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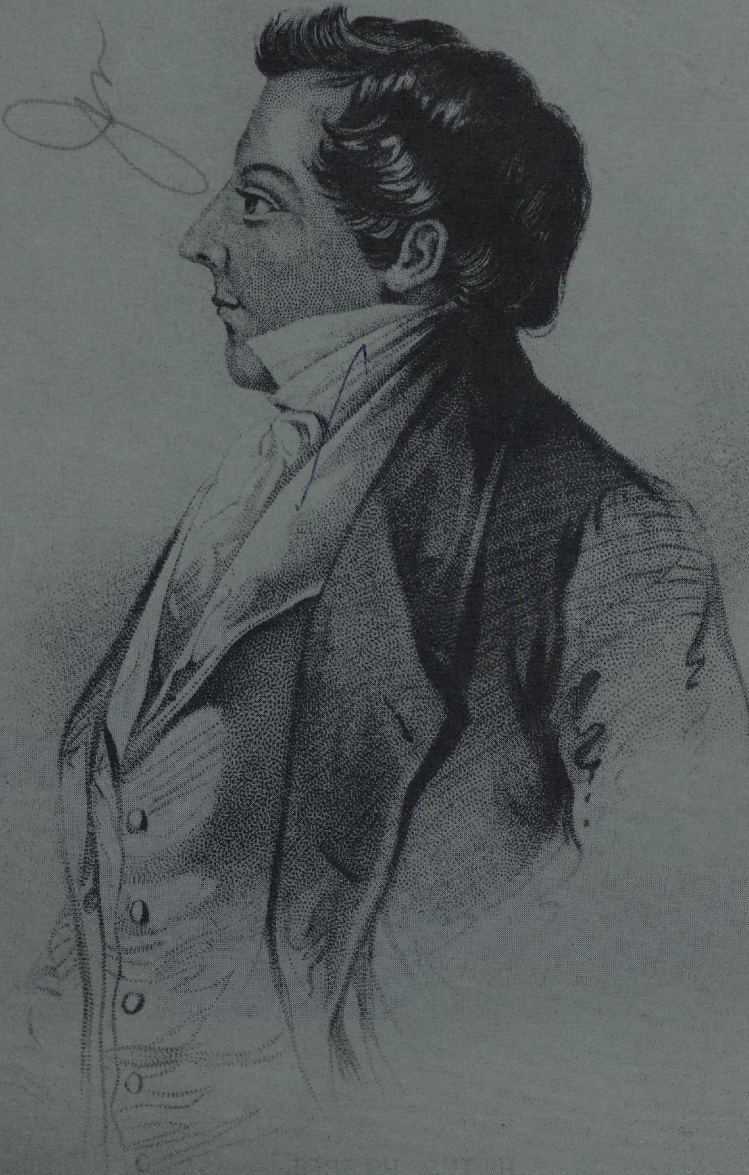
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Journal of Mormon History

for Ashroen

for



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COVER: This steel engraving of Joseph Smith, Jr., was prepared by Edwin Roffe for James Linforth's *Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley* (Liverpool and London, 1855). The engraving is based on a lithograph published in New York. Courtesy Utah State Historical Society, Charles Kelly Collection.

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MORMON HISTORY ASSOCIATION AWARDS FOR 1974

Book Award:

CHARLES S. PETERSON, *Take Up Your Mission: Mormon Colonizing along the Little Colorado River, 1870-1900* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1973).

Article Awards:

LESTER E. BUSH, JR., "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8 (1973): 11-68.

EUGENE E. CAMPBELL, "Brigham Young's Outer Cordon: A Reappraisal," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 41 (1973): 220-53.

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EDITORS of *Courage: A Journal of History, Thought and Action*,
for publishing stimulating reappraisals of Mormon history.

The Prophet Puzzle: Suggestions Leading Toward a More Comprehensive Interpretation of Joseph Smith

Jan Shipp

Joseph Smith was just one of a proliferation of preachers and prophets who found God along the stony ridges and narrow lakes of western New York in the first half of nineteenth century. It was a place and a time of intense interest in religion: pathways to paradise ran in all directions. Prospective pilgrims had a choice, and many a wanderer journeyed a little way down first one path and then another testing alternate routes to heaven. The story of the strange systems and unusual faiths that resulted is essentially a record of unsuccessful experiments with religion. Some survived for a season, but most of the cults and sects of the day disappeared at the death of their leaders — if they lasted that long. Of all the unorthodox theological systems that were introduced in the New York hinterland between 1800 and 1850, the only one that has become an important American religion is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Mormon church found scant support in New York State, however. Within a year after the formal organization of the church, the Mormons had started their celebrated westward hejira by moving to Ohio. Because the phenomenal growth of the organization began after this initial move from New York State, the successful development of the church has generally been predicated on evidence found in the subsequent history of the sect. Tendentious histories — whether pro or con — almost invariably begin with the events that preceded the founding of the church in 1830, but for a very long time the *objective* historiography of Mormonism was largely made up of studies which explained how the Mormons built the Kingdom of the Saints following the removal of that realm from western New York.

Jan Shipp, who is assistant professor of history and religious studies at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, presented an earlier version of this essay in September 1973 at the first annual meeting of the John Whitmer Historical Association.

Recently the "Case of the Missing Information about Mormon Origins," as Truman G. Madsen once styled the problem posed by the paucity of information on the New England-New York background, can be said to have been reopened. James B. Allen's article on "The Significance of Joseph Smith's 'First Vision' in Mormon Thought" was published in *Dialogue* in 1966, and the following year an intensive reexamination of Mormon beginnings was spurred headlong by the challenge to the integrity of Joseph Smith represented in the outcome of the Reverend Wesley P. Walters's investigation of the religious situation in and around Palmyra, New York, in the 1820s.¹ So much research has been carried out since then that a steady stream of articles, essays, and books on the early period in Mormon history is pouring forth.²

While some of these new works are little more than arguments with the Reverend Walters about LDS chronology, or with Philastus Hurlbut and Eber D. Howe about valid interviewing techniques, much of it is extremely interesting — and extremely significant. Richard L. Bushman's description of what one can learn from a close reading of the rhetoric of the Book of Mormon, for example, is not only intrinsically useful, but methodologically important. Mario S. De Pillis, with his analysis of dream accounts, is also making a methodological contribution while adding to our understanding

¹James B. Allen, "The Significance of Joseph Smith's 'First Vision' in Mormon Thought," *Dialogue* 1 (Autumn 1966): 29–45. The characterization of the need for information about the early period as a "case" calling for good detective work is recalled from Dr. Madsen's remarks at the 1968 Edwardsville Conference on the Mormons in Illinois. Reverend Walters's article, "New Light on Mormon Origins from the Palmyra Revival," was first published in 1967 as an Evangelical Theological Society tract. It was reprinted in *Dialogue* 4 (Spring 1969): 60–81.

²Concentrated research in the available records relevant to Mormon history in New York has been carried out under the direction of a committee of outstanding Mormon historians and scholars headed by Dr. Madsen. The first fruits of this project were presented in the Spring 1969 issue of *BYU Studies* (vol. 9), which included the following articles: James B. Allen and Leonard J. Arrington, "Mormon Origins in New York: An Introductory Analysis"; Dean C. Jessee, "The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision"; Milton V. Backman, Jr., "Awakenings in the Burned-over District: New Light on the Historical Setting of the First Vision"; Larry C. Porter, "Reverend George Lane — Good 'Gifts,' Much 'Grace,' and Marked 'Usefulness'"; T. Edgar Lyon, "How Authentic Are Mormon Historic Sites in Vermont and New York?"; Marvin S. Hill, "The Shaping of the Mormon Mind in New England and New York"; and Richard L. Anderson, "Circumstantial Confirmation of the First Vision through Reminiscences." The 1970 Spring issue of the same journal was also devoted to the New York period. It included two articles by Russell R. Rich, "Where Were the Moroni Visits?" and "The Dogberry Papers and the Book of Mormon" as well as Dean C. Jessee, "The Original Book of Mormon Manuscript"; Richard L. Anderson, "Joseph Smith's New York Reputation Reappraised"; Stanley B. Kimball, "The Anthon Transcript: People, Primary Sources, and Problems"; Leonard J. Arrington, "James Gordon Bennett's 1831 Report on 'The Mormonites'"; and Larry C. Porter, "The Colesville Branch and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon." A chapter on "The Church in New York and Pennsylvania, 1816–1831," in *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History*, ed. by F. Mark McKiernan, Alma R. Blair, and Paul M. Edwards (Lawrence, Kans., 1973), pp. 27–61, was also written by Mr. Porter. In addition, see Marvin S. Hill, "Joseph Smith and the 1826 Trial: New Evidence and New Difficulties," *BYU Studies* 12 (Winter 1972): 223–33; and "Brodie Revisited: A Reappraisal," *Dialogue* 7 (Winter 1972): 72–85; Milton V. Backman, Jr., *Joseph Smith's First Vision* (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1971), and Richard L. Bushman, "The First Vision Story Revived," *Dialogue* 4 (Spring 1969): 82–93; and Reverend Walters's reply to same, pp. 94–100.

of the initial appeal of Mormonism.³ At a less theoretical level, Dean Jessee's work with holograph writings provides precise information about who wrote what when, and, at the same time, demonstrates the procedures employed in the original production of such basic works as the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's history.⁴

Nevertheless, complacency is not in order. It is true that many major points have been clarified and many minor issues settled, but there are still loose ends not neatly tied up between the covers of *BYU Studies* and *Dialogue*; inconsistencies still exist that must be resolved before the case can be considered closed. Perhaps Marvin Hill's projected biography of the prophet, which — judging from his published articles — seems to promise a much needed new interpretation of Joseph Smith, will provide answers to all the unanswered questions about the Latter-day Saint leader's early career and the church's beginnings. In the meantime, all that can be said is that, while a great deal is known about the methods used in building up this extraordinary religious society, its creation is still surrounded by mystery.

Throughout the nineteenth century, when the church was regarded as a threat to the social and political fabric of the nation, those who wrote about it were less concerned with the mysterious nature of Mormon origins than with their perceptions of present dangers. For a very long time the mystery connected with Mormonism appeared to be corporate — and criminal — and its solution was seen, therefore, less as a matter of understanding Mormon origins and theological beliefs than discovering the secrets of the temple and penetrating the plottings of the "sinister" hierarchy.⁵ When polygamy and the political Kingdom were shorn away, the mystery for a time seemed to dissipate. Emphasis on the radical and revolutionary elements in Mormonism diminished, and the Saints seemed destined to fade unobtrusively into the American religious landscape. From the outside it even looked as if they might, in their search for acceptance and respectability, find a place, if not in the fold, then certainly along the fringes of American Protestantism.

In a recent essay, Klaus J. Hansen speculates that something of this sort has, in fact, happened. After reviewing the reasons which explain Mormonism's failure to fit into the pluralistic, voluntaristic pattern of nineteenth century American religion, he points out that, in the twentieth century, these reasons no longer function as boundaries marking Mormon peculiarity, and suggests that, as a result, Mormonism as a "distinct cultural unit" has

³Doctors Bushman and De Pillis read papers reporting the results of their research at a session on "Early Mormonism in Its American Setting" at the annual meeting of the Western Historical Association in New Haven, Connecticut, 13 October 1972.

⁴In addition to the articles noted above, see "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 11 (Summer 1971): 439-73.

⁵In a chronologically stratified representative sample of periodical articles on Mormons and Mormonism published between 1860 and 1895, 74 percent of the articles contained references to Mormonism as a threat to the American political system, 66 percent contained pejorative references to the internal control the church leaders exercised over the LDS community, but only 57 percent contained references which were coded as "unflattering descriptions of Joseph Smith, of the origins of Mormonism, or of the religion itself."

more or less ceased to exist.⁶ As is usually the case, Professor Hansen's elegant argument is extremely persuasive. Here, however, agreement must be made contingent on a clear understanding of the difference between a "cultural entity" and a religio-theological unit. While the homogeneous character of Mormondom is plainly giving way, the Saints are still set apart — certainly in their own self-consciousness — as a "community of the faithful." Despite a value structure and belief in Christ which Mormons share with middle-class American Protestants, the Saints have not been absorbed into Protestantism. A chosen people living in the new dispensation of the fullness of times cannot be a party to the denominational contract; they retain an identity as separate and distinct from American Protestantism as either Roman Catholicism or Judaism.⁷ For that reason the "mysteries" of Mormonism, particularly the enigmatic early years, remain matters of concern not only for Latter-day Saints who wish a deeper understanding of their faith, but also for historians who would fully comprehend American religion.

Now that the nineteenth century bias toward Brigham Young as the "real" genius of Mormonism is clearing away, it is obvious that the logical place to begin is with the study of Joseph Smith's life. That is not an easy task, however. As is so often the case with controversial figures, the prophet's adherents and detractors built up public images which they have been at pains to protect, leaving apparently irreconcilable interpretations of the Mormon leader's life to be dealt with. As a result, the historian must cope with the contradictory accounts found, on the one hand, in memoirs penned by apostates and in affidavits collected by Smith's enemies, and, on the other, in the official *History of the Church*, a reconstruction of events compiled by diverse persons, including the prophet himself, which was commenced in 1838 with the express purpose of countering the reports, circulated by "evil-disposed" persons, which were clearly designed to militate against the character of the church and its prophet. The situation is further complicated, moreover, by the need to establish the extent to which the contents of the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, and the revelations of the prophet — works purportedly produced with the aid of dicty — can be utilized as primary source material.

All these difficulties to the contrary notwithstanding, a continuing effort must be made to solve the mystery of Mormonism by coming to understand the enigma at its core. The image that now exists is fragmented and incomplete. The perspective must be lengthened through a consideration of the

⁶"Mormonism and American Culture: Some Tentative Hypotheses," in McKiernan et al., *Restoration Movement*, pp. 1-25. The complexity of the ideas put forth in this essay make summary difficult. The essay should be read in its entirety.

⁷This conclusion agrees with the characterization of Mormonism as the fourth major religion generally accepted in American society found in Mario S. De Pillis, "The Quest for Religious Authority and the Rise of Mormonism," *Dialogue* 1 (Spring 1966): 78. The full effect of the abandonment of the policy of the "literal gathering" is more apparent today than it was in 1966. While cultural distinctiveness is disappearing — an inevitable consequence, in any case, of the international outreach of both major branches of Mormonism — it is likely that the dispersal of LDS "communities of the faithful" throughout the nation and the world has resulted in a heightened consciousness of Mormon peculiarity, both from within and from without.

prophet in the context of the social, political, economic, and theological milieu from which he came; the range of resources must be expanded to utilize the information and the insight that can be found in the Mormon canon; and the entire project must be approached with an open mind, a generous spirit, and a determination to follow the evidence that appeals to reason from whatever source it comes, wherever it leads. Only then will the outcome be a picture of the prophet and an account of the foundations of the Mormon faith which will be convincing to both *tough* minds, which demand empirical facts, and *tender* minds, comfortable in the presence of leaps of faith. What follows here are some suggestions leading in that direction.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, western New York was, in effect, the New England frontier. As they crossed the Adirondacks, emigrants from New England left behind the Half-way Covenant that had allowed church membership to be handed down from generation to generation. On the frontier, the social satisfactions that had accompanied full communicant standing in the Congregational churches of the older settled regions all but disappeared. Even long after the frontier character of this area had passed away, religion ministered primarily to the emotional rather than the social needs of the populace. The unfolding economic opportunity that attended the building of the Erie Canal seemed to make all men fortune's heirs; status came with success, and society no longer gave church members special social or religious privilege.

This fluid economic and social environment made an anachronism of the theological doctrine of divine election, and yet the Protestant community was still too close to the Reformation to alter the balance between faith and works in favor of the latter. As a result the way of conventional Christianity throughout the district was the way marked out by George Whitefield and Gilbert Tennent during the Great Awakening in New England in the 1740s. Beyond the mountains, doctrinal distinctions denoting denominationalism were blurred by a stylized evangelism that forced the wide thoroughfare of Protestant Christianity into the straightened confines of the sawdust trail. Whether the ecclesiastical connection of the minister made the service a Baptist gathering or a Methodist meeting, the sermon followed the predicted pattern of its "New Light" Presbyterian prototype.

With jeremiads that were painstaking catalogues of the known sins of omission and commission that would lead to destructions — and they were legion — Charles Finney and his fellows cautioned the unregenerate to beware the day of judgment. While penitents approached the sinner's benches, these lamentations were extended into compelling crescendos of exhortation designed to disturb the indifferent and terrify the wicked with speculation about the fate of unrepentant sinners abandoned to the wrath of an angry God. As fear and guilt pulled heartstrings taut, the preacher watched with practiced eye for the signs that the limits of emotional stress were near. Sounds of weeping and audible appeals for mercy were the prelude to skillful modulation from admonition to invitation and promise. When a contrite soul accepted the pledges of forgiveness and love and yielded absolute trust in God, release and re-

joining — sometimes verging on ecstasy — followed. Another Christian had been born again.

As unquestionably effective as such techniques were, their often transitory results reflected the limitations of a theology that attempted a compromise between the uncertainty inherent in the doctrines of predestination and divine election and the ineffable assurance of the interior religious experience. Using conversion as a catalyst, the Puritan theologian Jonathan Edwards had sought to merge mystic rapture and Calvinistic logic into a stable compound, but the subtleties of the speculations of this great philosophic intellect were lost when lesser minds proved unable to keep conversion at the center of Christian life where it had been placed by the Northampton divine. One result was the development of an emotional evangelism that made conversion the capstone of religious experience.

The good Master Edwards had kindled such a fire as has never yet been put out, but seldom has the flame blazed so brightly or for so long as it did beside the banks of the Erie Canal during the youth of Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet. Revivalistic fervor swept through western New York State with such regularity that Orthodoxy back across the Adirondacks looked on the region as the "Burned-over District." The religious holocaust predicted by the use of this derogatory designation failed to occur, however, and in 1825 it was clear that the fire that raged over the area was like the fire in the midst of the bush that burned and was not consumed. As if increase of appetite had grown by what it fed on, the spiritual longings of the people had created one of those spheres of genuine religious exploration that have served from time to time throughout man's history as the seedbed for new theological systems.

Within a span of twenty-five years after the frontier gave way to the settled community life that paralleled the building of De Witt Clinton's canal, this "burnt" district sheltered a multitude of small bands and large congregations that had turned aside from traditional faiths to travel toward eternity along unmarked trails. As guides, contemporaries might follow Andrew Jackson Davis, the "Poughkeepsie Seer," and the amazing Fox Sisters into Spiritualism, or William Miller into Millennialism; they could make a more total commitment and move to Oneida to search for Perfection with John Humphrey Noyes; they could join the Shakers at New Lebanon or the Community of the Publik Universal Friend at Jerusalem in Yates County — or any of a host of lesser known groups that sought God with creeds embracing vegetarianism, sexual abstinence, communism, complex marriage, or some other equally esoteric doctrine.

But man has a way of packing the past among his personal possessions when he moves from place to place, and most of those who settled in the area had come with Protestant traditions so firmly fixed that no alternative was acceptable. The overwhelming majority of western New Yorkers looked for religious assurance in the old familiar places, and Presbyterians (and Congregationalists under the Plan of Union), Baptists, and Methodists all hastened to provide ministers to preach the gospel to the community beyond the Catskills. Unfortunately, these virtually simultaneous home missionary efforts

of the several Protestant denominations sometimes brought religious chaos, not spiritual comfort, for when conversion, rather than spiritual guidance and pastoral care, was made the primary purpose of the Protestant ministry, success became a matter of numbers. And since this quantitative criterion was not limited by the sum of uncommitted souls, the successful evangelist had to build his church by tearing others down. There was a buyer's market in salvation, and, in the confusion of contested credentials and conflicting claims, it was not at all unusual for a single soul to have been saved several times.

Although the Mormon prophet emerged from this volatile psychic ground, no evidence exists to indicate that the religious tensions there caused him to move — as many other incipient religious leaders did — through a succession of affiliations with different religious groups, searching for satisfactory answers to his spiritual questions. Like his father, Joseph Smith stood aside and refused to join any of the churches in the Palmyra region.

According to a biographical sketch written by his wife, Joseph Smith, Sr. did not become a member of any of the churches that were already established because he interpreted a dream (or vision) which he had had in 1811 — the elder Smith, like the father of Nephi in the Book of Mormon, regarded dream and vision as synonymous — as a warning that these churches were the outposts of Babylon.⁸ Joseph, Jr. came to the same conclusion in a not altogether different fashion. When he dictated the explanatory prologue to the official *History* in 1839, the prophet described the way that the bewildering religious landscape had confused him. He said that in 1820 he had made prayerful inquiry about which church he should join, and that the prayer had been answered in a vision wherein he saw two "personages" and was told that he should join none of the established churches as they were all wrong.⁹

Since the account of the first vision published in the *History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet* (the official history, Period One) seems to tie it chronologically to a revival that was going on in 1824 and 1825, since the prophet apparently mentioned this vision rarely, if at all, before 1830, and since no description of it seems to have been written down until almost a dozen years after it is said to have happened, Fawn Brodie, Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Wesley P. Walters, and many others take the position that the first vision never occurred — that the prophet invented it in order to defend himself when his credibility was under attack.¹⁰

These critics may be right, of course. Certainly the Reverend Walters's reconstruction of the events surrounding the 1824 revival, and his argument that this was the "war of words and the tumult of opinions" the prophet spoke

⁸Lucy Mack Smith, *History of the Prophet Joseph* (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1902), p. 54.

⁹Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Period I, History of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 6 vols., 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1955), 1:4–6. (An official publication of the Mormon church.)

