.”

Mormon 2:4 “we did take possession of the city and [e] make preparations to defend ourselves against the Lamanites”

**Here are several examples of multiple *did* ellipsis found in the Book of Mormon:**

1 Nephi 9:1 “all these things did my father [e] see and [e] hear and [e] speak as he dwelt in a tent”

In this passage note the single past tense verb “dwelt” rather than “did dwell.”

Helaman 6:39 “insomuch that they did trample under their feet and [e] smite and [e] rend and [e] turn their backs upon the poor and the meek”

3 Nephi 17:25 “the multitude did see and [e] hear and [e] bear record”

3 Nephi 26:13 “after that, he did shew himself unto them oft and did break bread oft and [e] bless it and [e] give it unto them”

Ether 10:22 “they were exceeding industrious, and they did buy and [e] sell and [e] traffic one with another that they might get gain”

1 Nephi 9:1 “all these things did my father see and [e] hear and [e] speak as he dwelt in a tent”

1 Nephi 10:15 “after this manner of language did my father prophesy and [e] speak unto my brethren, and also [e] many more things”

1 Nephi 17:22 “after this manner of language did my brethren murmur and [e] complain against us.”

**Some other example of multiple “did ellipsis” in Early Modern English:**

“How be it for all that, afterwarde they did all fall, [e] feare, [e] faint, and did haue a doubt in him” J. Daniel tr. An excelent comfort to all Christians 96, 1576

“The seuenth was Sloth, . . . Who being cald, did gape, and [e] yawne, and [e] stretch.” J. Taylor (Water P.) Nipping Abuses D 1, 1614

“Some of the Disciples . . . at first did mince, and [e] sparingly speake, but afterward [e] practise and [e] loudly preach.” 1st Bk. Discipl. Ch. Scot. Pref. (1641) A 3, 1621

“And No-body did drinke, and [e] winke, and [e] scinke.” J. Taylor (Water P.) Penniless Pilgr. Wks. i. 123/2, 1630

“Parson Veron the Frenche man dyd pryche ther, for he was parson ther, and ys menyster.” Machyn Diary (Camden) 249, 1560–1

**Examples of Intervening adverbials:**

Alma 55:27 “And it came to pass that they did, notwithstanding all the intrigues of the Lamanites, keep and protect all the prisoners”

Helaman 11:32 “And the robbers did still increase and wax strong, insomuch that they did defy the whole armies of the Nephites and also of the Lamanites”

Ether 2:2 “And they did also lay snares and catch fowls of the air”

**Could the King James Bible have been a model for ADP did syntax in the BofM?** No. Note the following table:

**Some Notable ADP did Differences between the King James Bible and the Book of Mormon.**

| Differences                             | KJB  | BofM  |
|-----------------------------------------|------|-------|
| Overall rate                            | 1.7% | 27.2% |
| ADP <i>didst</i> rate                   | 23%  | 71%   |
| Adjacency rate                          | 61%  | 92%   |
| Inversion rate                          | 31%  | 5%    |
| Instances of <i>did eat</i>             | 115  | 1     |
| Instances of <i>did eat &amp; drink</i> | 20   | 0     |
| Instances of <i>did go</i>              | 0    | 57    |
| Instances of <i>did cause</i>           | 2    | 50    |
| Instances of <i>did come</i>            | 1    | 41    |
| Instances of <i>did cry</i>             | 1    | 31    |
| Instances of <i>did have</i>            | 0    | 19    |
| Instances of multiple ellipsis          | 0    | 6     |
| Rate of <i>did preach</i>               | 0%   | 78%   |
| Rate of <i>did minister</i>             | 6%   | 74%   |
| Rate of <i>did pursue</i>               | 3%   | 59%   |
| Rate of <i>did pitch</i>                | 1%   | 54%   |
| Rate of <i>did build</i>                | 4%   | 56%   |

**Conclusion.** As a general rule, obsolete syntax is completely inaccessible to an author or speaker because of a lack of knowledge. The same is true of “lost meaning”—language that has never been encountered, language with which one is wholly unacquainted. However, some obsolete usage or “lost meaning” that a speaker or writer may know from prominent sources such as the King James Bible or Shakespeare is properly excluded from this statement. It is profoundly true, though, that writers and speakers cannot manufacture out of thin air vanished forms and lexical meaning when language shift has taken place, thereby obscuring prior usage. That of course is precisely the case of the Book of Mormon’s past-tense syntax. High-rate ADP *did* adjacency disappeared before the 1700s and was not generally known. So Joseph Smith had no knowledge that it was used at high rates during the 1500s and the 1600s. (The anomalous use of biblical *did eat* would not have told him that, just as it does not tell us that today.)

In terms of ADP *did*, we note a systematic match between the Book of Mormon and the syntactic usage of the Early Modern English period, exclusively. On the basis of this evidence we conclude that God, consistent with his divine purposes, chose this specific language variety and syntax as a framework for much of the past-tense narrative of the Book of Mormon. Wherefore, in this and other respects the language of the book is Early Modern English. Moreover, the pervasive use of this construction in the text and its close match with certain 1500s texts (as well as other syntactic evidence alluded to above), point directly to the idea that the book is full of Early Modern English syntax.