¹⁰See Fawn M[cKay] Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York, 1945), p. 25; Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Joseph Smith's Strange Account of the First Vision* (Salt Lake City, Utah, n.d.), p. 3; Walters, "New Light on Mormon Origins," pp. 71–73.

of, is far more convincing than the counter-argument that Smith was referring to an awakening that took place, not in the immediate Palmyra-Manchester area, but nearby, around 1820.¹¹ But using the confused chronology presented in the official *History* as the basis for assuming that an early vision — one which led Joseph Smith to stay away from organized religion — never occurred is less persuasive. And, considering all the available evidence, it is an exercise in unsound logic to use the same confused chronology to question the reliability of Smith's reports of subsequent visions and to conclude that his descriptions of most, or all, of the spiritual events in his life during the 1820s are ex post facto inventions designed to validate the story of the discovery of the metal plates which became the basis for the Book of Mormon.

As for considering all the available evidence: In addition to William Smith's earliest known recollection of his brother Joseph's conversion, which does not connect the first vision to the 1824 revival, and in addition to the general tenor of the prophet's personal diaries, from which an attitude of piety and devoutness can be read back,¹² the evidence which has not been adequately brought to bear on this question is the Book of Mormon itself. Although this work has been considered — often at length — in general histories of Mormonism, it has by and large been neglected as a source which might facilitate a better understanding of Joseph Smith's early career. The reasons for this neglect center on the answers that have usually been given to questions about who wrote the Book of Mormon and what its intrinsic merit is. Most of the Mormons themselves have taken the position that Joseph Smith was the translator of the book, not its author, which means, of course, that since they believe the prophet did not write the book, they could not regard it as a potential source of insight into his early life. Throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century, many non-Mormons were led to a similar conclusion, not because they thought the substance of the Book of Mormon had been taken from the plates of Nephi et al., but because the work was widely believed to have been plagiarized from a manuscript which had been lost by the Reverend Solomon Spaulding. Even if this notion were wrong, and Joseph Smith had written the book, taking the work into account in explaining his career seemed foolish; after all, what could an amateurish historical novel masquerading as scripture reveal about a man's spiritual history?

The situation is changed now. In 1945, Fawn Brodie completely demolished the Spaulding manuscript myth and made it absolutely clear that anyone who wanted to fully understand Joseph Smith would have to come to terms with his "golden bible."¹³ A dozen years later, in a critical expli-

¹¹See Bushman, "The First Vision Story Revived"; Porter, "Reverend George Lane"; Porter, "The Church in New York and Pennsylvania, 1816–1831," chap. 1 in McKiernan et al., *Restoration Movement*; and Milton V. Backman, Jr., *Joseph Smith's First Vision*.

¹²Hill, "Brodie Revisited," pp. 76, 78–81.

¹³Mrs. Brodie categorized the Mormon Bible as merely one of several ostensibly inspired sacred books made up of "an obscure compound of folklore, moral platitude, mysticism, and millennialism" (p. 67). Readers of *No Man Knows My History* come away convinced, however, that the "compound" is Joseph Smith's own.

tion included in his 1957 sociological study of the Latter-day Saints, Thomas F. O'Dea made it just as clear that scholars are equally mistaken in accepting Mark Twain's assessment of the Book of Mormon as "chloroform in print," and in taking, at face value, Judge Cradlebaugh's description of the book as "a conglomeration of illy cemented creeds from other religions."¹⁴ As a result, historians are reconsidering the Book of Mormon. And it is becoming increasingly obvious that, whatever its source — whether it was translated from engravings on metal plates or dictated directly from Joseph Smith's extraordinary mind — this book functions as a powerful and provocative synthesis of Biblical experience and the American dream, and it occupies a position of major importance in both the religious and intellectual history of the United States.

It is likewise evident that, beneath its crude exterior, the Book of Mormon reflects knowledge of the Bible, familiarity with theological currents, perception of the problems posed by Protestant denominationalism, and experience with extra-rational religious phenomena that simply are not consistent with the theory that its religious framework was an afterthought.¹⁵ Since it posits a Book of Mormon produced by an essentially irreligious young man, adopting such a position, in fact, requires a greater leap of faith than accepting a naturalistic explanation which holds (1) that Joseph grew up in a family fascinated with religion; (2) that, as he said, he thoroughly searched the scriptures and came to know them well; (3) that around 1820 he probably did have a vision, or go through some other nonrational experience, which at least left him convinced that his father's dream about the organized churches all being in error was true; (4) that in the throes of revivalistic excitement he could well have come to doubt his earlier conclusion about the Protestant churches, leading him to inquire about the matter a second time, thereby stimulating a second vision around 1824; (5) that (as will be discussed below) in connection with his money-digging activities, he actually found some Indian artifacts, or he hoped so much to do so, that the discovery or the desire for the discovery, inspired the writing of the Book of Mormon. Which, leaving aside the question of whether the book has captured eternal truths, plainly reflects the religious experiences and concerns that had been an important part of his life until that time.

¹⁴See chap. 2 of O'Dea's *The Mormons* (Chicago, 1957). Mark Twain's sally is in the appendix to *Roughing It*. Judge Cradlebaugh's description was given in his testimony before Congress in 1863. It is reprinted in Andrew J. Hanson, "Utah and the Mormon Problem," *Methodist Quarterly Review* 64 (April 1882): 213. The description is, of course, not unique: it is a variation of Alexander Campbell's 1832 charge that the book contained answers to every conceivable theological question. Nineteenth and early twentieth century anti-Mormon literature, especially that portion of it published in religious periodicals, is shot through with similar charges that the Book of Mormon is made up of wholesale borrowings from other religions.

It is likely that Sterling McMurrin's *Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1965) is also a factor in the reappraisal of the Book of Mormon.

¹⁵Reverend Walters summarizes this position in the concluding section of "New Light on Mormon Origins." With reference to this same point, Mrs. Brodie states: "What had been originally conceived as a mere money-making history of the Indians had been transformed at some point early in the writing, or possibly even before the book was begun, into a religious saga" (p. 83).

Because Smith's history — so misleadingly alleged to have been written "by himself" was, at once, a defensive reconstruction of events and a proselytizing treatise, and because, as Joseph grew in spiritual stature and theological sophistication, he seems to have reinterpreted some of the things that occurred in his early life, the confused accounts of the spiritual episodes of the 1820s will never be reconciled entirely. Yet the effort to learn more must be continued, for the greater our knowledge of the prophet's history in the decade prior to 1830, the more likely we are to comprehend the meaning of events which occurred after the founding of the church.

If the foregoing conceptualization of the events of Joseph Smith's youth which includes the visions as an integral part of his life is not completely congruent with what really happened, it does, nevertheless, assist us in understanding his complex personality. Reports of visions not unlike those described by this gregarious and handsome, albeit somewhat strange young man were by no means unknown in western New York in the 1820s, but these experiences were sufficiently singular to convince Joseph Smith that he was set apart from his peers. His subjective recognition of separateness may well account for the apparently compulsive need for acceptance that led him into "vices and follies" after he had been rejected "by those who ought," he said, "to have been my friends and to have treated me kindly." He wanted to belong, but he could not; he did not fit the pattern of men whose worlds were limited by scant schooling, mortgaged homesteads, and revivalist religion. He was different; he knew it, and the knowledge made him abnormally sensitive to the opinions of others. Although it was camouflaged in later years by his self-confident, almost cocksure, personality, this sensitivity persisted throughout his life. It caused him to place an unwarranted value on flattery and praise, and it made him react to criticism with an intensity that, at times, approached paranoia, in his transformation of slight censure into "bitter persecution."

It was not his propensity to prophetic vision that first made Joseph Smith's difference distinct and introduced him to condemnation, however, for he was also gifted with what his contemporaries called "second sight." Using a "peepstone" (a luminous semi-precious gemstone which served as a screen for mental images) as a kind of psychic Geiger counter, Smith attempted to supplement the meager farm income of his family by assisting in the location of lost articles and buried "treasure." Because ventures of this nature which proved unsuccessful left the "peeper" vulnerable to charges of dishonesty and fraud, Smith was brought to trial in 1826 after he had failed to locate a silver mine he had promised to find, and he was found guilty of being a disorderly person and a fraud.

A year or so following the conclusion of that trial, Smith reported that he had, in his possession, a book, "written upon gold plates, [containing] an account of the former inhabitants of this continent and the sources from which they sprang." The existence of the plates, Smith said, had been revealed by an angel; they were instruments of divine revelation, which would, after translation, be the occasion of the ushering in of the new dispensation of the fullness of times. When the translation of the plates was completed

and published to the world, the temporal juxtaposition of these two apparently antithetical activities — digging for money and translating holy scripture — was used to bring the prophet's integrity into question and to cast doubt on the validity of his claims.

Testimony was collected in 1833 from almost a hundred persons who had lived in the same general area where the prophet grew up, and their affidavits almost uniformly maligned the reputation of the Smith family and featured reports of the prophet's youthful search for buried treasure. Mormon apologists have sought to discredit these affidavits by charging muckraking, and demonstrating how the information the witnesses supplied was contaminated by the attitude of the investigators. They are probably right on both counts. But attempts to discredit the information gathered by Philastus Hurlbut and Eber D. Howe can never prove that the attitudes reflected in the affidavits were not generally current, or that the information in them is necessarily wrong, because newspaper articles, written by Obadiah Dogberry, the Reverend Diedrich Willers, and James Gordon Bennett, which contain precisely the same information were published in 1831 — a full two years before the preparation of *Mormonism Unveiled*.

The fact that so many of Smith's neighbors and casual acquaintances used the reputation of the Smith family (an important issue, but one which will not be dealt with here) and the "money-digging" to demonstrate the incongruity between the man they knew and a man of God is not surprising if the extraordinary difference between their perception of jovial Joseph and their Old Testament notions of appropriate prophets is kept in mind.

The situation can perhaps be compared to one occasionally encountered in today's tragic world. A "model" devout church-going teen-aged boy suddenly kills his father, and neighbours and casual acquaintances — finding it difficult to immediately alter their perception of the boy — explain over and over again that the young man had been a perfect child. Just as these explanations are crucial in developing a psychic profile which will facilitate an understanding of the patricidal act, so the Dogberry, Bennett, and Hurlbut and Howe reports of the way the people of Palmyra perceived the prophet are crucial to the development of a complete religious profile of Joseph Smith.¹⁶

Although Professor Hill is undoubtedly right in his assertion that necromancy and religious faith were not incompatible in nineteenth century America,¹⁷ it is nevertheless clear that the prophet and those who participated with him in the compilation of the official *History of the Church* were anxious not to emphasize the prophet's early connection with the divining art. It seems reasonable to conclude that the motive for playing down this part of the prophet's background was the knowledge that it could be used as the basis for charges that might endanger his reputation. But by sliding over that part of his life in the preparation of his history, Smith left himself

¹⁶The Dogberry editorials and selections from the affidavits collected by Hurlbut and Howe are reprinted in the appendix to *No Man Knows My History*. Bennett's articles are reprinted in Leonard J. Arrington, "James Gordon Bennett's 1831 Report on the 'Mormonites,'" *BYU Studies* 10 (Spring 1970): 353-64.

¹⁷Hill, "Brodie Revisited," p. 78.

vulnerable to the charges that have been used from that day to this as Exhibit A to prove his, at best, insincerity; at worst, outright fraud.

If the prophet's preference for leaving the money-digging part of his career out of the picture is ignored, and the events of that part of his life are placed alongside the clearly defined spiritual events of his early years (see table below), a pattern emerges which leaves little room for doubting that Smith's use of the seerstone was an important indication of his early and continued interest in extra-rational phenomena, and that it played an important role in his spiritual development.

1820	first vision
1822	peepstone discovered while digging a well
1823-24	angel said to have revealed the existence of the plates
1824-26	most intense period of money-digging activity
1826	trial at Bainbridge
1827	Smith reports having possession of the plates
1828-29	engraving on the plates is "translated" by means of the "Urim and Thummim," an instrument which operated on the same principle as the peepstone.

Integrated in this fashion, the early events of Smith's life add up to a coherent whole that makes more sense than the charlatan-true prophet dichotomy which has plagued Mormon history from the beginning.

Historians who deal with Joseph Smith's post-1830 career are also faced with disparate interpretative models, but since the fruits of the prophet's labors after the church was established are more amenable to assessment, these models do not represent the same sort of polar opposites that have been developed to explain the Book of Mormon. The building up of Kirtland, Far West, and Nauvoo, the formation of an efficient and effective organizational structure for the church, and the overall development and remarkable growth of Mormonism were substantial achievements — feats which can hardly be credited to a ne'er-do-well, practiced in the magic arts and proficient at deception and trickery, or, for that matter, to a prophet intoxicated with divinity. Some students of the Mormon past have denied Smith's crucial role as the leader of the church — suggesting that he was a dreamer, a visionary, or a madman, who was fortunate enough to have Brigham Young around to handle practical things, and who managed to be martyred, as Bernard DeVoto said, "at precisely the right time," to allow his blood to become "the seed of the church." But this view, like the notion that someone other than Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, has not survived in the wake of Fawn Brodie's portrait of the prophet in *No Man Knows My History*. Historians are now generally agreed that the prophet's influence was the decisive factor in almost every phase of the construction of the Mormon Kingdom, though they do not agree on the reasons why this is so. Devotional interpretations explain almost everything in terms of the working out of the Will of the Lord, but historical interpretations of Smith's later career, in the main, are variations on two themes: Joseph Smith as charismatic personality and Joseph Smith as pragmatic prophet.

These two themes are not diametrically opposed; as categories they are not mutually exclusive; each depends on the other. Biographical treatments of that part of Smith's life which follows the founding of the church, therefore, betray less anti-Mormon—pro-Mormon bias than the portrayals of the years of his youth. The images remain distressingly different even so. Difficult questions are not adequately answered either with the explanation that the prophet was an effective leader because he was ultimately taken in by his own deception, or with the reminder that the prophet was a prophet only when he was acting as such.

Perhaps the situation will be clarified if the problem is approached from another direction. Joseph Smith was a dynamic personality, it is true; and there was undoubtedly a charismatic quality to his leadership. If his charisma is seen not as a function of his personality, but as an integral part of his role as prophet, seer, and revelator, the reasons for the reactions to his leadership of both Mormons and non-Mormons will be more intelligible. While the distinction being made here was not important for the large proportion of the Saints who perceived his personality and his prophet's role as one, it is important in fathoming the behavior of those Saints who made Smith's ability to carry everything before him contingent on their ideas about the authenticity of his prophetic position. When his pronouncements and actions led certain Saints to conclude that Smith was a fallen prophet, his charisma, for them, evaporated.

The prophet, seer, and revelator *role*, then, is central to an understanding of the prophet's life. Because this role grew out of, and was defined by, the Book of Mormon and the circumstances surrounding its "translation," it is there that we must look to get a glimpse of how the prophet's role was perceived by Joseph Smith and by his followers. There, too, we must turn if we would begin to analyze the importance of the *role* of the prophet as a factor in early Mormonism's appeal.

The Book of Mormon claimed to be the history of the Western Hemisphere between 600 BC and 400 AD, but its account of that millennium was interspersed with such an astonishing variety of philosophical notions and theological speculations that it was immediately apparent that this was no ordinary history. The work recounted stories of voyages and battles and tales of intrigue and treason. Yet the most striking passages in the Book of Mormon were those which were essentially explications of ideas that had also been a part of the visions of Joseph Smith's youth. Allusions to the ideas which, according to Smith's own account, were conceived in the course of his extraordinary experiences were particularly clear in the second section of the book. This section, the book of 2 Nephi, included a series of chapters which provided a detailed description of the state of society that would exist at the day when the plates of gold would be opened to the man chosen of God. These supposedly prophetic predictions returned again and again to the themes of the visions; that churches already current were corrupt, and that a book containing a "revelation from God from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof" would be delivered into the hands of a "seer" whom the Lord

would bless, whose name like that of his father would be Joseph, who would bring the people who loved the Lord to salvation.¹⁸

Since a far greater portion of the book was concerned with the fanciful history of the Western Hemisphere, it stands to reason that its initial appeal was not entirely religious. This was a time when the people of the United States were busily engaged in the manufacture of instant heritage, substituting inspiration for antiquity with regard to the Constitution and the law, and producing a veritable hagiography of popular biography designed to turn America's political leaders into national heroes in the shortest possible time. Joseph Smith's visionary account of the American past was, therefore, perhaps not entirely out of place.¹⁹ The passages which referred to the United States as the "land of promise" and as "a land which is choice above all other lands" appealed to (and reflected) the exceedingly nationalistic sentiment of the age in overt fashion. And in addition, Smith's golden book was a fascinating expression of the prevalent American desire to declare cultural independence from Europe. In a pseudo-Elizabethan prose style that recalled the King James version of the Bible, the Book of Mormon maintained that the American Indians were remnants of the twelve tribes of Israel, and that Christ had appeared on this continent in 34 AD. Thus this book provided a connecting link between the history of the United States and the Judeo-Christian tradition that by-passed the European culture filter altogether.

Nevertheless, this unconventional pre-Columbian history of the Western Hemisphere must, in large measure, be regarded as but suits and trappings for the prophetic device that reiterated the errors of established churches and promised that the seer who read the record found on the golden plates would be the agency through which the ancient church in all its purity should be restored.

And it shall come to pass that my people . . . shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions. . . .

If they will repent and hearken unto my words, and not harden their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come into the covenant and be numbered among this remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance . . . that they may build a city which shall be called the New Jerusalem.

And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth Zion.²⁰

Joseph Smith said that the "miracle" of translation was accomplished by means of a "curious instrument which the ancients called 'Urim and Thummim,' . . . two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow fastened to

¹⁸Specific references to the errors of already established churches are found in 2 Nephi 26:20-21; 28:3-20. The content of the records engraved on the plates of gold are described in 2 Nephi 27:6-11; 28:2. The prophecy about the seer to be called Joseph is in 2 Nephi 3:1-19.

¹⁹The German historian Peter Meinhold has commented at length on the way in which the Book of Mormon provided America with a useable past. See "Die Anfänge des Amerikanischen Geschichtsbewusstseins," *Saeculum* 5 (1954): 65-86. This work is discussed in Klaus J. Hansen's chapter on "Mormonism and the American Dream," *Quest for Empire* (East Lansing, Mich., 1970).

²⁰Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 29:14; 3 Nephi 21:22-23; 1 Nephi 13:37.

a breastplate," that somehow allowed him to read the "reformed Egyptian" engraving as if it were English.²¹ As news of his unusual project spread across the countryside, a small band of followers including Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Knight, several members of the family of Peter Whitmer, and most of Smith's own immediate family gathered round. They watched the progress of the work as Smith dictated it from behind a makeshift curtain to be written out on foolscap paper by Cowdery or Harris, or his new bride, Emma, and they were convinced that Joseph Smith had a divine calling.

Martin Harris's wife, Lucy, was convinced otherwise, and so after a considerable portion of the manuscript had been completed, Harris persuaded the translator to let him take those pages home in order to prove to Lucy that the work was inspired of God. But Lucy Harris was not impressed. She had never liked Joseph Smith, and she heartily disapproved of her husband's association with him. She feared, not without reason, that Harris intended to use his modest fortune to make the publication of Smith's golden bible possible; and consequently, when she got her hands on the manuscript, she destroyed it.

The crisis that resulted profoundly affected the new religion. Joseph Smith prayed for guidance and received two revelations directing that the lost section should not be retranslated. Lest the devil arrange publication of the missing section, making any textual discrepancies lead readers to doubt the work's veracity, God would provide another set of plates which would summarize the account contained in the missing chapters.²² Thus did Joseph Smith don the prophet's mantle.

Thomas F. O'Dea suggests that the exigency of the situation with which Smith was faced simply proved to be the necessary occasion for the introduction of contemporary revelation; he says that a belief in continuing revelation was vital to the secure establishment of the new religion, and that it should probably have come in any case.²³ Fawn Brodie failed to credit the translator with so much foresight; she concluded that the revelations were a ruse — perhaps an unconscious one — to conceal the fact that the story of the golden plates was false, and that Smith merely capitalized on their effect among his followers.²⁴ Yet Fawn Brodie and Thomas O'Dea agree that this event was decisive in Mormon history, and most students of Mormonism concur, so that accounts of the origins of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints usually trace the doctrine of continuing revelation to this juncture in Joseph Smith's career.

Notwithstanding the importance of the doctrine of continuing revelation in the development of the faith, few serious attempts have been made to

²¹In his 1974 Mormon History Association Presidential Address, " 'Is There No Help for the Widow's Son': Mormonism and Masonry," Reed C. Durham alluded to a Masonic legend which utilized many of the same elements — metal plates, stones called Urim and Thummim, and Egyptian hieroglyphics — found in Smith's account of the origin of the Book of Mormon. The quotation is from the Wentworth Letter, Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:537.

²²*Ibid.*, 1: 22–28.

²³O'Dea, *The Mormons*, pp. 19–20.

²⁴Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, pp. 55–57.

delineate the difference between these revelations and Smith's earlier esoteric activities. Church doctrine makes no distinction between the divine character of the Book of Mormon and the prophet's revelations, and that may explain why Latter-day Saints have not done so. From the outside, all the reports of visions and revelations and the writing of golden bibles and the pursuit of treasure with a peepstone tend to become so confusing that it is entirely understandable that historians often dismiss the problem by saying that it is all a matter of faith. And indeed it is. But just as Vernon Louis Parrington and Perry Miller were obliged to go to theological polemics to fully comprehend the social and economic and political developments in Puritan New England, so the student of Mormon history must seek the explanation of many of the significant events in Mormon history in the subtle distinction between vision and revelation.

In the eyes of the Latter-day Saints, Joseph Smith's early visions and his later revelations are both seen as dialogues between God and man. The difference turns on who initiated the conversation. Whether it is regarded as a metaphysical event or a psychic phenomenon, a religiously oriented vision is an intensely realistic subjective experience which leaves the individual who has experienced it with a definite sense of having been in direct communion with God. Like other spiritual manifestations, the hearing of transcendental voices, infused meditation, illumination, and so on, visions are spontaneous occurrences apparently independent of the conscious human mind.