On the basis of the foregoing evidence and discussion, I would assert that the frequent occurrence of ADP *did* syntax in the Book of Mormon, as well as its deeper patterns of use, cannot reasonably be ascribed to the mind of Joseph Smith or anyone else associated with, or proposed to be associated with, the composition of the text in the late 1820s. And the odds that anyone else would have or even could have written a text in this fashion 200 years ago are vanishingly small. It seems that no one has done it since the Early Modern English period. The data discussed here are compelling, and it is hoped that the related conclusions are as well.

We have seen that some who intentionally tried to follow King James English in their writings did not match 1500s ADP *did* usage. Their efforts do not positively correlate with that stage of English: Snowden's *The American Revolution*, Hunt's *The Late War*, and Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* ended up well off the mark. Sixteenth-century texts were not readily available in the 1820s as they became later in the 1800s. As a result, the access to the relevant texts was extremely limited in the 1820s, especially to someone living away from populated eastern cities with research libraries. And the 1500s printed books containing the heavy use of this syntax were still largely to be found only in British libraries. So a compelling position—on account of the lack of any specific, credible evidence to the contrary—is that the words of the Book of Mormon were revealed to Joseph Smith through the instrument, that they came from a divine source.

### **Another Note on Non-Biblical Early Modern English Found in the Critical Text of the Book of Mormon.**

There are several expressions in the earliest text of the Book of Mormon that have been thought to be provincialisms from Joseph Smith's day. These include such words/expressions as: *drownded*, *massacreed*, and *had ought to*. It turns out that these are simply words/expressions that are found in Early Modern English. Here is evidence in support of that assertion:

"And finding that he was thus betrayed, ran into the sea and drownded himself." EEBO A62145 Sir William Sanderson [1586?–1676] A compleat history of the lives and reigns of, Mary Queen of Scotland, and of her son and successor, James the Sixth, 1656

"Surely when you are sober you will consider, and when you are come to your selves you will be ashamed, and will not open any more your malice and wrath which hath drownded your honesty and civility" EEBO A30510 Edward Burrough [1634–1662] The memorable works of a son of thunder and consolation, 1672

"how doth he deliver his Children when we see them taken away by death, and oftentimes are massacreed?" EEBO A60194 Richard Sibbes [1577–1635] A learned commentary or exposition: upon the first chapter of the second Epistle of S. Paul to the Corinthians, 1655

“The annals of the world some he surprized by treachery, the rest he massacred in one night at a reveling” EEBO A64619 James Ussher [1581–1656], 1658

“and yf it be not so / than tell thou me, In what thyng he meanted, that every soule shulde be subiecte to the powers, etc. For yf euery soule hadde oughte to be subiecte to Timotheus, and Titus, In suche maner iudgemente he shulde in vayne haue sayde admonysshe them.” EEBO A07430 William Marshall, tr. [fl. 1535] | Marsilius of Padua [d. 1342?] The defence of peace, 1535

“he suffered them to come into the playne, without making any such resistance, as he had ought to haue done, because hee had giuen his word, that he would not stoppe their passage.” EEBO A07982 W. Traheron, tr. [fl. 1601] | Remigio Nannini [1521?–1581?] Ciuill considerations vpon many and sundrie histories, 1601

The same can be said of words like *attackt*, *bellowses*, *fraid*, *grievious*, *kinsfolks*, *Tremendious*, etc. All these are cases of the earliest text employing Early Modern English.

### **The Case of the Plural “Was” in the Earliest Text**

Because the earliest text of the Book of Mormon is primarily an Early Modern English text (in terms of its English language), it, understandably, employs many examples of the plural *was*—for example, “the words which **was** delivered” (Alma 5:11). It does so in a way that is substantially similar to what is found in many writings of the Early Modern period—that is, it manifests the syntactic usage, variation, and differential rates typical of that era.

In 2006, in an article on the *plural was* in Early Modern English, Nevalainen wrote that the use of *was* with plural subjects was a northern English dialect feature in the 1400s and 1500s, but it was by no means restricted to the north. In the course of the 1600s the pattern declined in frequency, but continued to be used as a minority variant even by the literate social ranks throughout the country.

So *plural was* was a widespread literate usage. And although *plural is* usage may have reinforced *plural was* usage, there appears to have been a greater tendency in Early Modern English to use *was* with plural pronouns than *is*.

Here is a passage with close variation exemplifying that tendency, along with a Book of Mormon example:

“the Lord saw ye was able by his grace to bear the loss of husband and childe, and that ye are that weak and tender” EEBO A57970 Samuel Rutherford [1600?–1661] Joshua redivivus, 1664

Alma 7:18–19 “I had much desire that ye was not in the state of dilemma like your brethren, even so I have found that my desires have been gratified. For I perceive that ye are in the paths of righteousness”

**Adam and Eve.** The following passage was frequently commented upon as an example of Joseph Smith's failing in an attempt to imitate older language. In view of that, this is an important one to address at the outset:

1 Nephi 5:11 "and also of Adam and Eve, which was our first parents"

The following old syntax is a close match:

"A new postil conteinyng most godly and learned sermons vpon all the Sunday Gospelles not after the maner of Adam and Eue, which was made of the grounde" EEBO A06932 Thomas Becon [1512–1567], 1566

Interestingly, the charge of plagiarism has been made against Joseph Smith because of some biblical passages that have the form of Early Modern English.

In Early Modern English *was* was employed at a relatively higher rate after the relative pronoun *which*, with a plural antecedent, than it was after plural noun phrases.

It is not hard to find Early Modern English examples of "which was" preceded by plural noun phrases. Here are three examples:

"A confutation of atheism neither how Moses his rodde devoured the serpents which was made by the sorcerers of Aegipt" EEBO A69226 John Dove [1560/61–1618], 1605

"The royall law and covenant of God and the Apostles which writ the Epistles which was to be read among the Saints" EEBO A52713 James Naylor [1617?–1660], 1655

"Politick discourses in such manner as he challenged all the Praises which was given unto him" EEBO A56530 Henry, Earl of Monmouth, tr. [1596–1661] Paolo Paruta [1540–1598], 1657

Here is a Book of Mormon excerpt that is similar to these Early Modern English examples:

Alma 9 [heading] "The words of Alma and also the words of Amulek which was declared unto the people which was in the land of Ammonihah."

Note the variation in Mosiah 24:15 "the burdens which was laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light."

Here both the *was* and the *were* are the verbs for the plural brethren.

These next examples match this variation.

"The hystory . . . of the warre, whiche was betwene the Peloponesians and the Athenyans But pryncipally the Brasides, whyche was adioynginge unto them, were of that intelligence and confederacy, and had bene alwayes ennemys of the Athenyans" EEBO A13758 Thomas Nicolls, tr. | Thucydides, 1550

"The true history of the ciuill warres of France the raging follies which was committed at Tholouse were incredible to report, except his owne disciples had written them in his legend." EEBO A19179 Antony Colynet, 1591

Examples like these, along with many other verified variational matches, indicate that Early Modern English competence was part of the translation. Here are two more clear examples that demonstrate the same syntactic matching:

“An answer to a great number of blasphemous caullations written by an Anabaptist That place of Paule proveth not that all the Israelites, which was called from Egypt, were within gods holie election to lief everlasting in Christ Jesus.” EEBO A04920 John Knox [1505–1572], 1560

“he praised God for that the Controversies which was amongst them, were not upon any fundamental Article.” EEBO A36910 John Dunton [1659–1733] | Frederick Hendrick van Hove [1628?–1698] The Young-students-library. 1692

**“Were” followed by conjoined “and was.”** Next we take a look at the agreement variation found in this passage:

Mosiah 7:7 “and they were surrounded by the king’s guard and was taken and was bound and was committed to prison.”

Here are three Early Modern English examples with the same syntactic pattern—that is, with *were* used right after the pronoun, and *was* used in conjoined predicates:

“A booke . . . to those that desire the true vnderstanding & meaning of holy Scripture Confirmation was that Ceremonie, which the Apostles did use, when they laide their handes upon those which received the holy Ghost after they were baptised of them, and was likewise ordeined by the auncient Fathers.” EEBO A06863 John Merbecke [ca. 1510–ca. 1585], 1581

“so we were put in prison again, and some hours after we were called forth again, and was had before the Governour John Indicot,” EEBO A52921 Humphrey Norton [fl. 1655–1659] et al. New-England’s Ensigne, 1659

“The invisible things of God brought to light by the revelation of the eternal spirit inwardly they were ravened from the spirit, and was gone from it into the earth, into the world, and served not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies,” EEBO A44796 Francis Howgill [1618–1669] 1659

Thus, we see that three different writers, from two different centuries, employed the same syntax found in Mosiah 7:7.

Next, we consider a variable noun/verb agreement pattern.

Alma 14:28 “and every soul which was within the walls thereof, save it were Alma and Amulek, were slain”

During the Early Modern period, “every (single noun)” could be treated as either singular or plural.

Here are three examples of “every one was”:

“Lectures vpon Ionas deliuered at Yorke because the portions of the Levites and singers had not beene given to them, and everie one was fled to his lande” EEBO A04845 John King [1559?–1621], 1599

“For all the porches were double, and everie one was supported by pillars” EEBO A04680 Tho. Lodge, tr. [1558?–1625] Flavius Josephus Works, 1602

“For the Bores in Germany rebelled against the Princes, and Magistrates, and every one was busied with the warre of the Anabaptists.” EEBO A11516 Nathanael Brent, tr. [1573?–1652] Paolo Sarpi [1552– 1623] The historie of the Councel of Trent, 1629

Here are two examples of “every one were”:

“The most delectable and pleasaunt history of Clitiphon and Leucippe one of the passengers . . . got holde of the rope, and almost brought the boat to the ship side, and every one were made ready” EEBO A22560 William Burton, tr. [1575–1645], Achilles Tatius. 1597

“insomuch as every one thought his labour well imployed to do him seruice, and every one were desirous to question with him” EEBO A08882 Anthony Munday, tr. [1553–1633] Palmerin of England and Florian de Desart his brother, 1616

What are we to take away from this variability? Apparently at this point in the history of Early Modern English, the language was quite fluid and unpredictable in this regard.