Although it is true that many of the prophet's revelations — particularly the ones having to do with theology or with the organization of the restored church — were accompanied by visions, voices or some other metaphysical phenomena, much of the revelation in Mormonism proceeds from a more prosaic, but far more dependable, method of communicating with God. As it worked out in Mormon history, this process of revelation involves asking for divine instructions and receiving an "impression" of the will of the Lord in return. In theological terms, God initiates the vision and man responds; man asks for revelations and God responds.²⁵

The difference was clear even to the prophet. The visions left him with no doubts about the reality of what he had seen and heard. When William James said that persons who have undergone traumatic religious experiences "remain quite unmoved by criticism from whatever quarter it may come, [because] they have had their vision and they *know*," he could have been referring directly to Joseph Smith who wrote, "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 God knew it, and I could not deny it"²⁶

²⁵The two categories, vision and revelation, which are being put forth here are not intended to be mutually exclusive; they are, rather, semantic symbols intended to encompass *process* (the means by which communications between God and the Mormon Prophet were initiated), as well as the extra-rational phenomena themselves.

²⁶Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:7–8. While this quotation is taken from the official History, which account has been called into question, the reality of the prophet's perception of his having been made responsible for translating the plates is substantiated in chaps. 2, 4, and 9 of the Book of Commandments (1833; reprint ed., Independence, Mo., 1972), pp. 8–13, 22–27.

This same confidence did not always extend to the revelations, however. David Whitmer said that Smith, himself, said "some revelations are of the devil," when his revelation prophesying the sale of the copyright for the Book of Mormon failed to materialize.²⁷ Historians who deal with the prophet's life and the history of the church must take note of the implications of that statement and weigh the possibility of considering the revelations according to some classification scheme. This does not mean — *must not mean* — that a dash through the Doctrine and Covenants identifying revelations of a first, second, and third order is necessary. It means, rather, coming to realize and consciously accept what Flanders's *Nauvoo* and Arrington's *Great Basin Kingdom* demonstrate implicitly, a recognition of the fact that a continuum on which the revelations can be placed *exists*. At its highest terminal point are the revelations which came in those moments when a higher reality erupted into the prophet's everyday world; at its opposite extreme are the revelations which can, perhaps, best be marked, not as Smith said, "of the devil," but as wishful thinking.

Taxonomical exercises in history are always dangerous, frightfully so when the subject is the history of religion. But in view of the schizophrenic state of Mormon history, with its double interpretative strand of Joseph Smith as a man of God and Joseph Smith as a kind of fraud who exploited his followers for his own purposes — lately brilliantly summed up as a religious vs. a rational being — it is possible that drawing distinctions between the character of the different parts of the Mormon canon will allow us to see the prophet's mature life as more coherent than is now possible.

I am not an expert on Joseph Smith. I don't possess that kind of encyclopedic knowledge that would allow me to argue with anyone over where he was at two o'clock on July 12, 1843. I don't even know for sure how many town lots he sold or how many wives he wed. But I do know that the mystery of Mormonism cannot be solved until we solve the mystery of Joseph Smith.

In a biography I once heard described as the best biography ever written of an American historical figure, Carl Van Doren describes Benjamin Franklin as a "harmonious human multitude." We don't have a comparable biography of the prophet. Joseph Smith was also a "human multitude," an extraordinarily talented individual — a genius beyond question — but our picture of him is anything but harmonious. What we have in Mormon historiography is two Josephs: the one who started out digging for money and when he was unsuccessful, turned to propheteering, and the one who had visions and dreamed dreams, restored the church, and revealed the Will of the Lord to a sinful world. While the shading has varied, the portraits have pretty much remained constant; the differences are differences of degree, not kind.

²⁷David Whitmer, "An Address to All Believers . . .," reprinted in Keith Huntress, *Murder of an American Prophet: Events and Prejudice Surrounding the Killings of Joseph and Hyrum Smith; Carthage, Illinois, June 27, 1844* (San Francisco, 1960), p. 23. This point must not be confused with Smith's clear distinction between his actions as a prophet and his actions as a "mere man."

The approach I am suggesting here at least has the virtue of providing a different perspective from which to view the prophet's life. The result cannot be harmony, because Joseph himself had difficulty integrating the many facets of his complex career. But it might allow us to reconcile enough of the inconsistency to reveal, not a split personality, but a splendid, gifted — pressured, sometimes opportunistic, often troubled — yet, for all of that, a larger than life *whole* man.

The Evolution of the Presiding Quorums of the LDS Church

D. Michael Quinn

Following the publication of the Book of Mormon in March 1830, Joseph Smith, Jr., organized a church on April 6, 1830. Originally called The Church of Christ, the organization in 1834 became known as The Church of the Latter Day Saints, and in 1838 received its final designation as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹ At first the government of the church was informal, with Joseph Smith and his former scribe Oliver Cowdery leading the group, but at the outset Smith claimed that he was a prophet of God whose words must be heeded.²

Smith's inevitable dominance of the new church eventually had to be supplemented by expanded leadership at the highest level. Commenting on this development in Mormonism, sociologist Thomas F. O'Dea has written:

The recognition of prophetic leadership implies the development of a hierarchical church structure, with authority flowing from top to bottom, at least as soon as the informal master-disciple relationship among a small group is replaced by the more formal relationship of leadership and membership in a large church organization. The process of binding charisma within organizational forms was one aspect of the evolution of such a hierarchical structure, and the original relationship between the prophet and his disciples evolved into a

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¹B. H. Roberts, ed., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1970), 2:24n.

²D. Michael Quinn, "The First Months of Mormonism: A Contemporary View by Rev. Diedrich Willers," *New York History* 54 (July 1973): 330-31.

relationship between the prophet and an oligarchy of leading elders, which merged into and exercised ascendancy over the rank and file of the membership.³

The process by which a hierarchy of presiding quorums developed in Mormonism was evolutionary, and was preceded by the development of ministerial offices among the general membership.

From the outset the ministry of the church was somewhat democratized in that virtually every adult male had the opportunity to be ordained to ecclesiastical authority. At first there were five grades of office, in ascending order: deacon, teacher, priest, elder, and apostle. Their respective duties were outlined in a revelation dictated by Joseph Smith in June 1830.⁴ Beginning in 1835, the titles "First Elder" and "Second Elder" were applied respectively to Joseph Smith and his former scribe Oliver Cowdery.⁵ These honorific titles were conferred upon these men in recognition of the fact that they were the first two men ordained to that office. In 1831 this priesthood was expanded to include the office of bishop and high priest. Up to the year 1832 these offices were formally restricted, with the exception of Joseph Smith, to local responsibility rather than having jurisdiction over the entire church.⁶

While the ministry of the church was being democratized during the years 1830-32 Joseph Smith's own position as leader was given more precise definition. At the organization of the church, he was designated "a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church," and in September 1830 he was identified as the only person to proclaim revelations that were binding upon the church.⁷ For nearly two years after the organization of the church, Joseph Smith dictated no revelations or instructions indicating that he would have officially appointed assistants or counselors.⁸

³Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago, 1957), p. 160.

⁴A Book of Commandments, for the Government of the Church of Christ, Organized According to Law, on the 6th of April, 1830 (Zion [Independence, Mo.], 1833), pp. 47-55. A current edition of these instructions, indicating that the above revelation was given 6 April, instead of June 1830, is published as *The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1971), Section 20.

⁵In the 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* a textual change was made in the previously cited revelation on offices of the ministry. Originally the text in the *Book of Commandments* identified Smith and Cowdery each as "an elder," but in the 1835 edition this was changed respectively to "first" and "second" elder. For a discussion of this problem of alterations in the printed versions of revelations dictated by Joseph Smith, see Melvin Joseph Peterson, "A Study of the Nature and Significance of the Changes in the Revelations as Found in a Comparison of the Book of Commandments and Subsequent Editions of the *Doctrine and Covenants*" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1955), and Richard P. Howard, *Restoration Scriptures, A Study of Their Textual Development* (Independence, Mo., 1969), pp. 196-263. Whenever citations are substantively identical in original and recent editions of the revelations of Joseph Smith, the recent editions will be cited.

⁶Roberts, *History of the Church*, 1:40-41, 61, 77-78, 147, 175-76. See discussion below of the development of the office of bishop.

⁷Book of Commandments, pp. 45-67; *Doctrine and Covenants*, Sections 21:1, 28:2.

⁸A revelation dictated in November 1831, makes reference to "the First Presidency of the church," as this document has been published in recent editions of the revelations, *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 68:22-23. These references, however, were substituted in the 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* for the phrase "a conference of high priests," in the original document as published in the church's first organ, *The Evening and the Morning*.

Traditional histories of the church indicate that Joseph Smith did not appoint official assistants until March 18, 1833, following a revelation ten days earlier in which Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams were designated counselors. Moreover, conventional history asserts that the first quorum of the hierarchy formed was that of the Presiding Bishopric in 1831.⁹ Newly discovered evidence indicates, however, that Joseph Smith chose official counselors a year before the date usually given and that the Presiding Bishopric was the last quorum of the hierarchy to develop rather than the first.¹⁰

On January 25, 1832, Joseph Smith was sustained by the church as "President of the High Priesthood." Following that event, Joseph officially appointed men to act as his counselors, thereby beginning the Mormon hierarchy. On March 8, 1832, the Prophet made the following statement:

Chose this day and ordained brother Jesse Gause and Brother Sidney [Rigdon] to be my counsellors of the ministry of the presidency of the high Priesthood.¹¹

An unpublished revelation to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, dated in March 1832, had authorized Joseph Smith to appoint an unspecified number of counselors to assist "the presidency of the high Priesthood."¹² In the Old Testament, Moses was assisted by Aaron and Hur, and in the New Testament Peter, James, and John seemed to function as a unit. These biblical precedents may have been the basis on which Joseph Smith chose two counselors rather than some other number. In the later presidencies of the church, beginning with the reorganization of March 18, 1833, the two counselors were ranked respectively as first and second, with attendant seniority.

In the first organization of the Presidency it is not readily apparent whether Gause or Rigdon was the senior counselor. A little known figure, Jesse Gause had been a member of the Shaker faith, having moved in 1829 to the Shaker communitarian family in North Union, Ohio. Previously he had

Star 1 (October 1832): [35]. When using *The Evening and the Morning Star*, care must be taken to obtain the first edition. A revised edition was reprinted beginning in 1835 which introduced the changes in the printed revelations. By 1835, the First Presidency had already been formed, and that organization was introduced retroactively into the text of the earlier revelation.

⁹Roberts, *History of the Church*, 1:334; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, 25th ed. rev. (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1972), pp. 127, 595-96.

¹⁰Since discussion of each unit of the hierarchy will correspond to its chronological development, analysis of the Presiding Bishopric will be presented as the last in that order.

¹¹Kirtland Revelations Book, pp. 10-11, manuscript, Library-Archives Division, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, hereinafter referred to as Church Archives.

¹²Revelation to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, manuscript in Newel K. Whitney Family papers, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; a notation on the back of the document states that the revelation was given in "March 1832." The library catalogue card for the document, however, states that the revelation was given 7 January 1832. The source of the latter date cannot presently be verified. Since the revelation speaks of "the office of the presidency of the high Priesthood" as though it has already been established, the revelation probably was given after 25 January 1832, when Joseph Smith was sustained in that position. Therefore, the March date, although imprecise, seems to be the more likely one.

resided in the Shaker community at Hancock, Massachusetts. Matthew Houston, a non-Mormon associate of Gause, wrote a letter concerning Gause in which Houston said Gause "is yet a Mormon — and is second to the Prophet or Seer — Joseph."¹³ Moreover, when Joseph Smith listed his two counselors, he placed Gause's name before that of Rigdon.

There is other evidence, however, to indicate that Sidney Rigdon had ascendancy over Elder Gause. Rigdon, for example, was the recipient of at least eight revelations dictated by Joseph Smith between 1830 and 1832, and was frequently in his company during this period to transact important church business.¹⁴ Gause, on the other hand, was the recipient of only one revelation, dated March 15, 1832, in which his role as counselor was reaffirmed.¹⁵ The only recorded occasions in which Gause acted with Smith in an official capacity were during an important trip to the Missouri settlements of the church from April to May 1832. Gause attended five meetings in Missouri between April 26 and May 29, 1832. In the minutes of these meetings (in which his name was erroneously spelled "Gauss") Gause and Rigdon were designated as counselors to Joseph Smith, Jr.¹⁶ Moreover, an ecclesiastical protest against irregular proceedings of a conference of the church was signed first by Rigdon and second by Gause, implying their relative seniority.¹⁷

There seems to be sufficient circumstantial evidence to assert that in this organized Presidency of the church Joseph Smith was president, Sidney Rigdon was first counselor, and Jesse Gause was second counselor. Late in 1832, Jesse Gause "denied the faith," and Joseph Smith recorded that "Br Jesse" was excommunicated on December 3, 1832. After Gause's disaffection from Mormonism, he faded into obscurity. His replacement, Frederick W. Williams was functioning as Joseph's counselor as early as January 22, 1833.¹⁸

¹³Matthew Houston to Seth Y. Wells, 10 August 1832, quoted in Mario S. DePillis, "The Development of Mormon Communitarianism, 1826-1846" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1960), p. 184.

¹⁴Doctrine and Covenants, Sections 35, 37, 40, 44, 49, 71, 73, 76; Roberts, *History of the Church*, vol. 1, *passim*.

¹⁵Kirtland Revelations Book, pp. 17-18. For some reason, the introductory words "my servant Jesse" in this document were altered to read "my servant Frederick G. Williams," and the latter version appears in the published editions of the revelation. There is no question that the revelation was directed to Gause, because the page index to the book read "17 Revelation to Jesse Gauze [sic] March 15-1832." Since Williams later replaced Gause in the presidency, apparently someone felt justified in substituting the names. This unfortunate alteration has not only violated the context of the original document, but it has further obscured the existence of Gause as one of the General Authorities of the church and has erroneously indicated that Williams was a counselor in 1832 (see Doctrine and Covenants, Section 81).

¹⁶The Conference Minutes and Record Book of Christ's Church of Latter-day Saints, Belonging to the High Council of said church, of their successors in office, Caldwell County, Missouri. FAR WEST: April 6, 1838, pp. 30-33, typescript, Church Archives, hereinafter referred to as Far West Record, as is the custom among researchers of Mormon history; Roberts, *History of the Church*, 1:265; DePillis, "Mormon Communitarianism," pp. 170-89.

¹⁷Sidney Rigdon, Jesse Gause, David Whitmer, Peter Whitmer, Jr., Hyrum Smith, Reynolds Cahoon, undated protest against irregularities in a conference of 28-30 January 1832, manuscript in Kirtland, Ohio, High Council Minutes file, 1832-1839, Church Archives.

¹⁸Far West Record, 26 April 1832; Diary of Joseph Smith, Jr., 3 December 1832, manuscript, Church Archives. The Journal History of the Church, a day-by-day compilation of

Within a year after the formation of the First Presidency in 1832, revelations announced by Joseph Smith unquestionably established that body as the supreme authority of the church. In the revelation through Joseph Smith to Gause (not Williams, see note 15) in March 1832, reference was made to "the keys of the kingdom, which belong always unto the Presidency of the High Priesthood." A later revelation, dictated on the anniversary of the presidency, further stipulated: "And this shall be your business and mission in all your lives, to preside in council, and set in order all the affairs of this church and kingdom."¹⁹ Subsequent revelations gave the presidency control over finances. The "affairs of this church and kingdom" would subsequently be expanded to include political activities,²⁰ but by 1833 the First Presidency was unmistakably recognized in the practice and doctrine of the church as the apex of the Mormon ecclesiastical structure.

A revelation dictated in 1835 specified that the First Presidency was to be comprised of three men, the president with his first and second counselors.²¹ Nevertheless Joseph Smith had already established the precedent of appointing extra counselors or "Assistant Presidents" in addition to the first and second counselors.²² He and his successors in office, Brigham Young, repeated this policy occasionally during a forty-year period. Irrespective of the numbers of counselors, by 1833 the First Presidency of the "Church of Christ" had established a role that would remain virtually unchanged.

The second unit of the hierarchy to develop was the office of Presiding Patriarch, or Patriarch to the Church. Both the function and the name of the office derived from the ancient practice of giving father's blessings, as did the Old Testament prophets Isaac and Jacob.²³ Joseph Smith transformed this ancient custom into a function of the ecclesiastical organization.

Although hardly a patriarch in the sense of age, the twenty-seven-year-old Joseph gave special blessings to members of his family and to one of his associates on December 18, 1833.²⁴ On that occasion, the blessing given to his father, Joseph Smith, Sr., designated the elderly gentleman as Patriarch

historical data on the LDS church, states under date of 31 December 1832, that Jesse Gause was still one of the active high priests of the church. Unless Gause was reinstated within four weeks of his excommunication, this statement is in error. His replacement, Frederick G. Williams, was noted as a counselor to Joseph Smith as early as a meeting on 22 January 1832. See Kirtland Council Book, p. 6.

¹⁹Doctrine and Covenants, Sections 81:2, 90:16.

²⁰Klaus Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (Lansing, Mich., 1967).

²¹Doctrine and Covenants, Section 107:22.

²²Oliver Cowdery was appointed as Assistant President on 5 December 1834, and Joseph Smith, Sr. and Hyrum Smith were appointed Assistant Presidents on 6 December 1834. Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-1, p. 11, 5-6 December 1834, manuscript, Church Archives. Pagination of this entry is different from that of the rest of the volume. Cowdery's role as Assistant President was one of joint leadership, with the right of automatic succession. See Robert Glen Mouritsen, "The Office of Associate President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972).

²³Genesis 27:27-29, 39-40; 49:1-28.

²⁴Roberts, *History of the Church*, 1:465-67.

to the Church, as though he were the spiritual father of the members of the Church.

So shall it be with my father: he shall be called a prince over his posterity, holding the keys of the patriarchal Priesthood over the kingdom of God on earth, even the Church of the Latter-day Saints.²⁵

The day he received this blessing, Joseph Smith, Sr. was ordained "Patriarch and president of the High Priesthood" by the First Presidency.²⁶ Joseph Smith, Sr. began giving patriarchal blessings to individuals in which they were counseled, told of their potentials and future activities, and designated as descendants of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, thereby setting the pattern for all patriarchal blessings given by later patriarchs in the church.

Although a Presiding Patriarch had been established in 1833 as an ecclesiastical authority for the entire church, it was an office of limited hierarchical power. Joseph Smith, Sr.'s jurisdiction in giving blessings extended throughout the church, but over whom did he preside? If he was the first man to be ordained to the office of patriarch, then there was no other patriarch over whom his jurisdiction extended. Brigham Young maintained that his own father, John Young, was the first man ordained a patriarch and that Joseph Smith, Sr., the second ordained, was given the special designation "presiding."²⁷ Even so, Patriarch Smith presided over only one other patriarch. It was perhaps to elevate Joseph Smith, Sr.'s sense of hierarchical importance that he was made an Assistant President in the First Presidency on December 6, 1834.²⁸ This gave him a jurisdictional authority which his primary office in the hierarchy lacked. Moreover, it may have been because of the small number of patriarchs in the church over whom the Presiding Patriarch could actually preside, that this office was not voted on with other members of the hierarchy in official conferences of the church until April 6, 1843.²⁹ Although it was nearly a decade before the office of Presiding Patriarch was given the ultimate status of the other units of the Mormon hierarchy, the function of that position had been clearly established in 1833.

The third unit of the hierarchy to be formed was the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. As early as 1830, Joseph Smith and his former scribe Oliver Cowdery were designated as apostles, having received the authority from

²⁵Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* . . . (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1938), p. 39.

²⁶Andrew Jenson, "Presiding Patriarchs," *The Historical Record* 5 (August 1886): 89.

²⁷Journal History, 21 June 1874, p. 3. Brigham Young's statement seems to be inaccurate, however, since he indicates his father became a patriarch in 1834, which would be subsequent to the ordination of Joseph Smith, Sr.

²⁸Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-1, p. 20, 6 December 1834. Pagination of this entry is different from the rest of the volume. The standard histories imply he first became an Assistant President on 3 September 1837 (see Smith, *Essentials*, p. 571).

²⁹Roberts, *History of the Church*, 5:329. That this was the first time the Presiding Patriarch was sustained with the other members of the General Authorities is confirmed by a review of the actions of the various conferences of the church from 1833 to 1843 (see General Conferences, List of General Authorities and Officers, a typed record at Church Archives).

Peter, James, and John the previous year.³⁰ The establishment of a governing body of twelve men had been alluded to in a revelation announced by Joseph Smith in June 1829.³¹ These men were to preach to Jew and Gentile, to baptize, and to ordain men to the ministry. The establishment of such a body of men was an obvious response to the New Testament precedent of the Twelve Apostles chosen by Jesus.³² These modern apostles were to be sought out and chosen by Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, two men who had given public testimony that an angel had showed them the plates from which the Book of Mormon had been translated. Although several men were ordained to the office of apostle during the first year of the church's history, it was not until 1835 that twelve men were chosen to comprise this special presiding quorum.³³ On February 14, 1835, men were ordained apostles and named the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.³⁴ Although any number of living men could be ordained to the office of apostle, by definition the Quorum of Twelve Apostles was comprised of twelve such ordained men.³⁵

As with the other units of the hierarchy, Joseph Smith gave early definition to the responsibility of the Quorum. On February 27, 1835, he proposed to answer the question, "What importance is there attached to the calling of these twelve Apostles different from the other callings or offices of the Church?" To that query, he responded:

They are the Twelve Apostles, who are called to the office of traveling high council, who are to preside over all the churches of the Saints among the Gentiles, where there is no presidency established, and they are to travel and preach among the Gentiles, until the Lord

³⁰Book of Commandments, p. 48; Doctrine and Covenants, Section 20:2-3.

³¹Book of Commandments, pp. 37-38; Doctrine and Covenants, Section 18:26-39.