Here is an example of the lack of proper resolution of a plural subject:

Alma 22:32 “the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla was nearly surrounded by water”

And, in Early Modern English:

“The fat of Wolues and the marrow of Swyne is good to anoint bleare-eyes withal” EEBO A13820 Edward Topsell [1572–1625?] The historie of foure-footed Beastes, 1607

“The Towne of Romerswaell, the castell of Lodycke and the Scluse of Creeke was all carried away.” EEBO A02239 Edward Grimston, tr. | Jean François Le Petit [1546– ca. 1615] A generall historie of the Netherlands, 1608

Here are examples of “that were” followed by “was”:

Helaman 1:7 “Paanchi and that part of the people that were desirous that he should be their governor was exceeding wroth”

“the Ladyes and all that were present, was stroken into a great maze, some for joy clapped theyr handes, and some on the other side began to weepe” EEBO A07911 Anthony Munday [1553–1633] Zelauto. The fountaine of Fame, 1580

Here are some examples of the “objectionable use” of “they was.” First the five instances of “they was” found in the earliest text of the Book of Mormon. Most readers find this language completely unacceptable:

1 Nephi 4:4 “Now when I had spoken these words, they was yet wroth and did still continue to murmur.”

Mosiah 18:17 “And it came to pass that whosoever was baptized by the power and authority of God, they was added to his church.”

Mosiah 29:36 “telling them that these things ought not to be, that they was expressly repugnant to the commandments of God.”

Alma 9:31–32 “when I Alma had spoken these words, behold, the people were wroth with me because I said unto them that they was a hard-hearted and a stiffnecked people. And also because I said unto them that they were a lost and a fallen people, they was angry with me and sought to lay their hands upon me,”

In the last example we notice close variation, in the following order: “people were”, “they was”, “they were”, “they was”.

Here is an example of close variation of “they was” and “they were”, in Early Modern English:

“The Arms of the Knights of Ely, might on a threefold title have escaped the Animadvertoꝝ’s censure: First, they was never before printed. Secondly, the Wall whereon they were depicted, is now demolished.” EEBO A40651 Thomas Fuller [1608–1661] *The appeal of iniured Innocence*, 1659

Here is another example, without variation, but where “they was fitted” clearly references plural ships.

“Lewis of France . . . obtained . . . the Merchants consent for six of their own ships to joyn with that; But in the Interim, before they was fitted for that purpose, K. James dies” EEBO A62144 Sir William Sanderson [1586?–1676] *A compleat history of the life and raigne of King Charles from his cradle to his grave*, 1658

In Early Modern English, “they was” was a minor variant of heavily dominant “they were.” The usage rate in the Book of Mormon is also low, less than 1%.

More examples of “they was” syntax in Early Modern English:

“And than he wolde put in agayn the guttys / and they was so sore swollen that they cowde natbe handelyd” EEBO A03315 Hieronymus Brunschwig [ca. 1450–ca. 1512] *The noble experyence of the vertuous handy warke of surgery*, 1525

“The papists strength, principles, and doctrines when they was speaking of justifying by faith without the works of the Law,” EEBO A40227 George Fox [1624–1691], 1525

“New-England’s ensigne and the first relation we had was concerning him, and how they was laboring to save his life” EEBO A52921 Humphrey Norton [fl. 1655–1659] et al., 1659

“Works the judgement did not come upon Corah because they was Lay-persons,” EEBO A44832 Richard Hubberthorn [1628–1662], 1663

“An answer to John Wiggans book and though the Disciples were led into all truth by the Spirit, by which they was to preach the Gospel to all Nations,” EEBO A35520 Thomas Curwen et al., 1665

“So they was a great hoost whan bothe hoostes were assembled togyder.” EEBO A71318 John Bouchier, tr. (Lord Berners) [1466/67–1533] | Jean Froissart [1338?–1410?] *Chronicles*, 1523

“The reason why we were more civilized then they was, because we were not very far from the Euxime Sea,” EEBO A70988 F.G., tr. | Madeleine de Scudéry [1607–1701] *Artamenes*, 1653

“[the Ships] entred into the River, not knowing they was departed, and were so far engaged amongst the French Ships before they were aware,” EEBO A42277 tr. | Count Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato [1606–1678] *The history of the managements of Cardinal Julio Mazarine*, 1671

“by which they were brought into a bondage fear; yea they was to remember this especially.” EEBO A30211 John Bunyan [1628–1688] *A treatise of the fear of God*, 1679

The above excerpts contain occasional instances of *were*, clearly demonstrating that such variation was permissible. Again, this is like Alma 9:31–32, shown above, which has “they was / were / was”.

This leads us to another example of suspect Book of Mormon grammar: “both X and Y was.”