³²Luke 6:13; Acts 1:21-26.

³³It is generally recognized that prior to 1835 Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer were ordained apostles (Doctrine and Covenants, Sections 18:9, 20:2-3). There may also have been others. An early defector from Mormonism, Ezra Booth, wrote in 1831 that Ziba Peterson, "one of the Twelve Apostles," had been rejected. See his letter in E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio, 1834), p. 208. Booth's reference to the Twelve Apostles may indicate that nine other men besides Smith, Cowdery, and Whitmer had been ordained apostles by 1831. Nevertheless these apostles never functioned as a unified group or quorum, and when such a quorum was organized in 1835, new apostles were ordained to comprise it.

³⁴Smith, *Essentials*, pp. 63-64, 151-52.

³⁵Qualifications of this statement are necessary. First, three men were given the official designation as Counselor to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Amasa M. Lyman (1844-45), Daniel H. Wells (1877-91), and John W. Young (1877-91); Sylvester Q. Cannon was ordained an apostle and served as an Associate to the Quorum of the Twelve (1938-39). After 1847 when members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles served as counselors to the President of the church, new apostles were called to replace them in the Quorum of the Twelve. In 1887, the death of the President of the church created a situation in which his two counselors returned to their former positions in the Quorum of the Twelve, resulting in the presence of thirteen members of the Quorum of the Twelve, in addition to the two counselors to that quorum. The presence of more than twelve men in the Quorum of the Twelve was thereafter relieved by organizing another First Presidency from among members of the Quorum of the Twelve. The temporary abundance of men in the Quorum of the Twelve subsequently occurred with the death of each President of the church. See Reed C. Durham, Jr. and Steven H. Heath, *Succession in the Church* (Salt Lake City, 1970), pp. 95ff.

shall command them to go to the Jews. They are to hold the keys of this ministry to unlock the door of the kingdom of heaven unto all nations and to preach the Gospel to every creature. This is the power, authority and virtue of their Apostleship.⁸⁶

The "presidency" referred to in this quote is not the Presidency of the church but is instead the organized presidency and high council of a stake. At the time the Quorum of the Twelve was organized, there were two stakes of the church, one at Kirtland, Ohio, and one in Missouri. Each stake had a local presidency and high council. The high council's responsibilities were to govern the members, arbitrate disputes, investigate misconduct, and generally oversee the ecclesiastical and religious life of the stake.

The significance of the "standing high councils" of the stakes is that according to the instructions of Joseph Smith on May 2, 1835, the jurisdiction of the Twelve Apostles ended where that of the stakes began:

The twelve apostles have no right to go into Zion or any of its stakes where there is a regular high council established, to regulate any matter pertaining thereto: But it is their duty to go abroad and regulate and set in order all matters relative to the different branches of the church of the Latter Day Saints.

No standing high council has authority to go into the churches abroad and regulate the matters thereof, for this belongs to the Twelve.⁸⁷

Combining this instruction with that of February 27, it is evident that the Quorum of the Twelve was originally intended to operate only in those areas of the church where there was no regularly organized stake.

Throughout Joseph Smith's lifetime the stakes were the centers of the ecclesiastical mainstream. The hinterland of the church was comprised of comparatively small, isolated branches of members. According to the definitions established by Smith in 1835, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was a traveling high council to function officially only in those areas where there were no permanent stake high councils. In pursuance of this limited jurisdiction, Joseph Smith sent the Twelve Apostles to regulate affairs in scattered branches in New York, eastern Canada, Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine from May to October of 1835. After similar activities during the next year, he sent two of the Twelve Apostles to the British Isles in 1837 to begin the work of proselyting there. From 1839 to 1841 all but two of the Quorum of the Twelve were in foreign lands.⁸⁸ Thus, during the first five years of existence of the Quorum, it seemed that its primary role would be performed away from the headquarters and central activities of the church.

⁸⁶Kirtland Council Minute Book, p. 88, manuscript, Church Archives. The published version of this passage has omitted the word "no" prior to the word "presidency," a variation significant enough to warrant quoting the original source (see Roberts, *History of the Church*, 2:200).

⁸⁷Minutes of a Grand Council at Kirtland, Ohio, 2 May 1835, manuscript, included in Patriarchal Blessing Book 2, Church Archives. A rephrased version of these minutes is found in Roberts, *History of the Church*, 2:220.

⁸⁸Roberts, *History of the Church*, 2:209; Smith, *Essentials*, pp. 227-36.

Unlike any other unit of the hierarchy, however, the functions and jurisdiction of the Quorum of the Twelve were significantly expanded by Joseph Smith several years after the formation of the body.³⁹ This development began in 1841, and apparently resulted from two factors: first, the remarkable successes of the Twelve in converting thousands of Britons to the church, organizing them into branches, and preparing them to emigrate to the headquarters of the church at Nauvoo, Illinois; second, a record of constant devotion to Joseph Smith by several of the apostles during periods of persecution, apostasy, and turmoil.⁴⁰

In a revelation dictated by Joseph Smith on January 19, 1841, the Quorum of the Twelve was designated to "hold the keys to open up the authority of my kingdom upon the four corners of the earth, and after that to send my word to every creature."⁴¹ On August 16, 1841, at a special conference the Quorum was authorized to select men to go on missions, and then Joseph stated "that the time had come when the Twelve should be called upon to stand in their place next to the First Presidency, and attend to the settling of emigrants and the business of the Church at the stakes, and assist to bear off the kingdom victoriously to the nations."⁴² In pursuance of these instructions, the Twelve Apostles were also appointed to assist Joseph Smith in his duties as Trustee-in-Trust for the finances of the church.

Following the return of seven of the Twelve Apostles from England on July 1, 1841, their ascendancy began. During 1841 seven of the Quorum of the Twelve became members of the city council of Nauvoo, and by April 1844 four more had been called to serve there.⁴³ On January 28, 1843, Joseph Smith announced a revelation giving the Twelve control over the church organ, the *Times and Seasons*, and also the printing of all church publications.⁴⁴ Moreover, President Smith commissioned the Twelve Apostles on June 18, 1842 "to organize the Church more according to the law of God" and to supervise the settlement of immigrants in Nauvoo.⁴⁵ This was a crucial

³⁹A valuable essay on this development is T. Edgar Lyon, "Nauvoo and the Council of the Twelve," *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History*, ed. by F. Mark McKiernan, Alma R. Blair, and Paul M. Edwards (Lawrence, Kans., 1972), pp. 167-205.

⁴⁰Roberts, *History of the Church*, 4:403.

⁴¹Doctrine and Covenants, Section 124:128. On 28 March 1835 it is true that the Quorum of the Twelve was designated as being equal in authority to the First Presidency, but in the same revelation it was stated that the other body of the hierarchy, the First Quorum of Seventy, also was equal in authority with the Twelve, and that the combined stake high councils (in 1835, there were only two) were also equal in authority to the Quorum of the Twelve (see Doctrine and Covenants, Section 107:23-26, 36). Although this 1835 revelation ranked the Twelve next to the First Presidency, its functions were still limited as above stated, and its decisions could be negated by the vote of two lesser bodies. Therefore, 1835 is not the period in which the Quorum of the Twelve gained its ascendancy.

⁴²Roberts, *History of the Church*, 4:403; Journal of Willard Richards, 16 August 1841, Church Archives.

⁴³Nauvoo City Council Minutes, 1841-1844, manuscript, Nauvoo, Illinois, Collection, Church Archives. The only member of the Quorum of the Twelve who did not serve on the city council during this period was John E. Page.

⁴⁴Journal of Wilford Woodruff, 8 February 1842, Church Archives; Roberts, *History of the Church*, 4:503.

⁴⁵Journal of Wilford Woodruff, 18 June 1842; Roberts, *History of the Church*, 5:35.

development in the gradual ascendancy of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Now, for the first time, they were authorized to regulate the affairs within the jurisdiction of a stake high council, specifically the Nauvoo High Council. Thus, within a year following the return of the Twelve Apostles from Europe, this body was directing the political, economic and ecclesiastical affairs of the church at home and abroad.

Having given the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles increasing authority in the public ministry of the church by 1842, Joseph Smith also commissioned that body to direct other lesser known developments within the church. On May 4, 1842, he met with three of the Twelve and several other church leaders, "instructing them in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchisedek Priesthood."⁴⁶ This was the introduction of the endowment ceremony within the church, a sacerdotal ritualization of theology, covenants, and instructions. After its introduction this rite was administered under the direction of Joseph Smith and members of the Quorum of the Twelve, and constituted an ordinance of the LDS temple.⁴⁷ Following this development, Joseph Smith revealed to the Quorum of the Twelve a doctrine which required the practice of plural marriage. Under his direction, members of the Quorum married plural wives and began solemnizing such marriages for others.⁴⁸

Opposition to the Mormons generally and to these practices in particular caused Joseph Smith to consider moving the body of the church into the unsettled West. As recorded by Apostle Wilford Woodruff, Joseph Smith delegated the responsibility of organizing that westward movement to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on February 21, 1844:

I met with the quorum of the Twelve at Josephs Store & according to Joseph Council we selected a company to go on an exploring expedition to California & pitch upon a spot to build a City.⁴⁹

Despite the intended move west, the Quorum of the Twelve had already voted in private council with President Smith that he be a candidate for the presidency of the United States.⁵⁰ In pursuance of the expanding political role of Mormonism, Joseph Smith and the Twelve on March 10, 1844, secretly organized a governing body (the Council of Fifty) to take charge of the political

⁴⁶Roberts, *History of the Church*, 5:1-2.

⁴⁷Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana, Ill., 1965), pp. 271-73.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 267-72, 274-77; Andrew Jenson, "Plural Marriage," *The Historical Record* 6 (May 1887): 219-40.

⁴⁹Journal of Wilford Woodruff, 21 February 1844; Roberts, *History of the Church*, 6:223. Later this responsibility was transferred to the Council of Fifty of which the Apostles were prominent members.

⁵⁰Journal of Joseph Smith, Jr., recorded by Willard Richards, 29 January 1844, Church Archives; Roberts, *History of the Church*, 6:187-88.

affairs of the Mormon kingdom throughout the world.⁵¹ Thus, by the spring of 1844, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had attained formidable power in Mormonism, far more than indicated by its jurisdiction as defined nine years earlier.

The fourth hierarchial body to be formed was that of the First Council of the Seventy, a group of seven men often called the First Seven Presidents of Seventy. On February 28, 1835, two weeks after organizing the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Joseph Smith began choosing seventy men to fill the office of Seventy, stating: "The Seventies are to constitute traveling quorums, to go into all the earth, whithersoever the Twelve Apostles shall call them."⁵² Although the traditional histories indicate that Joseph Smith established this office in response to visions and revelations he had received, there apparently are no extant revelations authorizing the calling of seventy prior to Smith's introduction of that office on February 28, 1835. Undoubtedly the biblical precedents of Moses and Christ appointing seventy men for ecclesiastical purposes influenced Joseph Smith's thinking on this matter.⁵³

The earliest known revelation of Joseph Smith concerning the role of the seventies in the church was dictated on March 28, 1835, a month following the establishment of this group.

The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles in all the world—thus differing from other offices in the church in the duties of their calling. And they form a quorum equal in authority to that of the Twelve special witnesses or Apostles just named.⁵⁴

At the outset, therefore, the specific role of the seventies was defined: to be proselyting missionaries to all the world. Although the revelation stated that the seventy were equal in authority with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Joseph Smith had already affirmed that the seventy were to act under the direction and jurisdiction of the Twelve Apostles and he subsequently reinforced this subordinate role in a written revelation.⁵⁵ Considering that the seventy were to proselyte outside the headquarters of the church where there were no organized stake high councils, this relationship with the Quorum of the Twelve was entirely consistent with the role of that latter body in 1835 as the Traveling High Council.

There is no indication that Joseph Smith intended this body of seventy men to comprise in their full number a unit of the hierarchy of the church.

⁵¹Journal of Wilford Woodruff, 10 March 1844; Hyrum L. Andrus, *Joseph Smith and World Government* (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1958), pp. 47-48; Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest for Empire*, pp. 59-62.

⁵²Roberts, *History of the Church*, 2:202. For a general history of the office of seventy, see James Norman Baumgarten, "The Role and Function of the Seventies in L.D.S. Church History" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1960). Throughout the nineteenth century these men were variously called the Seventies, the Seventy Apostles, or the Seventy Elders.

⁵³Exodus 24:1, 9-11; Luke 10:1-20.

⁵⁴Doctrine and Covenants, Section 107:25-26.

⁵⁵Ibid., Section 124:138-40; Roberts, *History of the Church*, 2:202, 221.

Perhaps remembering the New Testament precedent of the appointment of seven deacons⁵⁶ he specified:

And it is according to the vision showing the order of the Seventy, that they should have seven presidents to preside over them, chosen out of the number of the seventy; and the seventh president of these presidents is to preside over the six; and these seven presidents are to choose other seventy besides the first seventy to whom they belong, and are to preside over them; and also other seventy, if the labor in the vinyard of necessity requires it.⁵⁷

Beginning August 17, 1835, this group of seven presidents over the seventy was sustained with the other General Authorities of the church.⁵⁸ That their status was clearly subordinate to members of other presiding councils is suggested in the call of Joseph Young. Although one of the most senior members of the First Council of the Seventy, he did not even realize he was one of the seven presidents until he was so informed by one of the apostles four years after having been given that responsibility.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the basic function and jurisdiction of the First Council of the Seventy had been outlined in 1835.

The fifth and final quorum of the hierarchy to be established was that of the Presiding Bishopric. Of all the units of the LDS hierarchy, the historical development of this office has been the most complex and the least understood. Traditional histories of the church assert that the first Presiding Bishop was Edward Partridge, who was called as a bishop in 1831; his succes-

⁵⁶Acts 6:3-6.

⁵⁷Doctrine and Covenants, Section 107: 93-96.

⁵⁸A practice observed at this meeting and some subsequent meetings of the First Council of Seventy requires explanation. At the conference of 17 August 1835 among those men listed as "the seven Presidents of the Seventy Elders" were men who have never been recognized as holding that position (Harpin Riggs, Joseph Hancock, and Almon Babbitt), whereas three of the original members of the First Council of Seventy (Hazen Aldrich, Joseph Young, and Zebedee Coltrin) are not listed with the other members of that body (see Kirtland Council Minute Book, p. 99). This fact could lead to the conclusion that the latter three were not actually part of the First Seven Presidents of Seventy designated on 28 February. However, the record of the ordination prayers on the occasion indicates that Joseph Young, whose name was not listed at the 17 August meeting, was set apart on 28 February "to be one of the 70 and also to be one of the Presidency of that Mission to preside with thy brethren." (See Kirtland Council Minute Book, p. 185). The reason for the confusion is that Riggs, J. Hancock, and Babbitt acted as substitutes for the actual members of the First Council of Seventy who were absent at the time of this meeting. This was apparently the last time this practice occurred in a public meeting of the First Council of the Seventy, but in the private council meetings of that body beginning 10 May 1879, "alternate" members of the First Council of the Seventy were appointed in the place of absent members. These alternates functioned only during the deliberative council meetings of that group and were never voted upon by the general membership so as to give them official status in the hierarchy. The practice of using men to substitute in council meeting for absent members of the First Council of the Seventy was discontinued on 27 May 1883. (See First Council of Seventy Minutes, 10 May 1879, and 27 May 1883, manuscript, Church Archives.)

⁵⁹In 1878, Joseph Young told a group of seventies: "Speaking of his own experience he said that he never knew that he was President of the Seventies until he came to Nauvoo [in 1839] and Br. Brigham told him that that was his place and he took it." (See First Council of Seventy Minutes, 16 January 1878.)

sor in office has been thought to be Newel K. Whitney, who attained that office sometime about 1844.⁶⁰ One difficulty with this traditional view is that in 1841 a contemporary of Whitney, George Miller, was "appointed, by revelation, Bishop, in place of Edward Partridge, deceased."⁶¹ If Partridge was succeeded as Presiding Bishop by Whitney, as traditional histories assert, then he was succeeded in office by two men at the same time. The confusion about the history of the Presiding Bishopric, which is still evident in the 1972 official history of the LDS General Authorities, derives from a misunderstanding of the development of the office of bishop in Latter-day Saint history.

When Edward Partridge was appointed bishop, February 4, 1831, he was the first bishop and only man in the church to hold that position. When Newel K. Whitney was appointed the following December to be bishop, only these two men held that office in the church. During 1831, Joseph Smith gave these two men little information about their duties or the extent of their powers. The few references in the dictated revelations indicated that the bishop was to receive donations for the benefit of the poor, to be present at investigations of misconduct by members, and to watch over the church.⁶² A later Presiding Bishop of the Church, Edward Hunter, commented on the disturbing limbo in which these two bishops functioned:

Spoke of the Temple and the power of the priesthood and the knowledge we had now as compared with even leading men at the commencement of this dispensation. As for example when Bro. Whitney was first told he was to be Bishop fumbled and said not so unless it be the will of God. He did not know at the time nor Joseph either what the position of a Bishop was.⁶³

In the two 1831 revelations which designated Partridge and Whitney as bishops it had been specifically promised that further instruction would be given as to their duties.⁶⁴ Aside from an 1832 revelation concerning the economic duties of the bishopric, explicit details concerning the limitations of the office did not come until 1835. At that time, it was made clear that the bishops were subject to the jurisdiction of the First Presidency, were to preside over the lesser offices of deacon, teacher, and priest, and were exclu-

⁶⁰Andrew Jenson, "Church Encyclopedia," *The Historical Record* 8 (December 1889): s.v. "Partridge, Edward" and "Whitney, Newel K."; Smith, *Essentials*, pp. 595-96.

⁶¹*Times and Seasons* 2 (1 February 1841): 310; Roberts, *History of the Church*, 4:286.

⁶²Unpublished revelation to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, March 1832; Doctrine and Covenants, Sections 42:30, 82, 46:27; substantive additions were made to the text of the revelation contained in Section 42 compared to the published version in Book of Commandments, p. 92. Retroactive additions to the 1831 revelations concerning the role of bishop were made concerning their role as judges, the question of descendants of Aaron functioning as bishops, and the fact that bishops are subject to trial by the First Presidency, a body not formed in 1831. These additions first appeared in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. Compare present Doctrine and Covenants, Section 64:37-43 with Book of Commandments, p. 160; compare Section 68:15-23 with *Evening and Morning Star* 1 (October 1832): [35].

⁶³Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 3 March 1877, manuscript, Church Archives.

⁶⁴Book of Commandments, p. 89; *Evening and Morning Star* 1 (December 1832): [53]; Doctrine and Covenants, Sections 41:10, 72:7.

sively concerned with the "temporal" (financial and economic) welfare of the church.⁶⁵

Concerning the extent of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of these first two bishops, it is necessary to remember that from 1831 to 1838 there were two headquarters of Mormonism: one at Kirtland, Ohio, and one in Missouri. Whitney was bishop in Ohio and Partridge was bishop in Missouri. Each had control over the temporal affairs of his respective region; neither had jurisdiction over the entire church. Their ecclesiastical authority was described in 1880 by Orson Pratt, then the Church Historian:

Here were two Bishops, then, one having jurisdiction in the West, a thousand miles from the other; the other having jurisdiction in the East. Their duties were pointed out, but neither of them was a Presiding Bishop [over the entire church]. But what were they? As was clearly shown by President Taylor at the Priesthood meeting on last evening, they were general Bishops.⁶⁶

In ecclesiastical authority, these two men were performing regional functions rather than operating, according to the definition of LDS General Authorities, as officers who presided over the entire church.

Not until the church established its headquarters at Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1839, was the office of bishop further clarified. Beginning in 1839, two other bishops besides Partridge and Whitney were ordained, and these four men were appointed to preside over ecclesiastical wards. Within a year several more bishops were chosen to preside over wards. (Mormon usage of the word "ward" was derived from the term for political subdivisions within cities of nineteenth century America.) The appointment of bishops to preside over such geographical subdivisions gave a congregational or parochial responsibility to the office of bishop. This was a delimitation of the broad regional authority previously exercised by Bishops Partridge and Whitney. In Utah, the wards became independent ecclesiastical units with a separate schedule of meetings for residents of the geographical boundaries of the ward. In Nauvoo, however, the wards were apparently a pre-congregational development, since devotional meetings were held on Sundays for the entire population of Nauvoo, rather than by individual wards. Nevertheless, giving the bishops economical and ecclesiastical responsibility for Mormons living in a narrowly defined locality was an important step in the evolution of the bishopric.

For a time, along with the local ward bishops in Nauvoo, the previous regional bishops (General Bishops) continued. The opportunity to unify their role into a single presiding bishop was by-passed when, at the death of Edward Partridge in 1840, George Miller was appointed by revelation on January 19, 1841, to succeed him. But the need for a single authority over the various classes of bishops was recognized in the same revelation:

⁶⁵Doctrine and Covenants, Section 107:15-17, 68-76, 88; see also note 62 above.

⁶⁶*Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool, England, 1854-1886), 22:34 (discourse delivered 10 October 1880).

And again, I say unto you, I give unto you Vinson Knight, Samuel H. Smith, and Shadrach Roundy, if he will receive it, to preside over the bishopric.⁶⁷

President John Taylor and three church historians affirmed that, whereas Edward Partridge's authority was only regional, Vinson Knight was the first man to be designated as Presiding Bishop of the Church.⁶⁸

Despite the revelation designating Vinson Knight to preside over all other bishops, Knight apparently never functioned as the supreme Presiding Bishop over the church. Although information about Knight from 1841 to his death in 1842 is sketchy, it appears that he was not allowed to function as the supreme bishop in the church because of an act of ecclesiastical presumption on his part. In the *Times and Seasons* of January 15, 1841, Knight announced that the Aaronic Priesthood (a division of the ministry encompassing the offices of deacon, teacher, priest, and bishop) would be organized at his home on January 24, 1841.⁶⁹ This announcement was published by Knight four days before Joseph Smith dictated the revelation appointing Knight to "preside over the bishopric." Obviously Knight was anticipating the appointment which later appeared in the dictated revelation. Presumably Joseph Smith had given Knight some intimation that he would be called to be a bishop to preside over all other bishops, and Knight became overly anxious to exercise that authority.

In 1839, Joseph Smith had written a letter in which he discussed the situation of men in the church exceeding the bounds of their authority, using the words "many are called, but few are chosen."⁷⁰ That decree apparently applied to Vinson Knight's appointment as Presiding Bishop. When announcement was made in *Times and Seasons* on February 1, 1841, of the most important new appointments in the recent revelation, there was no mention of Knight's appointment, even though George Miller's lesser appointment to succeed Partridge was announced.⁷¹ Knight's January announcement indicated he planned to organize the Aaronic or Lesser Priesthood himself on January 24, 1841. The meeting was not held as he an-

⁶⁷Doctrine and Covenants, Section 124:20-21, 141. Verse 141, which contained the appointment of Knight, was in a lengthy organizational section at the conclusion of this document, that was not published when the document first appeared in the church organ at Nauvoo, *Times and Seasons* 2 (1 June 1841): 424-29. The omitted section first appeared in the 1844 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

⁶⁸*Journal of Discourses*, 21:361-62 (discourse of John Taylor on 8 August 1880), 22:34 (discourse by Orson Pratt on 10 October 1880), 22:200 (discourse by John Taylor on 18 July 1880); Orson F. Whitney, "The Aaronic Priesthood," *Contributor* 6 (August 1885): 405. In 1904 Anthon H. Lund, the Church Historian, recorded: "Bro. Penrose came in and discussion on Keeler's book was had. It was thought best not to say the Presiding Bishop had the fulness of the Aaronic Priesthood. It was also decided to avoid saying there are several classes of Bishops such as Presiding, *not presiding but extensive district as Whitney and Partridge*, Traveling Bishops and Ward bishops. It is better to reckon the two: Pres. Bishopric and Ward Bishop and explain the position of the others." *Journal of Anthon H. Lund*, 30 June 1904, Church Archives; emphasis added.

⁶⁹*Times and Seasons* 2 (15 January 1841): 287.

⁷⁰Doctrine and Covenants, Section 121:34-40.

⁷¹*Times and Seasons* 2 (1 February 1841): 310

nounced, presumably because it was not allowed. When the Aaronic Priesthood was finally organized in Nauvoo, it was two months after the date Knight designated. Instead of being under his single direction, as implied by his announcement, the Aaronic Priesthood was organized under the joint direction of Bishops Miller, Whitney, Knight, and one other bishop of Nauvoo.⁷² To his death, Vinson Knight was denied the opportunity to receive the office of Presiding Bishop, and the announcement of his death in the *Times and Seasons* simply referred to him as "one of the bishops of this church."⁷³ Although excluded from the supreme position to which he had been authorized by revelation, Knight was advanced above the position of ward bishop he had previously held. He became a General Bishop and acted in concert with the two other General Bishops, Whitney and Miller.⁷⁴

For nearly five years following the death of Knight in July 1842 no man was appointed to the position of Presiding Bishop of the Church. Whitney and Miller continued their joint function as General Bishops.⁷⁵ Miller was the presiding officer of the high priests in the church, and Whitney presided over the Aaronic Priesthood officers. In October 1844 they were jointly appointed as Trustee-in-Trust for the church, following the death of the former trustee, Joseph Smith. At that same conference, Whitney was sustained as "first bishop" and Miller as "second bishop." They did not, however, form the unified quorum alluded to in the 1841 revelation, since each of them was semi-autonomous, Whitney having one counselor, and Miller having no counselors as bishop. Referred to as the "presiding bishops" of the church, these two men continued their semi-autonomous relationship to each other as General Bishops, even though Whitney was designated First Bishop in 1844, honoring him as the bishop of longest tenure in the church.⁷⁶

Following the exodus of the Mormons from Nauvoo in February 1846, Whitney gained increasing eminence and ultimately became the Presiding

⁷²Aaronic Priesthood Record and Minutes, Nauvoo, Illinois, 21 March 1841, p. 1, manuscript, Church Archives.

⁷³*Times and Seasons* 3 (15 August 1842): 894.

⁷⁴On 11 May 1842 an official declaration was signed by the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and by Whitney, Knight, and Miller, as "Bishops of the above mentioned Church." (Journal History, 11 May 1842.) These men were certainly not the only bishops of the church, nor were they the Presiding Bishopric designated in the 1841 revelation, but they were functioning in the special capacity of General Bishops.

⁷⁵It might be suggested that Samuel H. Smith became Presiding Bishop following the death of Vinson Knight, since the Nauvoo High Council resolved on 20 August 1842 that "Samuel H. Smith be appointed bishop in the place of Vinson Knight, deceased" (see Roberts, *History of the Church*, 5:119). This appointment was made in the reorganization of the wards of Nauvoo on that date, one of which Knight had continued to serve as a local bishop despite his other appointment. Moreover, the Nauvoo High Council had no authority to designate anyone to a position of presiding over the entire church or over any segment of it beyond the jurisdiction of the stake. Therefore, Samuel H. Smith had not been appointed as Presiding Bishop of the Church. Samuel H. Smith declined the offer to preside over a local ward as Knight's successor, and another local bishop was appointed by the high council instead (see Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 21 August 1842, manuscript, Church Archives).

⁷⁶Journal of Willard Richards, 9 August 1844; Journal History, 7 October 1844, pp. 2-3, 7 April 1845, pp. 5, 7. Miller had counselors in his role as president of the high priests quorum, but not in his role as bishop.

Bishop of the Church. George Miller began demonstrating resistance to the leadership of Brigham Young, and rapidly fell out of favor with his administration. Miller was specifically invited to attend the general conference of April 6, 1847. Failing to attend, Miller's name was omitted from the list of officers, and Whitney was sustained as Presiding Bishop of the Church.⁷⁷ Although the office had been authorized by the 1841 revelation, Whitney was the first man actually to function in that position. By 1847, the duties of the bishops to preside over the Aaronic priesthood and administer the finances of the church had been so well developed that the duties of the Presiding Bishop of the Church were obvious.

With respect to the hierarchial organization of the Presiding Bishopric, however, additional evolution was necessary. At first Newel K. Whitney served with counselors. Then, on September 6, 1850, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball were sustained as his counselors, a curious situation since by then Brigham Young was the President of the Church and Heber C. Kimball was his first counselor.⁷⁸ This situation ended with Whitney's death two weeks later.

During the tenure of the next Presiding Bishop, Edward Hunter, there was additional evidence of organizational evolution. From his appointment on April 7, 1851, until September 8, 1851, Hunter served without assistants or counselors. On the latter date, Nathaniel H. Felt and John Banks were sustained, at the instance of Brigham Young, as "travelling Presiding Bishops, under Bishop Edward Hunter."⁷⁹ On October 9, 1851, Alfred Cordon was also sustained a travelling bishop "to preside over other Bishops."⁸⁰ Although none of these three men has to date been recognized as a General Authority in official LDS histories, they were all presented at the general conferences of the church on April 7 and October 7, 1852, and April 7, 1853, in the following manner:

Edward Hunter was sustained as the Presiding Bishop to the Church; also Nathaniel H. Felt; John Banks, and Alfred Cordon, as Assistant Presiding, and Travelling Bishops among the people.⁸¹

Despite the fact that from 1851 to 1853 Edward Hunter had officially appointed "assistants," on April 11, 1852, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball were also appointed as his counselors.⁸² Apparently, however, Pres-

⁷⁷Journal of Willard Richards, 4 April 1847; Journal History, 6 April 1847.

⁷⁸Orson F. Whitney, "The Aaronic Priesthood," *The Contributor* 6 (September 1885): 441.

⁷⁹Journal History, 8 September 1851, p. 1.

⁸⁰Journal of Wilford Woodruff, 9 October 1851.

⁸¹Journal History, 7 April 1852, p. 1; 7 October 1852, p. 1; 7 April 1853, p. 1.

⁸²Journal of Wilford Woodruff, 11 April 1852. In commenting on this event the Seventh General Epistle from the First Presidency, dated 18 April 1852, indicates that Seth Taft, David Pettegrew, Abraham Hoagland, David Fullmer, and Daniel Spencer, were chosen "assistant Presiding Bishops" (see James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833-1964*, 5 vols. [Salt Lake City, 1965-71], 2:97). These men, however, were apparently never presented with the other General Authorities of the church, and therefore occupied a position inferior to that of Felt, Banks, and Cordon.

idents Young and Kimball were never subsequently presented to general conferences as Hunter's counselors. From October 7, 1853, until April 6, 1856, Hunter had no counselors or assistants sustained with him at general conferences. At the latter date, he finally received regularly appointed first and second counselors, and from 1856 onward the organization of the Presiding Bishopric was stable. The uneven attempts at stabilizing the organization of the Presiding Bishopric are further evidence that this unit of the hierarchy was the last, rather than the first, to develop.

During the lifetime of Joseph Smith, the basic foundations for the functions and organization of the presiding quorums had been established. With the First Presidency, its role as the supreme body was inherent in its proximity to the President of the church. Although two counselors in the First Presidency became the norm, organizationally it did not really matter how many assistants or counselors the president chose. Both the function and organization (one man) of the Presiding Patriarch's office had been established initially. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had both a clear organizational form and ecclesiastical jurisdiction at the inception of that body; but unlike any other unit of the hierarchy, the jurisdiction and function of the Twelve were greatly amplified during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Similar to the Patriarch, the organization and function of the First Council of the Seventy was also clearly defined almost at its establishment. Although the Presiding Bishopric did not develop organizationally until the death of Joseph Smith, its role was defined in the function of lesser bishops and its existence had been authorized in a revelation dictated by Joseph Smith.

All things considered, Joseph Smith had successfully created a hierarchy of presiding quorums which was sufficient for the ecclesiastical needs of the church at the highest levels. After a century of phenomenal growth, it has become necessary to add such offices as the Assistants to the Twelve, Regional Representatives, and Mission Representatives. Nevertheless, these organizational additions have served primarily to aid the five presiding quorums established by Joseph Smith.

Mormonism's Encounter with Spiritualism

Davis Bitton

For the first twenty or thirty years of Mormonism's existence one of its main appeals was the claim to modern-day revelation from God. Whereas other Christians were limited to hearing the word of God only through the pages of the Bible, obscured by problems of translation and theological controversy, the Mormons could hear the voice of God speaking directly to their needs in their day. Such was the message that was proclaimed confidently in the early Mormon proselyting literature and by the hundreds of missionaries that carried the good news to the world.

Around the middle of the century another movement set forth claims to direct communication with the unseen world. This was spiritualism, one of the significant enthusiasms of the nineteenth century. It was in 1848 in upstate New York that modern spiritualism had its origins. At Hydesville, in Wayne County, a Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Fox and their two daughters heard mysterious knocking or rappings, which they discovered to be in some way intelligent; that is, able to respond to questions. A little later, when Kate and Margaret Fox went to live with a married sister at Rochester, they established communication, as they said, with dead relatives and even famous figures of the past. The messages were conveyed by rappings—one for no, three for yes—and were transmitted through “mediums,” persons having some special quality enabling them to receive messages from the “other side.” The three Fox sisters were the first mediums of the new movement.¹

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¹A standard treatment of spiritualism is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of*

The spiritualist movement spread, as one authority has said, "like an epidemic." Spirit circles were formed. Soon there were mediums holding seances all over the country. Publications were established. Professional mediums from America carried the message to England and other countries, where the movement caught on. Variations in the form of supernatural communication included, in addition to the rapping already mentioned, such forms as spirit writing (in which the medium wrote but supposedly only as the passive instrument of a spirit), trance-speaking (in which the medium's voice was supposedly used by the spirit), and various kinds of table-turning, table-raising, or the well-known planchette, a small, heart-shaped board supported on two casters and a pencil that would, by light pressure of fingers of one or more living persons, produce writing, thus transmitting messages from the spirit world.

A large part of the appeal of spiritualism was its supposed ability to provide assurance of life after death, the well-being of departed loved ones, and the existence of a divine power and a real meaning for human life. The messages received through a medium were intimate, personal, directed to the individual. At the same time, according to the claim, the spiritualist activities were thoroughly scientific. Almost from the beginning there were investigations of the various psychic phenomena attempting to find natural explanations for them. Some examples of fraud were found, of course, and many of the spiritualistic experiences could be explained quite adequately by some kind of subconscious influence. But almost from the beginning, also, there have been people, including scientists of repute, who have concluded that some of the spiritualist communications were indeed of supernatural origin. Spiritualism, in a word, offered the unusual combination of religious fervor, emotional satisfaction, and intellectual respectability.

It is not surprising that the territory of Utah began to hear rumblings. Several prominent Mormon leaders were natives of the area in upper New York where the Fox sisters lived. Letters from relatives told of the spiritualist excitement. During trips to the native state, or missions to different parts of the United States or to Europe, Mormons began to hear about the spiritualists and their ability to receive messages from the other side of the veil. Through newspapers and periodicals received through the mail — some of which were used by the Utah newspapers as a source of national news — Mormons were made aware of the existence of the new rival. Unlike the Protestant and Catholic churches, which did not choose to claim modern revelations of their own, the spiritualists did claim present-day communications addressed to individual needs.

As early as February 22, 1851, Mormon readers of the *Deseret News* were learning of the "mysterious knockings" in Rochester. Almost exactly a year later, on February 21, 1852, the *Deseret News* warned, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, prove them, and learn whether they be god-like. . . . It is

Spiritualism, 2 vols. (New York, 1926). A popular account is in Carl Carmer, *Listen for a Lonesome Drum* (New York, 1936). A lively, well researched biography is Earl W. Fornell, *The Unhappy Medium: Spiritualism and the Life of Margaret Fox* (Austin, Tex., 1964).

no uncommon thing for a false spirit to assume a more plausible appearance, to a casual observer, than a true spirit would on the same subject." Heber C. Kimball told of hearing from a brother-in-law in Rochester that there were 135 "spiritual writers" in that city. Kimball saw this as a sign that "the invisible world are in trouble; they are knocking, and rapping, and muttering."² The following year, in April of 1853, Parley P. Pratt delivered a major address on the subject of spiritualism, by which, as he said, the world was "agitated."³ In February 1854, Jedediah M. Grant, just back from a mission in New York and Pennsylvania, told of there becoming acquainted with the "spirit rappers."⁴ A year later Charles H. Bassett told of the "indifference" in "infidelity" he found among the gentiles in Ohio. "Spiritualism has done much to bring about this state of feeling," he said, "and is daily adding to the ranks of skepticism. The many contradictory revelations, coming thro' the spiritual mediums, have had a tendency to destroy all faith in true revelation."⁵

It is more difficult to know what ordinary members of the church knew about the subject. Did the printer's devils at the *Deseret News* talk about it? Was it of any interest to new immigrants, some of them working on the temple block? Did it arouse the curiosity of families in American Fork, in Parowan, in Hebron, in Cache Valley? We do not have the complete transcripts of sacrament meetings or high council meetings or home teaching conversations that would give a solid answer. Nevertheless, there are a few glimpses indicating that Mormons, like other people, were interested in these claims to communication from "the other side." Apostate or lapsed Mormons at Kirtland were attracted to the "spirit rappers."⁶ In San Bernardino some were being attracted to spiritualism as early as 1853, and some defectors continued to follow it after the withdrawal of the loyalist Saints in 1857.⁷ In missionary diaries we get some hints. David Holladay found that a member had been

²*Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London, 1854-86), 1:36.

³*Ibid.*, 1:6-15.

⁴*Ibid.*, 2:10.

⁵*Deseret News*, 20 June 1855.

⁶For later spiritualism in Kirtland see the report of Thomas Colburn, who in 1855 found there a "few that call themselves Saints, but very weak, many apostates, who have mostly joined the rappers." St. Louis *Luminary*, 17 February and 2 May 1855. In 1869 Apostle Orson Pratt reminisced of a time several years earlier when he was in New York City. Spiritualism, he said, "was all the order of the day. Almost all those old members of the Church that had been in Nauvoo and Kirtland and had apostatized, had fled into New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and throughout the Eastern cities; and in going through any of these cities, if you heard anything about these apostates, you would hear about them being great mediums; there was scarcely a case but what they were spiritual mediums." *Journal of Discourses*, 13:70.

⁷"We have had some curious manifestations under the head of Spiritual communications by working table tipping and writing but the people are generally satisfied that God is not in the whirlwind nor the storm but in the spirit that whispers peace to the contrite heart." Amasa M. Lyman and Charles C. Rich to Brigham Young, 1 September 1853, Church Library-Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, hereinafter cited as Church Archives. Cf. Rich speech as summarized in San Bernardino Branch Record, 26 August 1855, Church Archives. Benjamin Grouard's defection to spiritualism is noted in Louisa Barnes Pratt's journal, *Heart Throbs of the West* 8 (1947): 309-81. Later spiritualism in San Bernardino is reported in *The National Spiritualist*, 1 January 1931.

"carried away" by the spiritualist movement in 1858.⁸ Two years later Henry G. Boyle encountered some spiritualists during his preaching mission in California.⁹ In 1859 Oscar O. Stoddard told of meeting a family who believed in spiritualism because their daughter had been cured of consumption by it.¹⁰ In 1858 Charles L. Walker was attending a grammar school class in Salt Lake City, where, one evening, the subject of spiritualism was discussed. Later the same year he spoke in church on the subject of "spirit rappings." He was quite disturbed the following year to find that his own father was favorably impressed by a spiritualist book written by a Mr. Arnold. Gradually, much to the dismay of Charles, his father became more and more interested, reading other spiritualist books and a spiritualist periodical. Even after he moved to St. George, in 1862, Charles Walker still found the subject to be a lively issue; his diary continues to include disappearing references to spiritualism for several years.¹¹ At about the same time, during the Civil War, Eliza R. Snow, obviously aware of the spiritualist craze among prominent American leaders, wrote the following "psalm to the Republic" in her journal: "And among all thy wise men—thy politicians—thy astrologers—thy spirit mediums—thy office seekers, yea, all of thy political demagogues; thou has not even one Daniel to whom the Most High revealeth secrets, and maketh known things that will shortly come to pass."¹²

A new phase in the incursion of spiritualism into Mormon Utah followed the coming of the railroad in 1869. This was the year of the Godbeite schism. The general lineaments of the Godbeite movement — its renunciation of economic dictation by the church, its advocacy of mining and other industry for Utah, and its alleged championing of free speech and enlightenment—have been known. But the movement had strong religious motivation as well. In essence the religion of the New Movement was, in Ronald W. Walker's phrase, a "grafting of their [the Godbeite leaders'] concept of spiritualism upon the roots of Mormon organization."¹³ Use of the planchette by curiosity seekers about this time is clearly established; one William Cogswell received special instructions from it to join the Mormon church.¹⁴ The device found such a ready acceptance among the Godbeites that Brigham Young denounced them contemptuously as the "Harrison-Godbe-Planchette church."¹⁵

⁸David H. Holladay Diary, typescript, Church Archives.

⁹Henry G. Boyle Diary, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, typescript in Church Archives.

¹⁰Oscar O. Stoddard Diary, microfilm, Church Archives.

¹¹Charles L. Walker Diary, typescript, Church Archives. Reference to spiritualism on pp. 24, 66, 81, 101, 130, 136, 205, 468, 535, 641, 677, 692, 737, 759.

¹²Eliza R. Snow Journal (1842–44) and Notebook of Poems, photocopy of holograph, Church Archives.

¹³Ronald W. Walker, "The Godbeite Church of Zion," a chapter from a University of Utah dissertation in progress entitled "The Making of Modern Utah: The Godbeite Protest," which promises to be the definitive treatment of the subject.

¹⁴William J. Cogswell, "Was Brigham Young a Spiritualist?" 24 September 1900, Bancroft Library Manuscript; microfilm copy in Church Archives.

¹⁵Journal History, 2 February 1870. This is a huge, multi-volume compilation of newspaper clippings and other primary sources located in the Church Archives.

As for mediumistic communications with the beyond, William S. Godbe and E. L. T. Harrison told of a series of seances in New York in the fall of 1868.¹⁶ By 1870, according to some rumors, Charlotte Ives Godbe, William's wife, was acting as a medium.¹⁷ A more important medium entered the movement with the conversion of Amasa Lyman, excommunicated Mormon apostle, who in the 1850s had opposed the inroads of spiritualism in the San Bernardino colony. His diary gives clear indication that during 1869 he was quite friendly with Harrison, Godbe, H. W. Lawrence, and T. B. H. Stenhouse.¹⁸ In 1870, when he announced that he was going to "resume the preaching of the gospel," the authorities of the Mormon church, including his son Francis Marion, were upset. Within a matter of weeks we find Lyman circulating among followers of the New Movement and proselyting, meeting a medium by the name of John Murray Spear, and attending a seance. His reading during 1871-72 includes such works as Henry J. Horn's *Strange Visitors*; A. J. Davis's *A Stellar Key to the Summer Land*; *Spiritual Pilgrim*; *Biography of Mr. J. M. Peebles*; and the *Religious Philosophical Journal*, all of them written with a spiritualist orientation.

Lyman's involvement in seances became more frequent. At first he seems to have been there as an observer, with someone else acting as the medium, probably Spear and on one occasion a Brother Carlile. During 1871 he even sent questions to a medium named Charles H. Foster in New York, who contacted Lyman's dead relatives and sent back the results. Quickly, however, the gift of mediumship was more widely shared. His daughters Josephine and Hila were "entranced." Sometimes his comments on these seances are quite general: "encouraging manifestation," "had private seance with happy results," "had pleasant time with our friends from beyond." Others are more specific, as this communication from Chief Walker through Lyman's daughter Hila:

Me big Chief. American. Me Walker, me much shine in spirit life, on big hunting ground. Me write big lots in Spirit life. Me Walker sure. Me no fool you. No, me good.