In the earliest text, there is one striking instance of this syntax—conjoined nouns preceded by the conjunctive adverb *both*—without plural number resolution:

Mosiah 18:14 both Alma and Helam was buried in the water

As might be predicted, there are examples in Early Modern English:

“In the end, I expresly demanded his Opinion, as that, whereto both he, and I was enjoyned” EEBO A28378 Francis Bacon [1561–1626] | William Rawley [1588?–1667] *Works (Resuscitatio)*, 1657

“after dinner, Butler and Smith were brought to the starre chamber before the privie Counsayle, where both sedition and heresie was obiected against them” EEBO A67926 John Foxe [1516–1587] *Actes and monuments of matters most speciall and memorable, happenyng in the Church*, 1583

“this was an evident and infallible argument, that both sinne and death was vanquished” EEBO A14710 John Bridges, tr. [d. 1618] | Rudolf Gwalther [1519–1586] *Homelyes or sermons vppon the Actes of the Apostles*, 1572

Here is an example of the syntax: “As X and Y was V-ing”:

Alma 20:8 as Ammon and Lamoni was a journeying thither

“not long time had passed before it happened, that as himself and train was riding through the streets to see how well this order was put in execution” EEBO A66812 Thomas Bayly [d. 1657?] *Witty apophthegms*, 1669

“I met the generous Falintus at his Landing, as Ventidius and I was diverting our selves upon a pleasant Strand, not far from his Palace” EEBO A53472 Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery [1621–1679] *Parthenissa, that most fam’d romance*, 1676

Another case of unexpected syntax: “king and people was”:

Mosiah 21:33 king Limhi and many of his people was desirous to be baptized

Nowadays after a combination of king and people, we expect plural number resolution. But we don't always see that in the Early Modern era:

“yet King Aram and his people was not blessed of God, nor yet wer the people of God,” EEBO A06481 Thomas Lupton A persuasion from papistrie written chiefly to the obstinate, determined, and dysobedient English papists, 1581

“The mirrour of mirth and pleasant conceits that the Kinge and all his people was so amased with feare, that they fel downe as deade” EEBO A20370 Thomas Deloney, tr. [1543?–1600] | Bonaventure Des Périers [1500?–1544?], 1583

The 1581 example above has “close variation.” This means, in that passage that “were the people” comes right after “king and people was”. Obviously such immediate variation was not only permissible, but even embraced in Early Modern English. The Book of Mormon exhibits this same phenomenon quite often, as in this example:

Alma 21:21 And he did also declare unto them that they were a people which was under him and that they were a free people,

Yet, another Book of Mormon example with close variation:

Mosiah 18:26 And the priests was not to depend upon the people for their support, but for their labor they were to receive the grace of God,

Here are some examples from the Book of Mormon of “so great was” with plural noun phrases:

1 Nephi 17:2 And so great was the blessings of the Lord upon us

2 Nephi 3:4 And great was the covenants of the Lord which he made unto Joseph.

Mosiah 24:10 And . . . so great was their afflictions that they began to cry mightily to God.

Alma 4:3 and so great was their afflictions that every soul had cause to mourn,

In the Book of Mormon, there is also variation in the text, and three times we read plural *were* in this context:

3 Nephi 8:22 for so great were the mists of darkness which were upon the face of the land.

Mormon 5:6 for so great were their numbers that they did tread the people of the Nephites under their feet.

Ether 15:16 And so great were their cries, their howlings and lamentations that it did rend the air exceedingly.

Here are a few corresponding Early Modern English examples of the “so great was” with plural noun phrases:

“so great was the calamities of those dayes in the often change of Princes and officers” EEBO A10649 Richard Rainolde [d. 1606] A chronicle of all the noble emperours of the Romaines, 1571

“Upon which, great was the acclamations of the people” EEBO A26603 George Monck, Duke of Albemarle [1608–1670] The declaration and speech . . . to the right honourable the Lord Mayor, aldermen and common-council of the city of London, 1660

“Yet so great was the differences amongst them,” EEBO A47947 G.H., tr. | Gregorio Leti [1630–1701] The history of the cardinals of the Roman Church, 1670

“they are called Hercules Labors, so great was the pains and so infinite the Toil of them.” EEBO A55340 Andrew Tooke, tr. [1673–1732] | François Pomey [1618– 1673] The Pantheon representing the fabulous histories of the heathen gods and most illustrious heroes, 1698

Here is a different type of syntax but note these two similar examples:

3 Nephi 10:12 and it was they which had not shed the blood of the saints which were spared.

“And they perceaved that it was they which were come agayne out of captivityte,” EEBO A10349 Miles Coverdale, tr. [1488–1568] Biblia the Byble, that is, the holy Scripture of the Olde and New Testament, faithfully translated in to Englyshe, 1535

Finally, here are some examples of “there was” with plural noun phrases. I have alternated the Book of Mormon examples with the Early Modern English examples. Each of these two sets shows a high degree of correspondence:

Ether 13:18 there was many people which was slain by the sword

“there was many people both in that Nation and elsewhere, in whom there was some true desires and breathings raised and begot” EEBO A47127 George Keith [1639?–1716] The benefit, advantage and glory of silent meetings, 1687

1 Nephi 18:25 we did find upon the land of promise as we journeyed in the wilderness that there was beasts in the forests of every kind

“When the Portingales first discovered it, there was not any beasts, nor fruite, at all within the Iland” EEBO A05569 William Phillip, tr. | Jan Huygen van Linschoten [1563– 1611] His discours of voyages into ye Easte & West Indies, 1598

Alma 4:9 there was envyings and strifes and malice and persecutions and pride,

“At that time there was murmurings and plottings against the then Oppressors” EEBO A56509 John Partridge [1644–1715] An astrological judgment on the great and wonderful year 1688, 1688

3 Nephi 8:7 And there was exceeding sharp lightnings such as never had been known in all the land.

“And there was lightnings, and voyces, and thundrings, and an earthquake, and great haile.” EEBO A91909 John Robotham [fl. 1654] The mystery of the two witnesses Unveiled, 1654

Mormon 9:19 And if there was miracles wrought, then why has God ceased to be a God of miracles and yet be an unchangeable Being?