Others from the spirit world who communicated to Amasa Lyman and his coterie were Kit Carson, Henry Lyman, Mother Phelps, Perez Mason, Cornelia Lyman, Joseph Smith, Heber C. Kimball, Hyrum Smith.

Lyman himself began to function as a medium. Between 1870 and 1873 he traveled from town to town, meeting with interested persons holding seances. Lyman and his associates seem to have been quite hopeful of attracting numerous followers. In 1874 Richard R. Hopkins wrote to Lyman that their movement, known as "harmonial philosophy," was "making such inroads among the faithful that it is a subject of condemnation in the various ward meetings."¹⁹ Orson Hyde and Franklin D. Richards called on Lyman to inform

¹⁶*Utah Magazine*, 27 November 1869. For Orson Pratt's critical comments on these alleged manifestations see *Journal of Discourses*, 13:72-73.

¹⁷Ellen Pratt McGary to Ellen Clawson, 23 April 1870, in papers of Hiram B. Clawson, Western Americana Collection, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹⁸Amasa Lyman Diary, Church Archives.

¹⁹Richard R. Hopkins to Amasa Lyman, 14 November 1874, Church Archives.

him of his excommunication. "Why my dear brethren," he replied, "you here now are simply, as it were, at the foot of the mountain, whereas I have been where you are now, but unlike you, I have gone to the summit of the mountain, and traversed its plateau, and gone far beyond, making the heights of another mountain far beyond and removed from this one."²⁰

Part of the appeal of New Movement spiritualism to dissident Mormons was that it allowed them to retain some elements of their Mormon beliefs, or to see Mormonism as a preliminary phase of spiritualism that had now moved, in Lyman's phrase, to the summit of the mountain. T. B. H. Stenhouse was especially articulate in giving a spiritualist interpretation of early Mormonism. Joseph Smith was "no more and no less than a 'spirit-medium.'" He did receive genuine communications but mistakenly interpreted as divine revelations messages that came from departed spirits. His seclusion behind the curtain when translating the Book of Mormon corresponded, said Stenhouse, to "the dark seances so common in the experience of modern Spiritualism." Even the extra-ordinary manifestations at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple were rejected out of hand by most people living at the time, but modern spiritualists "will credit the thousand spectators and witnesses at the dedication with having had a 'wonderful experience.'"²¹

If Ronald Walker's interpretation is ultimately persuasive, as it is to me, then the Godbeite leaders may not have at first recognized the implications of pursuing the spiritualistic experience. It seems clear enough that at first their intentions were veiled under the guise of modern reform of Mormonism, that they recognized the need for adding the genius of Mormon organization to the emotional appeals of spiritualism, and that "the logic of spiritualism ultimately was antithetical to the Mormon faith they believed themselves preserving."²² For present purposes, such cross currents and motivations are less important than the fact that this was a major channel for the inroads of spiritualism into the Mormon membership. Formally at their own meetings, through informal conversations and study groups, by development of mediumistic talent among their number, and by the sponsorship of prominent spiritualist mediums and lecturers from the outside such as Spear and Foster, the Godbeite spiritualists could appear as a formidable challenge to the Mormon position.

As they contemplated the popularity of spiritualism and saw its introduction into Utah, Mormon leaders could respond in different ways. One refrain that was heard over and over again as the Mormon leaders mentioned the subject, was that people who earlier had rejected the Mormon message by insisting on the impossibility of modern revelation were now accepting the spiritualist claims without compunction. After recalling how people had rejected the Mormon gospel, George Q. Cannon added: "But as soon as something came along that gratified them in the way they wanted — something that could tip a table or give some other singular manifestation of power, such

²⁰Clinton D. Ray Reminiscences, typescript, Western Americana Collection.

²¹T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1904).

²²Walker, "The Godbeite Church of Zion," p. 23.

as feeling invisible hands laid upon them, or hearing music played by invisible performers, or something of this character, they were convinced immediately that it was possible for spiritual beings to communicate with mortals, and now the Spiritualists number their converts by millions; they probably number more than any other denomination, if they can be called a denomination. They boast of their success.²³ The inconsistency and irony were enhanced by stressing the popularity of spiritualism.²⁴

In such statements there was an element of the I-told-you-so attitude, some sarcasm, and some understandable delight at pointing to what seemed to be a huge inconsistency on the part of their opponents. But the Mormon answer could scarcely stop with such superficial nudging. Were the spiritualists' experiences, which had an abundance of personal testimony in their favor, fraudulent or were they genuine? This was what the Mormon leaders were called upon to explain so that their people would not be led astray.

There were some suggestions from the Mormon pulpit that the spiritualists were frauds. In 1853 the *Latter-day Saint Millennial Star* labeled the movement as "transparent, blasphemous imposture."²⁵ In the *Deseret News* in 1859 the following brief notice appeared: "Dr. B. F. Hatch gives it as his opinion, after nine years' acquaintance with spiritualism and its leading advocates, that many of their theories are founded in wild delusion, and productive of the most direful results; that he is determined to 'flee from his errors,' and though he once threw Christianity overboard, he thinks God that he has again been made its recipient. For his wife Cora he professed the profoundest respect and tenderest regard, but asserts that spiritualism (of which she was a medium) is fifty percent self-delusion, twenty-five percent psychology, fifteen percent intentional imposition, and the remaining ten percent yet a matter of uncertainty."²⁶ For N. L. Nelson, writing in the 1890s, spiritualism was a "superstition."²⁷

Occasionally humor was used in the Mormon denunciation of spiritualism. Mild joshing is the tone of the poem published by the *Deseret News* on March 23, 1859:

The spirits are rapping, the spirits are rapping —
But not on the table, and not on the floor,
Good spirits and bad spirits are tapping and tapping,
Of every heart they are trying the door.

The remaining stanzas deal with these "spirits" — envy, pride, love, beauty, etc. In 1889 an amusing story in the *Young Woman's Journal* was entitled "Spiritualism, or What Became of Murphy." The best of the humorous

²³*Journal of Discourses*, 12:370.

²⁴It was estimated that there were about ten million "followers" of spiritualism by the mid-1850s. Fornell, *The Unhappy Medium*, p. 107. Mormon references to this popularity are found in several sermons printed in the *Journal of Discourses* and also, for example, in the *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* (Liverpool) 7 March 1868, 30 December 1873, 27 December 1886, 11 July 1887.

²⁵*Millennial Star*, 7 May 1853.

²⁶*Deseret News*, 9 March 1859.

²⁷N. L. Nelson, "Theosophy and Mormonism," *The Contributor* 16 (June 1895): 487.

stories I have found was published on February 22, 1859, in *Valley Tan*, where it was undoubtedly seen by a good number of Mormon readers:

An enthusiastic believer was relating to a skeptic, the spiritual performances to which he could testify, and among other things said that on a certain occasion the spirit of his wife, who had been dead several years, returned to him, and seated herself upon his knee, put her arm around him, and kissed him as much to his gratification as she used to when living.

"You do not mean to say," remarked the skeptic, "that the spirit of your wife really embraced and kissed you?"

"No, not *exactly* that," replied the believer, "but her spirit took possession of the body of a female medium, and through her embraced and kissed me."

Nudges and knowing winks would follow such a story, which was not calculated to treat the spiritualist claims with much seriousness.

But simply writing off the new movement as a fraud was too easy. Such terms as "delusion" came with ill grace from the Mormons, whose claims had repeatedly been disposed of with the same cavalier expression. As Parley P. Pratt recognized in 1853, the Mormons found themselves on the horns of a dilemma. "If on the one hand we admit the principle of communication between the spirit world and our own, and yield ourselves to the unreserved or indiscriminate guidance of every spiritual manifestation, we are liable to be led about by every wind of doctrine, and by every kind of spirit which constitute the varieties of being and of thought in the spirit world. . . . If, on the other hand, we deny the philosophy or the fact of spiritual communication between the living and those who have died, we deny the very foundation from which emanated the great truths or principles which were the foundation of both the ancient and modern Church."²⁸

The general Mormon position on spiritualism was worked out to meet this dilemma. Besides many brief references to the subject, there are three fairly substantial statements. An editorial entitled "Try the Spirits," which appeared in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842, preceded the rise of spiritualism in its specific form with the Fox sisters, but several of the principles there discussed were found to have relevance to the question later on. A full sermon on the subject of spiritualism was delivered by Parley P. Pratt in 1853, when some of the finest stirrings were taking place. Finally, near the end of the century N. L. Nelson published a series on "Theosophy and Mormonism" that contained a fairly thorough discussion of spiritualism.²⁹ It is mainly in these articles that the Mormon leaders gave their reasoned response to the spiritualist challenge. Other statements in the sermons or in Church periodi-

²⁸*Journal of Discourses*, 2:43.

²⁹"Try the Spirits," *Times and Seasons*, 1 April 1842; also in Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1932-51), 4:571-81. Pratt's sermon is in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:6-15 and was reprinted in the *Millennial Star*, 11 February 1865; cf. Pratt's sermon in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:43-47. N. L. Nelson is cited in footnote 28.

cals repeated the basic Mormon position with only occasional variations.³⁰

Rather than rejecting all of the spiritualist claims out of hand, the Mormons therefore allowed that at least some of the communications were from the spirit world. But evaluating their worth did not stop there. One clear possibility was that the spirits responsible for the messages were inferior spirits. N. L. Nelson was not so extreme as to maintain that only "evil" spirits were involved (although he saw only these as capable of "possessing" a human body when that phenomenon occurred). He was prepared to admit, in other words, that the spirits of people who had lived on earth were communicating. But he reasoned that it was unlikely that "men and women of intelligence would hang about clairvoyants and mediums for the miserable chance of gratifying the curiosity of earthly friends and relatives." The spirits moving the planchette or working upon earthly spirit mediums were "low-caste spirits."³¹ Other Mormon statements did not differentiate quite this carefully but simply labeled the spiritualist phenomena as coming from the devil and his minions.

Once genuine communication was admitted, the basic question became the means of discriminating between the good and bad, the lawful and the unlawful, channels. Pratt listed five characteristics of true and lawful communications. The privilege is granted to those who (1) believe in direct revelation in modern times; (2) have repented of their sins; (3) act in the name of Jesus Christ; (4) hold the Priesthood; and (5) are in the temples dedicated to God.³²

The Mormon leaders were confident of the superiority of the priesthood. Heber C. Kimball indicated his opinion in unmistakable terms: "I never heard a knocking, or saw a table dance, only as I kicked it myself. I do not want them knocking or dancing around me." After mentioning the claim of some to automatic or spirit writing, he said, "I do not thank any person to take my hand and write without my consent; we do not like such proceedings."³³ Brigham Young was especially confident that the powers responsible for the spiritualistic phenomena simply could not operate in the presence of a Mormon elder, for this would mean that a lesser power was dominating a greater. "You may assemble together every spiritualist on the face of the earth," he thundered, "and I will defy them to make a table move or get a communication from hell or any other place while I am present."³⁴

What about such words or ideas as the spiritualists did receive? The Mormons were not impressed. Some truths were conveyed, of course, but these were only such truths as the devil used to disguise and make palatable the basic error he wished to peddle. In most instances the Mormon leaders were obviously contemptuous of the feeble "truths" conveyed through the mediums.

³⁰See, for example, *Journal of Discourses*, 2:223, 12:368-71, 13:70-74, 13:266-67, 280-81, 19:133, 24:342.

³¹N. L. Nelson, "Theosophy and Mormonism," p. 488. Cf. Brigham Young in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:157, 13:281.

³²*Journal of Discourses*, 2:45-46.

³³*Ibid.*, 2:223.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 14:72; cf. 3:370.

N. L. Nelson gave the one systematic analysis when he listed twenty "ethical principles" of the spiritualists. These included, among others, the following: that man as a spirit is immortal; that there is a spirit world; that the "process of physical death in no way essentially transforms the mental constitution or the moral character of those who experience it"; that happiness or suffering in the spirit world depends on "character, aspirations, and degree of harmonization, or of personal conformity to universal and divine law"; that progression continues beyond the grave; that there are different grades in the spirit world; and that as offspring of the Infinite Parent man has in his nature "a germ of divinity." Nelson asked what all of this had to do with Mormonism and answered his own question: "Three-fourths of it is Mormonism and not Spiritualism." The remaining one-fourth could be accounted for, he thought, by "unconscious cerebration."³⁵

To those who wanted to give the spiritualists credit for at least indicating some belief in God and the immortality of the human soul, or those who thought Joseph Smith was merely an "advanced medium," the *Deseret News* answered that the Prophet Joseph received visitations but did not lose his own identity in the process. To make the contrast clearer it was pointed out that the spiritualists rejected belief in a personal God, in the pre-existence, and the Kingdom of God, all fundamental tenets of Mormon theology. "Spiritualism may change the form of unbelief," the article continued, "but it does not alter its character. The scepticism of the age as to the immortality of the soul may be removed, but what we want is faith in God, as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, faith in man's great destiny to live again upon this fair earth in a glorified and immortal condition, faith in the words of eternal life, as made known to them by revelation from God. These things spiritualism does not teach."³⁶

The most obvious characteristic of the spiritualist messages, as the Mormons saw them, was their confusion. This was closely related to the lack of any real organization among the spiritualists, who were seen as flying off in all directions, believing anything they wanted to, receiving messages that said almost anything, contradicting each other, a helter-skelter stumbling after some kind of guidance but with a bumbling confusion as the result. "God has spoken now, and so has the devil," said Brigham Young. "Jesus has revealed his Priesthood, so has the devil revealed his, and there is quite a difference between the two. One forms a perfect chain, the links of which cannot be separated; one has perfect order, laws, rules, regulations, organizations; it forms, fashions, makes, creates, produces, protects, and holds in existence the inhabitants of the earth in a pure and holy form of government. . . . The other is a rope of sand; it is disjointed, jargon, confusion, discord, everybody receiving revelation to suit himself."³⁷

³⁵N. L. Nelson, "Theosophy and Mormonism," pp. 485–88. These were resolutions passed by the American Association of Spiritualists at their 1868 convention in Rochester, N.Y.

³⁶This statement was in the form of a letter signed by "Beth." *Deseret News*, 28 January 1870.

³⁷*Journal of Discourses*, 13:281.

In a sense what the Mormon leaders were saying was, "By their fruits ye shall know them." "The difference between the two systems is apparent," said George Q. Cannon. "The Latter-day Saints are united, just as Jesus Christ prayed that His followers might be. It is true that we are not yet one as the Father and the Son are one; but we are approximating thereto. The principle of oneness is in our midst and is continually growing. But how is it with those who are the base imitators of the servants of God? Why a thousand vagaries are indulged in by them. There is no form of belief in which they unite. . . . Are the inhabitants of the earth benefitted by them? Is the earth better, more beautiful or lovely by their labors or by the revelations they receive? No, there are no fruits of this kind to be witnessed among them; but all is division, confusion, and chaos. There is nothing to cement them together or make them one."³⁸

In 1871 Gustave Henriod wrote of a man, once a Mormon, who was attracted to spiritualism and then later died under the influence of alcohol or opium. Such an example was thought to be ample warning to any Mormons who might be tempted by "the delusive influence of this sect."³⁹

In 1874, at a meeting of the Retrenchment Association, Sarah Decker "exhorted the sisters not to attend these Spiritualist meetings that were held in the Liberal Institute." She was "sorry to see so many of the saints drawn there."⁴⁰ This, of course, was the immediate aftermath of the Godbeite enthusiasm, and we may suspect that what she considered "many" may have been a hundred or less curiosity seekers. That Utahns could still follow spiritualism if they were inclined is suggested by a letter of 1888 in which Mrs. B. Raymond, a clairvoyant from Denver, asked about obtaining a license to practice in Salt Lake City.⁴¹ As late as 1900 an interesting comment appeared in the record of the Salt Lake Stake. An Elder J. Selley, a city employee, told that he had recently visited a "spiritual medium," who told him that she had been in town only about two weeks but had already received visits from "hundreds" of Mormons who came to ask her whether or not they should be baptized for their kindred dead.⁴²

Such indications notwithstanding, it would be hard to prove that spiritualism proved to be a serious threat to Mormonism if we judge it in terms of conversions. Spiritualism hovered on the periphery, a reality of which the Mormon leaders were aware and which for brief periods did bid fair to become a craze in the Mormon community. When the meetings, private conversations between individuals, and the Mormon sermons on the subject simmered down, however, it is apparent that spiritualism had never been more than a flash in the pan in Mormon country. Brigham Young was quite right in recognizing the confusion and disunity among the spiritualists. While their

³⁸Ibid., 12:371.

³⁹*Deseret News*, 10 May 1871.

⁴⁰Minutes, Senior and Junior Cooperative Retrenchment Association, 31 October 1874, Church Archives.

⁴¹Letter dated 27 November 1888, Salt Lake City Council files; photocopy in possession of author.

⁴²Salt Lake Stake Historical Record, 25 April 1900, Church Archives.

numbers may have been considerable throughout the world, they were never effectively organized. As a later authority said, spiritualism "failed to maintain its early promise. . . because of its failure to develop either organization, ritual or doctrine,"⁴⁸ a general observation that was doubly true when it faced a powerful, functioning organization like Mormonism.

Another reason for Mormonism's relative immunity has not yet been suggested. I refer to the fact that the church had already provided for many, if not all of the experiences which spiritualism offered to those longing for them. Reading statements in the spiritualist periodicals gives ample evidence of what these experiences were and of the widespread complaint that Christianity in general had become too rational, too proper, too arid to answer emotional yearnings. But Mormonism had it. What about personal contact with God and departed spirits? Mormonism allowed for such encounters and, under the necessary controls, even encouraged them in the form of dreams and individual revelations for the guidance of the individual. Patriarchal blessings and other similar blessings were an effective way of communicating a precious experience that was seen as highly individual. The longing for contact with departed loved ones, aside from the possibilities already mentioned, was given rich fulfillment in genealogy and temple work, which was seen and experienced as an activity that actually did something to knit the relationship with one's family and in some cases to perform services for those souls who were dead and gone. Anyone familiar with the folklore of Mormon temple work — I am referring to the rich variety of intimate personal experiences almost always transmitted by word of mouth — has heard reports of appearances of spirits, along with voice and other kinds of manifestations, occurring in a beautiful setting, sanctioned and permeated with awe, and frequently enough to make a trip to a medium seem anti-climatic if not superfluous and lacking in propriety.

I am referring of course to the resources of the two systems as they were seen by those who participated in them, the kinds of experiences they offered, the needs they seemed to fulfill. When the problem is considered in these terms, the failure of spiritualism to gain much of a following in Mormon country is scarcely surprising.

Whatever the reason, spiritualism did not succeed in winning substantial numbers of Mormons to its ranks. And on the world scene it has not since measured up to the anticipations of some of its early spokesmen. The failure of spiritualism in nineteenth century Utah is therefore an instructive case study dramatizing the inherent disadvantages of a faddish, quasi-intellectual, loose movement in competition with a movement that had its own theology, its own internal consistency, its own satisfactions and appeals, and above all its own firm organizational base.

⁴⁸Geoffrey K. Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society* (New York, 1969), p. 83.

The Stenhouses and the Making of a Mormon Image

Ronald W. Walker

Men and women are drawn into the net, perform many evolutions, cut a few capers, play their part, and exit. What a useful experience for the faithful. (William Eddington to T. B. H. Stenhouse, 1854)¹

As remote as the possibility of apostasy seemed upon its pronouncement, Eddington's caution proved prophetic. Thomas Brown Holmes Stenhouse and his wife Fanny Warn, after being early gathered into the gospel net and playing a significant role at the center of Mormon society, discarded their faith in 1870. If anything, their defection heightened their influence upon Mormon history. For each authored an exposé of their former belief which attempted not only to record history, but to determine it. Fanny's *Exposé of Polygamy*, later reworked into her famous "Tell It All," sought the abolition of her personal anathema, polygamy. On the other hand her husband's spritely and seminal historical survey, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, hoped to stir the Saints to the enticements of the Godbeite movements, a heresy which sought to transform Mormonism during the early 1870s.² If their pleadings failed to

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¹Salt Lake City, 31 October 1854, reprinted in *Millennial Star* 17 (17 February 1855): 107.

²Fanny Stenhouse, *Exposé of Polygamy in Utah: A Lady's Life Among the Mormons* (New York, 1872); Fanny Stenhouse, "Tell It All": *The Story of a Life Experience in Mormonism* (Hartford, 1874); and T. B. H. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints: A Full and Complete History of the Mormons* (New York, 1873). The titles of Fanny's books often varied with the edition.

enlist a substantial Utah audience, they helped to fashion throughout the United States and Great Britain the negative image of nineteenth century Mormonism.

I

The Stenhouse *denouement* could hardly have been anticipated when the twenty-one-year-old Thomas was first converted to Mormonism. Born February 21, 1824, in Dalkeith, near Edinburgh, Scotland, he was the twelfth child of Elizabeth and George Stenhouse, his father laboring as a vintner, coachman, and innkeeper.³ Young Stenhouse refused any religious profession, regarding the "*heterogeneous mass of confused modern Christianity*" to be nothing less than the "*lively reality of the vision on the Isle of Patmos*."⁴ But Mormonism enthralled him, and he readily gave himself over to its service. Early in 1848, with only a few years of Church experience, Stenhouse was entrusted to open the Southhampton Conference of the British Mission. He plunged into the task with only his faith as companion and succor. After less than two months' labor, he reported five miraculous healings, visitations by false spirits, and seventeen baptisms. "I find *no man* has power to stand against the power of force and truth," he later declared. When called from Southhampton in 1850, the dynamic evangelist left a small but prospering flock of five branches with 166 members.⁵

Stenhouse left Southhampton with more than a feeling of accomplishment. Fanny Warn had become his wife. The daughter of a gardener and florist, she was born on Jersey, one of the Channel Islands. She had gone to Brittany as a tutor when only in her middle teens, returning six years later to contemplate a wealthy Frenchman's proposal of marriage. Visiting members of her family in Southhampton who had already embraced Mormonism, Fanny was baptized by the handsome and magnetic Stenhouse. The day of her conversion, she later proclaimed even in the bitterness of her apostasy, was one of the happiest of her life. Testy and tart, she bore the allurements of beauty, intelligence, and culture. The charmed Stenhouse suddenly felt the need to cultivate his French, with Fanny serving as his instructor. The missionary soon proved himself both as a student and as a suitor. They were married on February 6, 1850.⁶

Together they embarked upon almost a decade of unremitted church activity. As the most promising elder in Britain, Stenhouse was selected by Apostle Lorenzo Snow to assist in the opening of the Italian Mission. He

³Stenhouse apparently shared the English delight for long and distinguished names, evidently affixing "Holmes" in honor of the Mormon elder who performed his baptismal ordinance. "Marriage of George Stenhouse," Dunbar Parish, Scotland, 25 December 1802, 706/5; "Entry of Marriage," T. B. H. Stenhouse, 6 February 1850, Somerset House, London, England; see also Dalkeith Parish Records, Dalkeith, Scotland, 683/5 and 683/10. Contrary to Utah records, Stenhouse's obituaries list his birth as 1825.

⁴T. B. H. Stenhouse, *Millennial Star* 12 (1 July 1850): 205. Emphasis his.

⁵*Ibid.*, 10 (1 January 1848): 16; (15 May 1848): 153-54; (15 November 1848): 348-49. Emphasis his. *Half-Yearly Reports of the Southampton Conferences*, 8 June 1850, p. 3, at the Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah. For Stenhouse's service as a clerk of the Glasgow Conference before his Southampton mission, *Times and Seasons* 6:1035.

⁶Fanny Stenhouse, "*Tell It All*," p. 33-73.

thus became the first English elder to serve in a "foreign" country and evidently the first Mormon high priest ordained in Italy.⁷ Stenhouse later was transferred to Switzerland where Fanny joined him. He labored indefatigably, at first without promise of success or even sustenance. His devotion clearly impressed Elder Snow. "Being a stranger to the manners and customs of the people and having no friend to introduce him to the confidence and favor of any one, Elder Stenhouse . . . has had to encounter difficulties insurmountable to any but those who have the most perfect consciousness of the truth and life-giving power and spirit of the cause,"⁸ wrote the apostle. Yet when Stenhouse's presidency terminated in October 1854, a French language Mormon newspaper, *Le Réflecteur*, had been established, tracts printed, and three hundred baptized.⁹

By late 1855, after an interval in England, the Stenhouses were Zion-bound aboard the *Emerald Isle*. But their hopes of immediately joining the Utah Saints were frustrated by John Taylor, presiding church officer in the eastern United States, who recognized Stenhouse's talents and sought to use them. For the next three and a half years, Stenhouse toured and spoke before the eastern congregations and assisted in editing *The Mormon*, the New York church organ. Inasmuch as the office of the newspaper was situated next to that of the New York *Herald*, Stenhouse met and became a protege of James Gordon Bennett, Sr. The famed editor hired the Mormon elder as the *Herald's* scientific writer, thus commencing a warm professional association which endured until Stenhouse's death almost twenty-five years later. While in New York Stenhouse reportedly introduced into America, the first stereoscope camera, a device producing a three-dimensional effect which eventually became popular during the latter half of the century. Later when Taylor was called to Deseret during the "Utah War," he presided over the eastern mission and received the commission from Brigham Young to foster the church's interests in the New York press. Fanny, as another indication of the couple's diversity, served at least on one occasion, as a successful midwife.¹⁰

Finally in September 1859, fourteen years following his baptism, Stenhouse and his wife gathered to Zion. The last eight hundred miles of their journey reportedly were completed by handcart. But in Utah, as in an Edna Ferber novel, the Stenhouses quickly scaled the frontier society ladder. First as a

⁷Edward W. Tullidge, "In Memory of T. B. H. Stenhouse," *Tullidge's Quarterly Magazine* 2 (April 1882): 91; Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 4 November 1850, pp. 1-3, (hereafter cited Journal History), Church Library-Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter cited as Church Archives).

⁸Snow to F. D. Richards, 7 February 1852, in Journal History, 26 January 1852, p. 2.

⁹Journal History, 1 October 1854, p. 1.

¹⁰Ibid., 3 January 1856, p. 2; 12 April 1856, p. 1; 5 October 1856, p. 6; 5 April 1857, p. 2; Fanny Stenhouse, "Tell It All," p. 204; New York *Herald*, 9 January 1870, p. 8; *Daily Alta California* (San Francisco), 8 March 1882; B. H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor* (Salt Lake City, 1963), p. 247; Young to Stenhouse, 8 May 1858, Brigham Young Papers, Church Archives; for Stenhouse's role with the stereoscope camera, see Andrew Jensen, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City, 1920), 3:170; Fanny's midwifery is preserved in a Lyon family tradition; interview with T. Edgar Lyon, 12 March 1973, Salt Lake City, Utah.

clerk in the Church Historian's Office and as a reporter for the *Deseret News*, Stenhouse increasingly acquired positions and prestige; proprietor of Salt Lake's first newsstand, publisher of a short-lived magazine, university regent, Salt Lake postmaster, United States Postal Agent for the Intermountain West, patron of the Salt Lake Theatre, Seventy lecturer, and eventually founder and publisher of the Salt Lake *Telegraph*, the city's first daily and at the time the most successful journal in the territory. Clearly appreciated for his social touch, he frequently managed the territorial social events. Indeed Stenhouse usually joined Brigham Young's entourage when the church president toured the outlying settlements, briefly exhorting the Saints during their meetings.¹¹ As with most of Deseret's prominent citizens he entered into plural marriage. In 1863 Stenhouse chose as his second wife, Belinda, the fifteen-year-old orphan of Apostle Parley P. Pratt. She bore him three daughters. But it was Fanny who initially assisted in the building of the family fortunes, advertising herself as a "Milliner, Dress and Cloak Maker, First House West of the Tabernacle."¹² However with prosperity in the ascent, she retired to care for her family of five boys and five girls and to accept an occasional theatrical role. "We were surrounded by every comfort and luxury which at that time could be procured in Salt Lake City," she later recounted. "No family in the Territory was better provided for than was ours, not excepting Brigham Young."¹³

Had Deseret possessed a Minister of Public Information and Propaganda, Stenhouse would have carried the portfolio, assisted occasionally by Fanny. Stenhouse's *Telegraph*, while less provincial and partisan than its sister, the *Deseret News*, was "independent" only in ownership. Originally established as a foil to the stridently anti-Mormon *Union Vedette*, the voice of Colonel Connor and the California Volunteers at Camp Douglas, the *Telegraph* wore its commitment on its sleeve. There were few, if any, gentlemen among the rabid antagonists of Mormonism, declared one of its more forceful editorials. "On the contrary, those rabid, malicious, mendacious, unscrupulous antagonists manifest too many of the habits of climbing monkeys to ever be mistakenly regarded as men or gentlemen."¹⁴ Since during this period Stenhouse filed dispatches for the popular New York *Herald* as well as for several California papers, his journalistic voice was undoubtedly the most powerful in the territory.¹⁵

But Stenhouse's role as the defender of the faith was by no means limited

¹¹New York *Herald*, 30 October 1869; Journal History, 22 July, 1860, p. 3; 31 July 1862, p. 4; 30 September 1863, p. 5; 2 December 1863, p. 1; 15 June 1864, pp. 2-3; 20 July 1864, p. 3; 25 July 1864, p. 2; 24 March 1866, p. 1; 2 February 1867, p. 2; 23 August 1867, p. 1; J. Cecil Alter, *Utah, The Storied Domain: A Documentary History of Utah's Eventful Career* (New York, 1932), 1:435; *Daily Alta California* (San Francisco), 8 March 1882.

¹²*Deseret News*, 8 August 1860; 22 May 1861.

¹³Fanny Stenhouse, "Tell It All," p. 486; *Daily Alta California* (San Francisco), 8 March 1882.

¹⁴Salt Lake *Telegraph*, 24 February 1869.

¹⁵Edward W. Tullidge, *The History of Salt Lake City and Its Founders* (Salt Lake City, 1886), p. 317. At one time the *Telegraph* boasted a staff of thirty and annual advertising revenues from New York alone of \$4,000 — significant statistics for a frontier journal; Edward W. Tullidge, "The Mormon Commonwealth," *The Galaxy* 2 (15 October 1866): 363.

to journalism. When in 1863 frictions between the church and the California Volunteers threatened to escalate into open warfare, President Young deputized Stenhouse to travel throughout the eastern United States to solicit support. The energetic publisher secured favorable interviews with old Mormon friend Thomas Kane; former territorial governor Alfred Cumming; the chief agent of the Associated Press D. N. Craig; Horace Greeley; the influential U.S. postmaster Montgomery Blair; and even President Lincoln. The President received him warmly and jocularly, affirming that if the Mormons would leave him alone during the Civil War he would reciprocate.¹⁶ When the military suppression of the Saints again seemed a possibility in 1866, Stenhouse once more sought out the nation's most influential. Although managing only a perfunctory introduction with President Andrew Johnson, Stenhouse did gain promises of support from Cumming, New York *Herald* publisher James Gordon Bennett, Sr., and General William T. Sherman.¹⁷ Several years later Stenhouse employed his contacts with Governor Leland Stanford in an effort to secure for the church a valuable Central Pacific contract for railroad ties.¹⁸

Clearly the Stenhouses' most valuable assets to their community lay in their personal charm and sophistication. Among Deseret's most cultured missionaries, they were introduced to virtually every prominent visitor to the territory during the 1860s: Artemus Ward, Sir Richard Burton, Schuyler Colfax, Samuel Bowles, and British editor William Hepworth Dixon, were prominent examples. The fruits of their ministry were impressive. The tone and tenor of Ward's satirical essays on the Mormons changed appreciably following his contact with Stenhouse, the American humorist's lectures even becoming, in Stenhouse's words, "more favorable and conducive to good than otherwise."¹⁹ Burton's substantially favorable view of the Saints seemed heavily influenced by the Stenhouses. "For the first time I heard that phase of the family tie sensibly, nay learnedly, advocated on religious grounds by fair lips," the worldly and erudite traveller commented after Fanny's defense of plurality. Burton met with T. B. H. every day during his Salt Lake sojourn. "I found in his society both pleasure and profit," he commented, though the Mormon elder could see only "the perfections of his system. . . , his power of faith struck me much."²⁰ William Hepworth Dixon, editor of the prestigious *Athenaeum*, was equally impressed with Fanny, "a clever and handsome woman," and her defense of her husband's venture into polygamy. But T. B. H.

¹⁶Stenhouse to D. N. Craig, 13 June 1863, and Stenhouse to Montgomery Blair, 15 June 1863, Stenhouse Name File, Church Archives; Stenhouse to Young, 4 June 1863, Stenhouse to Young, 7 June 1863, Stenhouse to Young, 13 June 1863, and Stenhouse to Young, 19 June 1863, Brigham Young Papers.

¹⁷Stenhouse pursued his mission with such force that upon accidentally confronting his opponents while in the East he would neither greet nor speak to them. He detailed his activities in almost a dozen letters to Brigham Young, May through August 1866, Brigham Young Papers.

¹⁸Stenhouse to Young, 13 October 1868, Brigham Young Papers.

¹⁹Stenhouse to Brigham Young, 22 May 1866, Brigham Young Papers; Charles Farrar Browne, *The Complete Works of Artemus Ward* (New York, 1898), compare p. 67 with pp. 280-98.

²⁰Sir Richard Francis Burton, *The City of the Saints, and Across the Rocky Mountains to California* (New York, 1862), pp. 246-47.

produced a reaction approaching awe. How could Stenhouse, Dixon inquired, "perhaps the man of highest culture whom we saw at Salt Lake," who could make "jokes and quote the last poem," declare without reservation his personal fealty to Brigham Young? "A man had better go to hell at once," Dixon had Stenhouse declaring, "if he cannot meet Brigham's eye." Clearly affected by Stenhouse's loyalty, Dixon concluded that "no Pope in Rome, no Czar in Moscow, no Caliph in Bagdad, ever exercised such power as the Mormons have conferred on Young."²¹

By 1868 the Stenhouses had reached the high tide of their prosperity and commitment to Zion. Their religion had granted to them its highest rites and ordinances. Clara, their vivacious daughter, had become the fourth wife of Brigham's eldest son, Joseph A. Young. But even these bonds proved unsubstantial to a series of personal shocks which convulsed and eventually subdued their religious faith.²²

The immediate issue in Fanny's estrangement was polygamy. Despite her spirited public advocacy, her memoirs written following her apostasy proclaimed — at times somewhat inconsistently — an inveterate and impassioned hostility to the "principle," commencing when she first heard of the teaching in the early 1850s. No doubt, like some women polygamists, she experienced the pain of ambivalence, the tension between personal antipathy for plurality and the desire for religious compliance. Yet whatever her private reservations, previously she had consented to and even had defended her husband's espousal to Belinda Pratt. Indeed, grieved because of her former objections to the marriage of T. B. H. and Carrie Grant, who was the deceased daughter of churchman and Salt Lake mayor Jedediah M. Grant, Fanny had also consented to their posthumous sealing.²³

Clearly it was not until Stenhouse sought yet another wife that Fanny's frustrations boiled over into religious insurrection. The object of his court was the talented and beautiful Zina Young, the daughter of Brigham Young himself. Apparently the lovely Zina was the object of considerable public attention if not adoration. As a leading young lady of the Salt Lake Theatre, she received as Fanny uncharitably commented more "pretty" compliments than "any artist in the world deserves."²⁴ Later her charms apparently were sufficient to stir matrimonial discontent in Joseph F. Smith's household, whom a dream by one of his wives linked "a Zina" with the young apostle.²⁵ The prudent Stenhouse therefore delicately approached Fanny and secured her approval for the alliance with the assurance that his sole interest lay in his priesthood obligations to take another wife. Fanny later learned otherwise.

²¹William Hepworth Dixon, *New America* (Philadelphia, 1867), pp. 172–73; William Hepworth Dixon, *White Conquest*, 2 vols. (London, 1876), 1:208–9.

²²Fanny Stenhouse, "Tell It All," pp. 510–18. Later their son Lorenzo married Flora J. Young — her relationship if any to the numerous Young family remains uncertain; *Journal History*, 1 July 1869, p. 2.

²³Fanny Stenhouse, "Tell It All," pp. 446–54; Dixon, *White Conquest* 1:209.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 1:210.

²⁵The dream occurred several years following Stenhouse's suit, following the death of Zina's first husband; Juliana Smith to Joseph F. Smith, 1 January 1875, Joseph F. Smith Correspondence, Church Archives.

Her surreptitious reading of the lovers' correspondence proved definitely that their relationship was cemented by genuine passion. "When I saw the intensity of the love depicted in those letters, I began to think that I had before known nothing about that tender sentiment," she ruefully conceded.²⁶ The effect was shattering. Her emotions consumed her allegiance to polygamy, and with that her Mormon faith crumbled. "To doubt one doctrine," she acknowledged,

was to begin to doubt all, and I soon felt that my religion was rapidly crumbling away before my eyes, and that I was losing confidence in everything and everybody. I was like a ship at sea without a compass, not knowing where to go or what to do.²⁷

In her own eyes "a woman scorned," Fanny would view Mormonism the rest of her life through the dark hues of personal alienation and rejection.

The conclusion of the courtship proved almost as traumatic to Stenhouse. The passion and expectation of the fifteen-month engagement was abruptly terminated when Zina suddenly became the third wife of Thomas Williams, a clerk in her father's office.²⁸ Her selection and its abruptness — Williams was hardly Stenhouse's social equal — did little to burnish T. B. H.'s image. Even the disoriented Fanny seemed wounded by her husband's treatment and reportedly plead with President Young to ensure the match. After the Stenhouses severed their church ties, William Hooper, the territory's congregational delegate, stated what seemed the obvious reason: Stenhouse wanted Zina, "but the young lady gave him the mitten, and as Brother Brigham would not force his child to marry, Stenhouse has left us in a rage." Popular opinion notwithstanding, the reservoir of Stenhouse's faith was probably too deep and broad to be drained by a single unsuccessful personal venture. Nevertheless the episode left a festering doubt that perhaps Brigham had intervened to his disadvantage.²⁹

Stenhouse's business affairs flourished no more favorably. While the *Telegraph* had prospered from its inception, with substantial advertising revenues even from New York City, by late 1868 dull business conditions in Utah threatened its suspension. At the moment of its crisis, Brigham Young requested that the precarious journal be moved to Ogden. With the completion of the transcontinental railroad imminent, the universal expectation held that the fledgling community would soon commercially dominate the territory. Evidently President Young believed Stenhouse would prosper, while the church would possess a strong voice in the new city. The journalist concurred that the establishment of a church organ in Ogden was "a necessary step to be taken," but wished to establish a newspaper and not transfer the infirm *Telegraph*. If removed from Salt Lake, "I am extremely doubtful of the longevity of the paper," he wrote to Young. "To move it to Ogden would be to incur a

²⁶Fanny Stenhouse, *Exposé of Polygamy in Utah*, pp. 125–26; emphasis hers.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 127.

²⁸Before his early death, Williams was appointed treasurer of ZCML. Zina became a respected educator and churchwoman and later married Charles O. Card, the founder of the LDS mission at Cardston, Alberta, Canada, *Deseret News*, 31 January 1931, sec. 2, p. 1.

²⁹Dixon, *White Conquest*, 1:211–12.

responsibility and risk . . . that I do not feel to assume from choice.³⁰ Yet when the counsel of the church leader remained firm, Stenhouse — “to prove his obedience, cost what it might” — complied.³¹

But his compliance lacked his usual vigor and commitment. The *Telegraph's* first Ogden issue reported the city's greatest news story, the driving of the Promontory golden spike. Although Stenhouse covered the event for his paper he produced no news copy; returning to his office later that evening, he pleaded weariness and retired. Two clerks worked throughout the night rewriting his rough notes and preparing the inaugural edition.³² Never really committed to the *Telegraph's* transfer, he moved neither of his families northward. Nor did he remove “Salt Lake” from the paper's banner, hoping to retain the capital city's circulation and advertising through daily deliveries from Ogden. Thus the *Telegraph* came to represent his own ambivalence: a newspaper published in one city, with a name of another, and printed for an uncertain clientele.

Not surprisingly, from its inception in Ogden, the newspaper failed to prosper. Not only were Stenhouse's activities restrained, but the financially troubled Union Pacific Railroad virtually halted commercial enterprise in the territory by delaying payment to its subcontractors. After less than ten weeks in Ogden, Stenhouse declared the venture “financially, a failure.”

I have no doubt that had the anticipations concerning Ogden, some six months back, been realized, the people would have stepped forward and sustained the paper. But . . . their pockets are empty, the town is dull; there is no business going on; and the people are anything but able to sustain a paper; besides, there is so very little — indeed I might say nothing — on which to make a paper interesting to the general public.³³

The latter consideration may well have proven the most weighty. Stenhouse, who long had been in the center of Deseret's activity, viewed his new city as a Siberian outpost. Yet even before the revival of the territory's commerce, a struggling but successful church semi-weekly journal was established in Ogden, with Stenhouse himself contemplating another newspaper venture in the city.³⁴ Whatever the reasons for its Ogden demise, the *Telegraph* was returned to Salt Lake in the early fall of 1869, where it expired several months later in December.

Understandably the Ogden misadventure failed to buttress the Stenhouses' faith. Requiring little additional fuel to fire her apostasy, Fanny

³⁰Stenhouse to Young, 28 December 1868, Brigham Young Papers. For the previous prosperity of the *Telegraph*, see Edward W. Tullidge, “The Mormon Commonwealth,” *Galaxy* 2 (15 October 1866): 363.

³¹Fanny Stenhouse, “*Tell It All*,” p. 553.

³²Edward W. Tullidge, *Tullidge's Histories: Volume II: Containing the History of All the Northern, Eastern and Western Counties of Utah; Also of Southern Idaho* (Salt Lake City, 1899), p. 168.

³³Stenhouse to Young, Ogden, 20 July 1869, Brigham Young Papers.

³⁴Extract of a letter, George A. Crofutt to Edward L. Sloan, 13 January 1870, Stenhouse Name File.

viewed Brigham Young's request as a wily and ruthless snare to exploit them.⁸⁵ Her husband's disillusionment differed only in degree. "I gave evidence of my obedience," T. B. H. privately concluded to his wife, "and it brought ruin, as I expected. Henceforth I will follow the best experience of my life."⁸⁶ Feeling that Brigham Young secretly had sought to destroy the *Telegraph* in order to leave the church organ, the *Deseret News*, unchallenged in Salt Lake, Stenhouse believed that he was entitled to compensation for the Ogden move.⁸⁷ But President Young refused any further explanation and made no recompense. During the *Telegraph's* final months, the churchman had ample reason to question not only Stenhouse's energy, but also his continuing church loyalty. Accordingly he apparently saw the issue of compensation as a test of his disciple's commitments.