“there was also greater miracles wrought in behalf of Truth.” EEBO A56539 Joseph Walker | Blaise Pascal [1623–1662] Monsieur Pascall’s thoughts, meditations, and prayers, touching matters moral and divine, 1688

Ether 13:26 And there was robbers, and in fine, all manner of wickedness upon all the face of the land.

“there was two thieves crucified, and one of the thieves reviled Christ” EEBO A40122 George Fox [1624–1691] The arraignment of popery when Christ was crucified, 1667

### **The Case of the {-th} Plural in the Earliest Text**

The earliest text of the Book of Mormon employs the {-th} plural—for example, “Nephi’s brethren rebelleth”—in a way that is substantially similar to what is found in many writings of the Early Modern period. The earliest text neither under uses nor overuses the construction, and it manifests inflectional variation and differential usage rates typical of Early Modern English. The totality of the evidence tells us that the critical text of the Book of Mormon is most reasonably classified as a 16th- or 17th-century text.

Careful readers of the Yale edition of the Book of Mormon notice the following language:

1 Nephi [heading] Nephi’s brethren rebelleth against him. He confoundeth them and buildeth a ship.

2 Nephi [heading] Nephi’s brethren rebelleth against him. The Lord warns Nephi to depart into the wilderness etc.

Some corresponding Early Modern English passages:

“as for the comon people that rebelleth about London” EEBO A71318 John Bourchier, tr. (Lord Berners) [1466/67–1533] | Jean Froissart [1338?–1410?] Chronicles, 1523. This example is ambiguous since people can be construed as either singular or plural.

“Let they that rebelleth beware” EEBO A04807 William Kethe [d. 1608?] A ballet declaringe the fal of the whore of babylone, 1548

Here are some examples of the {-th} plural form using other verbs paired with the corresponding Early Modern English examples:

2 Nephi 2:10 And because of the intercession for all, all men cometh unto God.

“Many tymes of wyse yonge men cometh olde foles, And of yonge fooles customably cometh wise olde men” EEBO A02303 John Bourchier, tr. (Lord Berners) [1466/67–1533] | Antonio de Guevara [d. 1545?] The golden boke of Marcus Aurelius Emperour and eloquent orator, 1537

Mosiah 3:18 but men drinketh damnation to their own souls

“To say this worde, and fouler is the dede whan men so drinketh of the whyte & rede” EEBO A18528 William Thynne, ed. [d. 1546] | Geoffrey Chaucer [d. 1400] Works, 1542

“and so one man, or several men, drinketh by the measure, will, and appetite of another” EEBO A37049 James Durham [1622–1658] A practical exposition of the X. Commandements, 1675

Helaman 5:12 a foundation whereon if men buildeth they cannot fall.

“And that of me men . . . byldeth fayre edefyces” EEBO A07095 William Caxton, tr. [ca. 1422–1491] | Aesop The subtly historyes and fables of Esope, 1484

Here are some additional Early Modern English examples using other verbs:

“But the Frensshe men knoweth all our secretes and counsayles” EEBO A71319 John Bourchier, tr. (Lord Berners) [1466/67–1533] | Jean Froissart [1338?–1410?] Chronicles, 1525

“but withal, he saith, honour that which is most excellent in the world, that which disposeth and Governs all” EEBO A61535 Edward Stillingfleet [1635–1699] A defence of the discourse concerning the idolatry practised in the Church of Rome, 1676

“being born, it nourisheth and sustains us, and at last takes us into her entrails as in our Couch, and keepeth us until our God shall call us to appear before his Tribunal” EEBO A43357 Heraclitus Christianus, or, The man of sorrow, 1677

“This goodness he despiseth, and maintains in himself the hardness of an impenitent heart, a heart that will not relent.” EEBO A45885 Nathaniel Ingelo [1621?–1683] A discourse concerning Repentance, 1677

“for they that hath the Commandments, and keepeth them, dwelleth in Christ, and Christ in them . . . for he that manifests his faith by being obedient, he shall live for ever: for the Kingdome of God consisteth not in words, but in life and power, which is righteousness; and that procureth true peace, such peace as men and Devils can never take from you” EEBO A85476 Daniel Gotherson An alarm to all priests, judges, magistrates, souldiers, and all people, 1660

Here are some “unexpected” examples the {-th} plural form. They are unexpected because they are used with a singular verb:

1 Nephi 22:2 And I Nephi saith unto them

“Thus Paul argues this, I saith that every one of you saith, I am Paul, I am Apollo, I am Cephas, & I am Christ” EEBO A09971 John Preston [1587–1628] Grace to the humble: As preparations to receive the Sacrament, 1639

Mosiah 26:23 For it is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world, for it is I that hath created them. And it is I that granteth unto him that believeth

Ether 4:19 And behold, it is I that hath spoken it.

“O Israel, it is I, it is I, which forgeeveth thee thy sinnes.” EEBO A67926 John Foxe [1516–1587] Actes and monuments of matters most speciall and memorable, happenyng in the Church, 1583

“It is I that doth profit thereby” EEBO A08550 R.P., tr. The sixth booke of the Myrrour of knighthood, 1598

“It is I (saith the Lord) that doth sanctifie you: It is I that doth act every Grace; it is I that do put your hearts into a good frame” EEBO A09950 John Preston [1587–1628] The breast-plate of faith and Love, 1630

“it is I, that worketh in thee both to will, and to do, of my good pleasure” EEBO A45630 Sir James Harrington [1607–1680] Hor. consecrata, or, Spiritual pastime, 1682

1 Nephi 12:9 Thou remembereth the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

“He is sycke that thou asketh after.” EEBO A10245 tr. | Pythagoras A brefe and pleasaunte worke, and sience, of the philosopher, 1560

Interestingly, the {-th} plural is a minority usage both in Early Modern English and in the Book of Mormon. In general, the earliest text of the Book of Mormon offers us a wider glimpse of Early Modern English than the King James Bible does.

In the King James Bible text, verbs whose explicit subject is *they* never take {-th} form. Also the {-th} plural form is rare in the King James Bible, in part because the majority of the decrease in use of that form occurred before the year 1600. The peak period of syntax like “angels hath ministered unto him” (1 Nephi 16:38) appears to have been during the first half of the 1500s. It was certainly employed at a much higher rate in the year 1500 than it was 200 years later.

The relative rates of use of the {-th} plural are more important than the absolute numbers. The {-th} plural—which was verb inflection from the Middle English period—was relatively frequent in the first half of the Early Modern period, especially during the early 1500s. But it was never the dominant form, and neither is it in the Book of Mormon. By the year 1600 a large drop off in usage had occurred, partially explaining its relative absence in the King James Bible. By the 1690s the syntax was rare, and still in a downward trend. By the 1800s it is virtually nonexistent.

The {-th} plural usage in the Book of Mormon is neither biblical nor like the early 19th century. In the Book of Mormon it occurs with many more verbs besides high-frequency auxiliary verbs, and in many more contexts besides conjoined singular, abstract noun phrases. If the usage were similar to biblical usage, then it might be claimed reasonably that it was done in imitation of it.

As mentioned, the King James Bible has no examples of they with {-th} inflection. The Book of Mormon has four of these:

2 Nephi 7:2 “and they dieth because of thirst.”

2 Nephi 26:10 “for because they yieldeth unto the devil and choose works of darkness rather than light,”

Alma 55:8 “Behold, we have escaped from the Nephites and they sleepeth.”

Moroni 7:17 “neither doth they which subject themselves unto him”

Here are some Early Modern English examples:

“yet they sprinkleth, boileth and welleth up.” EEBO A21119 Roger Edgeworth [d. 1560] Sermons very fruitfull, godly, and learned, 1557

“the ship drawing nere unto the land, as sone as they ar towched with the smell of the ayer, they dieth owt of hand. . . . and their possessions they kepeth for them,” EEBO A07396 Thomas Stapleton, tr. [1535–1598] | Venerable Bede [673–675] The history of the Church of Englande, 1565

“most speciall and memorable, happenyng in the Church Other mens fields they repeth,” EEBO A67922 John Foxe [1516–1587] Actes and monuments of matters, 1583

In summary, we have seen that the {-th} plural, as contained in the earliest text of the Book of Mormon, is neither biblical nor 19th-century in character. So by using syntax of the type “Nephi’s brethren rebelleth” somewhat frequently throughout the dictation, Joseph Smith went against both his own American English and biblical language.

The Book of Mormon’s {-th} plural rate appears to be less than 10%. Thus one can reasonably argue that the {-th} plural of the earliest text is not a case of consciously overusing the construction.

The Book of Mormon exhibits variation in this particular pattern that is typical of the Early Modern period:

1 Nephi [heading] “Nephi taketh his brethren and returns to the land of Jerusalem after the record of the Jews.”

Note the use of both “taketh” and “returns” in this verse. When we read the earliest text, we are reading Early Modern English!

Here are some examples of this same variation in Early Modern English:

“he taketh divers Towns, and returns to Spain” EEBO A57652 Alexander Ross [1591–1654] The history of the world, 1652

“Let us behold the Sunne, it riseth and setteth, and returnes againe to his place,” EEBO A02841 Thomas Hayne [1582–1645] The times, places, and persons of the holie Scripture. Otherwise entituled, The generall view of the Holy Scriptures, 1607

“In the meane time Philip razeth his Campe, and returnes to Corinthe,” EEBO A09833 Edward Grimston, tr. | Polybius The history of Polybius the Megalopolitan, 1633

“in the grave it dryeth up, and returnes to dust.” EEBO A08025 Henry Isaacson, tr. [1581–1654] | Saint Bellarmino [1542–1621] Iacob’s ladder, 1638

“The body is of the dust, and returneth to dust, the soule commeth from God, and returnes to God againe.” EEBO A13752 Daniel Featly et al. Thrēnoikos. The house of mourning, 1640

“he sheweth his feruencie, and repeates the same againe” EEBO A09442 William Perkins [1558–1602] Lectures vpon the three first chapters of the Reuelation, 1604

“He assureth the Citties, and levies men with all expedition.”

“He pincheth some, and ruines others.”

“He raiseth the siege, and retires in good order, fearing a charge.”

“He dislodgeth without Trumpet, and seemes rather to flie, then retire.”

“He dischargeth two pistolls, and seekes to force the house.”

“He chargeth, and overthrowes the first he encounters.”

EEBO A11931 Edward Grimeston, tr. | Jean de Serres [1540?–1598] A general inuentorie of the history of France, 1607

Here is an syntax in the Book of Mormon not found in the King James Bible:

Helaman 8:19 “ever since the days of Abraham there hath been many prophets that hath testified these things”

Here are three Early Modern English excerpts that correspond to Helaman 8:19:

“there hathe ben but fewe that hathe edefyed grete places and houses” EEBO A16638 Sebastian Brant [1458–1521] The shyppes of fooles, 1509

“There hath bene Popes which hath bene poyseners” EEBO A02886 John Bale [1495–1563] A mysterye of inyquyte, 1545

“there hath bene many, that hath sclaudered you, and the Gospell of our Saviour Christe.” EEBO A67926 John Foxe [1516–1587] Actes and monuments of matters most speciall and memorable, happenyng in the Church, 1583

So the syntax of Helaman 8:19 was not Joseph Smith overdoing the biblical. Instead, it was Early Modern English usage not to be found in the King James Bible.

Here is an interesting Book of Mormon example (also in found Early Modern English) where the subject is *ye* (or *they*), and the {-th} plural only occurs following an ellipsis in the following phrase:

Helaman 13:21 “ye have set your hearts upon them and [. . .] hath not hearkened unto the words of him who gave them unto you.”

“ye have disarmed my tongue of complement, and [. . .] hath turned the edge of my own weapon against me” EEBO A50450 Sir George Mackenzie [1636–1691] Aretina, 1660

“they haue found a treasure, and [. . .] hath felt the sweetnes of this Manna” EEBO A19504 William Cowper [1568–1619] A preparatiue for the new Passeouer, 1607

“they have come sick and weakly, and have gone away so, and [. . .] hath found your promises and assurances of no effect at all.” EEBO A44800 Francis Howgill [1618–1669] Mistery Babylon, 1659

“they have ordained one another, and hath set up a trade of preaching, and [. . .] hath fill’d the world with darknesse” EEBO A44802 Francis Howgill [1618–1669] One of the Antichrists voluntiers defeated and the true light vindicated, 1660

Here is a surprising finding in the Book of Mormon unrelated to our current topic. It is an instance of the plural *has*. You will see that it is also attested to in Early Modern English examples:

Alma 57:36 and I trust that the souls of them which has been slain have entered into the rest of their God.

“it must be an entire heart, and none of those that has been pierced with a thousand Arrows” EEBO A70988 F.G., tr. | Madeleine de Scudery [1607–1701] Artamenes, 1653

“and strike down all those that has got the words but not the power, and reach to the life and immortality . . . are not they them that has set up all these outward things,” EEBO A40227 George Fox [1624–1691] The papists strength, principles, and doctrines, 1658

“and leave the persons for their faults to God, and them who has power to punish them.” EEBO A85769 William Guild [1586–1657] The throne of David, or, An exposition of the second of Samuell, 1659

“And now a few words by way of tender advice, to those who has been long seeking a pure Church, not a mined confused Rabble of godless Atheists,” EEBO A47152 George Keith [1639?–1716] Immediate revelation, 1668

“That the Father giveth no such gift to them that has sinned this sin; Is evident,” EEBO A30130 John Bunyan [1628–1688] Come & welcome to Jesus Christ, 1678

Look again at the example of Alma 57:36: and I trust that the souls of them which has been slain have entered into the rest of their God. There is also here a close variation pattern involving has and have. Note the same pattern in this Early Modern English example:

“the whole strain of them that has been taken off by the hand of Justice, . . . have so behaved themselves at the last cast, as if the whole Schism were upon a vie who should damn bravest.” EEBO A47819 Sir Roger L’Estrange [1616–1704] The character of a papist in masquerade, 1681

In summary, plural {-th} syntax in the earliest Book of Mormon text is very different from rare 19th-century auxiliary usage and from King James style (with occasional singular {-th} usage that looks to be plural). The systematic use of the {-th} plural in the Book of Mormon is neither overblown nor underdone. Interestingly, {-th} plural usage in the earliest Book of Mormon text is similar to 16th- and 17th-century syntactic patterns, in a number of ways.