A major factor in Stenhouse's deepening disenchantment during 1868-69 was Brigham Young's economic policies. While the church leader welcomed the transcontinental railroad, he also feared some of its potential results. Feeling that Deseret's culture and economy were endangered, Young vigorously embarked upon severe counter-measures, which included a wage deflation policy to make Zion's industries competitive, the restriction of trade with non-Mormon merchants, and the organization of Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution. Stenhouse, increasingly influenced by the countervailing winds of nineteenth century culture, saw the restrictive church policy as another manifestation of Young's fallibility, an impression Fanny never allowed to pass "unimproved."⁸⁸

Given their frustrations and disappointments, the Stenhouses were prime prospects for the Godbeite conspiracy, secretly under way during the summer of 1869. Its two leaders, William S. Godbe and E. L. T. Harrison, sought to transform Mormonism into a species of nineteenth century spiritualism, with its twin emphasis upon intellectualism and spiritualistic phenomena. But like many revolutionaries, during the inception of their movement they wore a conservative cloak and disclaimed primarily against Brigham Young's leadership. Thus only partially aware of the full scope of the "New Movement," the Stenhouses saw it primarily as a vehicle for curbing what they considered to be the excesses of church policy. Long socially intimate with Godbe, they were recruited to the movement by Edward W. Tullidge, who viewed and preached the protest movement as a return to "pure Mormonism." Stenhouse's conversion was rapid. According to the personal observation of the editor of the *Omaha Herald*, within the space of only a few months Stenhouse exchanged his role as Young's defender for that of his accuser. In this he joined his wife, who clearly was in the lead. As the first woman enrolled in the movement, Fanny had eagerly embraced Godbeitism, resolving if necessary "to walk into the jaws of death."⁸⁹

⁸⁵Fanny Stenhouse, "Tell It All," p. 552.

⁸⁶Fanny Stenhouse, *Exposé of Polygamy in Utah*, p. 139.

⁸⁷Tullidge, *Tullidge's Histories*, p. 167.

⁸⁸Fanny Stenhouse, "Tell It All," p. 544, 550.

⁸⁹*Omaha Herald*, 21 August 1873, in *Journal History*, 3 September 1873, pp. 1-2. For the Stenhouses' conversion, Edward W. Tullidge, *The Life of Joseph the Prophet* (Plano, Ill., 1880), p. 693; Fanny Stenhouse, "Tell It All," p. vii.

At first Stenhouse cautiously embraced his new cause. The *Telegraph* signaled its new commitment more by its silence than by its voice. When the Godbeite *Utah Magazine* commenced its subtle onslaught against church policy, the *Telegraph*, once Zion's firm advocate, offered no protest. The newspaper obviously had become a muted trump. Indeed, several of its articles and editorials seemed to "aid and comfort" the church's enemies. Its discussion of the "labor question," abstract and non-committal, offered no solace to the beleaguered wage deflationary policy of Brigham Young. While ostensibly dealing with Louis Napoleon's France, Stenhouse's editorial "On Progress" was a thin transparency attacking the restrictive policies of Zion. The journal even fore-shadowed the advent of the spiritualistic Godbeite Church of Zion. "More and more do the people realize the importance of living for a day of revelation," Stenhouse wrote in commenting upon one of Harrison's sermons, "when all [both living and dead] shall see eye to eye, and when the Zion above can unite in the closest fellowship, with the Zion below."⁴⁰

Perhaps in direct proportion to the mounting boldness of the *Utah Magazine*, by October 1869 the Stenhouses' advocacy became increasingly energetic. During Schuyler Colfax's second Utah visit, now as the architect of the Grant administration's anti-Mormon policy, Stenhouse strongly counseled the vice-president to allow the Godbeites, not the United States army, to settle the Utah question. "The Mormons are naturally a loyal people," he assured Colfax. "They only need to be broken off from the influence of Brigham Young."⁴¹ If church authorities required positive proof of Stenhouse's infidelity, Fanny volunteered it. On October 16, she gratuitously informed Joseph A. Young, Brigham's son, that her husband was in the hostile camp. Four days later, Stenhouse, Godbe, Harrison, and four others were disfellowshipped from the church pending a hearing.⁴²

Suddenly Stenhouse's embrace of Godbeitism was no longer theoretical and semi-concealed. His weighing of allegiance now became public, with decisive, and from his perspective, eternal consequences. Issues and anxieties escalated immeasurably as he determined whether to affirm or recant. "It is not an easy thing to break away from a life-long hope." He later wrote in a strongly autobiographical passage:

It is not courage that is lacking. It is, in fact, easier to meet death than to live this life of anxiety and trouble; but believers dread to assume the responsibility of breaking off from shepherds whom once they almost idolized, and making the things of eternity a matter between themselves and their Maker.⁴³

Without the ballast of firm conviction which had given him strength and stability since young manhood, he pitched erratically. Only hours before his

⁴⁰The Salt Lake Daily Telegraph, 1 September 1869, and 16 September 1869; Fanny Stenhouse, *Expose of Polygamy in Utah*, pp. 139-40; Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain States*, p. 638.

⁴¹Edward W. Tullidge, "The Godbeite Movement," *Tullidge's Quarterly Magazine*, 1 (October 1880): 55-56.

⁴²Fanny Stenhouse, *Exposé of Polygamy in Utah*, p. 141.

⁴³T. B. H. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, p. 11.

hearing, he stoutly determined to stand with the recusants and even claimed the privilege to be the first to proclaim publicly his new allegiance.⁴⁴ Yet when Brigham Young unexpectedly dismissed all charges against him, he mildly acquiesced, not even disclaiming the eventual excommunication of Godbe and Harrison. Indeed the *Telegraph* reclaimed its voice, censuring the Godbeite protestors, and repeatedly defending the interests of the church. At one point the newspaper compared the heresy to Aesop's frog that attempted to swell itself as big as an ox. "It didn't succeed in doing it," the paper pointedly observed, "but it did in bursting itself." As late as December 1869, Stenhouse publicly and vigorously defended Mormon interests while in the East.⁴⁵ But at the very most, his protestations represented the last flickering of a dying flame. Simultaneous with his continued outward loyalty, Stenhouse secretly attempted to elicit eastern support for a "pitch in paper" against the Mormons to be published either in Ogden or Salt Lake. Unless Zion's Cooperative would rescue the fast flagging *Telegraph*, he promised that he would transfer the newspaper to Gentile interests, and at the proper time he would become "as big an Apostate as any." The report of Stenhouse's activities came confidentially to church authorities from non-Mormon George A. Crofutt, Chicago publisher and author, who viewed the journalist's actions as those of a "man of no principle — not a bit."⁴⁶

Stenhouse's instability, if not creditable, was at least understandable. Fellow Godbeites attributed Stenhouse's course to a want of courage, but fear is often a compound of lesser emotions. To the loss of his personal faith and rapidly disappearing fortune, Stenhouse added the worry of the health of his eldest son, critically ill in San Francisco. Also during these months, his second marriage began to unravel. Belinda Pratt Stenhouse, reportedly Zion's "foremost female advocate of polygamy," apparently refused to brook the slightest aberration from Mormonism. Willing to rid himself of the impediments of his withering faith, Stenhouse readily assented to Belinda's request for a divorce. But if on November 25, 1869, he freed himself from polygamy, he also lost the companionship of his children by his second marriage.⁴⁷

Amid the shipwreck of much of his life's endeavor, Stenhouse spent most of 1870 charting his course. The ties which once bound him to Mormonism were largely severed. Not only was his polygamous marriage dissolved, but the *Telegraph*, whose financial success had always been intimately connected with its pro-church advocacy, had finally suspended. Even the *Telegraph's* uncollected accounts seemed a minimal lure. Since in nineteenth century Utah some apostates had difficulty in securing their bills due, normally the \$20,000 owing Stenhouse would have constituted enticement to remain within the faith, but during the local depression, collection in or out of the church

⁴⁴Tullidge, "The Godbeite Movement," pp. 30-31.

⁴⁵*Salt Lake Telegraph*, 5 November 1869; see also 16 November, 2 December, 3 December, and 22 December 1869.

⁴⁶Crofutt authored the much printed and used *Crofutt's Overland Tours*, a travel guide to western America. Extract of a letter, George A. Crofutt to Edward L. Sloan, 13 January 1870, Stenhouse Name File, Crofutt's emphasis and capitalization.

⁴⁷Fanny Stenhouse, "Tell It All," pp. 554-57; Dixon, *White Conquest*, 1:208-9.

probably appeared doubtful.⁴⁸ Having failed to attend a Mormon religious service since the preceding October, Stenhouse formally requested excommunication in August 1870, stating that he had no faith in "Brigham's claim to an Infallible Priesthood." While Fanny claimed to have signed her husband's request, she was not excommunicated until four years later, following a Salt Lake presentation of her famous lecture depicting the evils of polygamy.⁴⁹

Events seemed to confirm their decision. Only days followed Stenhouse's withdrawal, he and his wife were set upon by four assailants, armed with "huge garden-syringes" containing "the most disgusting filth."⁵⁰ The incident was a violation of Brigham's Young's persistent and private counsel to the leading churchmen of the community to "let . . . [the apostates] alone, don't abuse them, and they will soon die out."⁵¹ Yet Fanny believed the act flowed directly from the priesthood with its alleged secret police. Her inflamed passions had not cooled several years later:

I shall never forget that night. I declared that henceforth I would tear from my heart every association — every memory — every affection, which still remained to bind me to Mormonism — not one solitary link should be left. Henceforth I would be the declared open enemy of the Priesthood. To the utmost of my power — weak though I might be — I would arouse the women of Utah to a sense of the wrongs which they endured; I would proclaim to the world the disgrace which Mormonism is to the great American nation, the foul blot that it is upon Christianity and the civilization of the age!⁵²

Shortly thereafter, as a determined Godbeite schismatic, Stenhouse departed for New York to author his history of the Saints, while Fanny, true to her word, remained much of the remainder of her life "the open enemy of the Priesthood."

II

"I have most scrupulously kept to the very letter of the truth," Fanny insisted upon concluding *"Tell It All."* "I have neither exaggerated nor concealed, and in every respect my great endeavor has been to act with the strictest impartiality and justice." If she were sincere in her claims, her writing remained yet another testament to the warping potential of inflamed emotions. Her prose breathed an omnipresent spirit of exposé, and while exposés

⁴⁸Stenhouse never recovered most of these accounts, Fanny Stenhouse, *"Tell It All,"* p. 599. No doubt many church members believed that Stenhouse, like other apostates, had enriched himself primarily as a result of his semiofficial, privileged position in Utah's closed society. In such a case, while circumspect in other obligations, they felt themselves relieved of their financial responsibility to Stenhouse upon his apostacy.

⁴⁹Fanny Stenhouse, *Exposé of Polygamy in Utah*, p. 141. The actual dates for their excommunications were 17 August 1870, and 5 October 1874, Excommunication File, Church Archives.

⁵⁰Fanny Stenhouse, *"Tell It All,"* p. 580.

⁵¹Minutes of the School of the Prophets, Salt Lake City, 16 July 1870, Church Archives. While Brigham Young vigorously denounced the Godbeites during the private sessions of the "School," he and other church leaders nonetheless urged tolerance of their beliefs.

⁵²Fanny Stenhouse, *"Tell It All,"* p. 582; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 27 August 1870.

universally promise truth, they seldom deliver it. Their advocacy and animosity fail to mix with the objective aims of history. Fanny's work probably should be judged not for what it claimed to be, but for what it certainly was: one of the more successful American polemics of the nineteenth century.

If her claims exceeded her grasp, Fanny never attempted to conceal her purposes. Hoping to provide compensation for her "wasted life" in Mormonism, she "earnestly desired to stir up" her Mormon sisters "to a just sense of their own position." "I longed to make them feel, as I do, the cruel degradation, the humiliating tyranny, which Polygamy inflicts," she wrote.

I wanted to arouse them to a sense of their own Womanhood. . . .

I was anxious that they should understand and know the inconsistency and folly of that superstitious faith by which they have been so egregiously deluded; that they might learn to hate and loathe the falsely-named "Celestial" system of marriage; and rising in honest indignation and disgust . . . assert their perfect equality with . . . their brethren, and henceforth claim and occupy that position which God assigned them, and which *by right* is theirs!⁵³

If hyperbole is not regarded as self-defeating, her book consistently sought to secure her purposes.

Actually Fanny wrote *two* books. Visiting her husband in New York but detained there by inclement weather, she dashed off within only several weeks her *Exposé of Polygamy*. She later described the piece as a pamphlet, but it actually was a small book of several hundred pages, a clear demonstration of her facile pen. Several years later, following the publication of T. B. H.'s history, she greatly enlarged, polished, and transformed the original into her famed and praised "*Tell It All*," borrowing as her title a Mormon newspaper's "spiteful invitation" to tell polygamy's full story.⁵⁴ The second preserved the basic organization of the first, although there were important deletions and additions which testified to the author's purposes.

Her alterations made "*Tell It All*" less of a memoir and more of an indictment. While some of her own personal foibles were expurgated, all the topics required of a standard anti-Mormon primer were added: a description of the Mormon temple rites, a wife by wife analysis of Brigham's household and (despite her lack of personal involvement and knowledge) vivid descriptions of the handcart disaster of 1856, the Mormon Reformation, and the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Occasionally the reworked text conveyed genuine emotions — as when Fanny recounted her conversion and later her struggle to accept her husband's second wife, but the general result was an overdrawn and sustained mosaic of pathos, excess, and exploitation. "*Tell It All*" left no doubt that Mormonism was a trail of tears.

Yet Fanny's testimony was by no means consistent. Her subsequent book implied that almost from the outset she had realized the corruption of her faith and had remained only in loyalty to her husband. The first paragraph of her original book, later deleted, suggested yet another version:

⁵³Fanny Stenhouse, "*Tell It All*," pp. 618–20; emphasis hers.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. xiii. As with her earlier book, the title of her second sometimes varied with its edition.

I was once a Mormon woman, and for over twenty years I have lived among Mormons. Their faith was once mine as truly as any words can express; their thoughts were the same as mine; their hopes were my hopes; their religious opinions were in sympathy with my own. But that was in the time past. It *seems* long past, and yet it was, as I may say, only a little while ago — a few months, which I might almost count upon my fingers. Yet now all this is changed, and I have learned to see matters in another light.⁵⁵

While her apostasy had not been rootless, clearly the final transformation had been sudden. During much of her life and perhaps to the point of her irretrievable break with her church, her sympathies had been Mormon “as truly as any words can express.” Much of the indicting emotion of “*Tell It All*” was fury after the fact.

A major addition in her expanded book was Mary Burton Shrewsbury, with chapters devoted to her saga. According to Fanny’s account, at first Mary was “a pretty, gentle fairie queen” with “a soul pure and serene.” But “blighted by Mormonism and Polygamy,” her withering physiognomy (her cheeks became “thinner and sadly pale”) certified to her ordeal. Finally after inconceivable cruelty and hardship, including marital abuse and what seemed to be an attempted suicide, Mary found welcome relief in natural death.⁵⁶ The sentimental portrait exceeded the limits of plausibility — perhaps even the limits of Victorian melodrama from whence the inspiration probably sprang. But if Mary Shrewsbury were a fictionalized composite of Mormon tragedy, the events which she transcribed in her “letters” to Fanny often possessed a historical basis. Mary’s doleful account of her participation in the 1856 handcart tragedy was actually written by Godbeite John Chislett, with Fanny (writing Mary’s fictitious letters to herself) only slightly rewording his narrative.⁵⁷

Fanny’s nonchalance in paying her historical debts was by no means limited. Since her “memoir” ambitiously sought to detail events beyond her personal experience, she necessarily relied heavily upon previous anti-Mormon writers, especially her husband. The genealogy of her vivid anecdotes could be traced to J. H. Beadle, John Hyde, and other writers unsympathetic to the Mormon cause, though she never confessed their parentage. But of greater consequence, her detailed narratives of the Mormon Reformation and the Mountain Meadows Massacre, like Mary Burton’s handcart account, were thinly disguised rewritings of materials quoted in her husband’s book. While the sanctions of citing historical sources were only then becoming mandatory, between five and ten percent of “*Tell It All*” was plagiarized.⁵⁸

⁵⁵Fanny Stenhouse, *Exposé of Polygamy*, p. 13; emphasis hers.

⁵⁶Fanny Stenhouse, “*Tell It All*,” pp. 84, 96, 394, 568, 574–75.

⁵⁷Chislett’s narrative was in response to T. B. H.’s request and apparently appeared first in print in *Rocky Mountain Saints*. Its actual composition occurred many years after Mary Shrewsbury’s alleged letter to Fanny. Compare Fanny Stenhouse, “*Tell It All*,” pp. 206–36 with T. B. H. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, pp. 312–32.

⁵⁸For instance compare chapters 15–16, 22, and 23 in Fanny Stenhouse, “*Tell It All*,” with the material contained in T. B. H. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, chapters 37, 36, and 43 respectively.

The protests of "*Tell It All*" were by no means uniquely Godbeite. For the most part Fanny's themes were the predictable fare common to many anti-Mormon works. The repudiation of polygamy ("that accursed thing — the offspring of deceit and licentiousness") was total. Brigham Young, confusing prophet with profit, was "probably one of the greatest cowards in history." The priesthood hierarchy and Mormonism in general were no better, filled with "folly," "superstition," "cunning absurdity," and "falsehood." Like many religious apostates, she lamented the alleged disparity between her original and later faith, the distinction which she felt between pristine Mormonism and Brigham's Mormonism. Finally, throughout "*Tell It All*" there existed a consistent feminist concern, demanding equality and respect, which placed the book in the mainstream of the nineteenth century's women's crusade.⁵⁹

Fanny repeatedly claimed to shield her readership from the worst of the Mormon atrocities — for the "sake of decency and propriety." She nonetheless hinted that the Endowment House had been employed for murder, suggested that the priesthood had "buried" innocent children who knew its dark secrets, and claimed that Mormon boys had been forced into polygamy. When documenting "blood atonement," however, her charges reached their most extreme:

The wife of one Elder, when he was absent on a mission acted unfaithfully towards him. Her husband took counsel of the authorities, and was reminded that the shedding of her blood alone could save her. He returned and told her, but she asked for time, which was readily granted. One day, in a moment of affection, when she was seated on his knee, he reminded her of her doom, and suggested that now when their hearts were full of love was a suitable time for carrying it into execution. She acquiesced, and *out of love* he cut her throat from ear to ear.⁶⁰

Her extreme allegations excepted, many of Fanny's statements possessed a historical basis. Their problem lay in their lack of balance, precision, and representativeness. Like any enterprise involving humans, Mormonism had its blemishes as the Morrisite and Mountain Meadow tragedies indicated. But its flaws hardly constituted the whole sum of its endeavor. Her vision saw little good. If polygamy were not always practiced on the high plane that some of its adherents claimed, the licentiousness and open cruelty which dominated Fanny's view have not been confirmed by more objective analysis.⁶¹ So intent upon describing the faults of Brigham Young and his fellow church-

⁵⁹Fanny Stenhouse, "*Tell It All*." For examples of her anti-polygamy: pp. 321–22, 551, 621–23; anti-Brighamism: pp. 174, 265, 268, 271, 463, 552; priesthood guilt: pp. 172, 187, 248, 501, 605; Mormon superstition and ignorance: pp. 138, 356, 616; alteration of belief: pp. 46–47; and feminism: pp. 239, 247, 343, 498, 618–19.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 318; emphasis hers. Actually Fanny was only repeating the incident from her husband's book, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, pp. 469–70. For Fanny's other accusations, "*Tell It All*," pp. 321–22, 337, 354–55.

⁶¹Stanley S. Ivins, "Notes on Mormon Polygamy," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 35 (Fall 1967): 309–21; Ivins's statistical analysis found that the typical polygamist was a reluctant participant, "far from being the insatiable male of popular fable." See also Kimball Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* (New York, 1954), especially pp. 56–57.

men, she saw few of their virtues, and consequently her portraits often were wildly distorted. Driven by her ardent desire to convince, she frequently manipulated her evidence. Thus she indicted President Young for destroying their family fortune without a single reference to the severe local depression that did much to occasion it.⁶² Not surprisingly, few of Fanny's former sisters found her narrative persuasive. When she delivered her anti-polygamy lecture in Salt Lake, the attendance was disproportionate to Fanny's reputation and to the extensive canvas made in her behalf.⁶³ There was little evidence that Fanny's books were ever honored in her own land.

If not a prophetess in Zion, Fanny was revered abroad. Her fluent and anecdotal style, when coupled with her feminist concern, obviously touched a sensitive chord. In America and England, her books were constantly reissued — at least seven times within three decades. The subsequent printings retained the format of 1874's *"Tell It All,"* except for a fervant appendage added in the wake of John D. Lee's Mountain Meadows confessions. Given their popularity her works probably revealed as much about Anglo-American society as Utah's, a testimony to the confusion and susceptibility of the times. From Parson Weems to Harriet Beecher Stowe, who in fact wrote the preface to *"Tell It All,"* the nineteenth century penchant for confusing fiction with fact was often considerable. Fanny's works lay within this tradition, contributing to (and its popularity reflecting) the virulent anti-Mormonism which peaked during the 1880s. When the national Congress erected the Woman's Industrial Home in Salt Lake City to shelter polygamy's fleeting downtrodden, it was a house that Fanny helped to build. While social pressures may have inhibited its use, its empty rooms nevertheless were an ample witness to the discrepancy between myth and reality.

III

Fanny's propaganda was disguised as history. Her husband's *Rocky Mountain Saints*, while certainly propagandizing the Godbeite cause, was a more substantial historical product. Indeed T. B. H.'s lengthy book (761 pages) became the first significant narrative history of the Mormon experience — and remains one of the half dozen most important written.

The circumstances of its composition belied its introduction. "The author has no pet theories to advance," Stenhouse commenced, "no revelations to announce, no personal animosity to satisfy. He has simply *outgrown the past*"⁶⁴ Stenhouse may have "outgrown" his Mormon experience, but Godbeitism had been the germinating factor. During the fall of 1869 when he wavered before the prevailing winds, he failed to comprehend the message of Godbe and Harrison. "Why don't [*sic*] the Lord speak to me as well as to Godbe and Harrison?" he often inquired.⁶⁵ But by late 1870, when he formally converted to the "New Movement," its spiritualistic content was part of the public record. He embraced the new teaching with the fervor of a true be-

⁶²Fanny Stenhouse, *"Tell It All,"* pp. 552–54.

⁶³Journal History, 3 July 1874, p. 1, quoting the *Salt Lake Herald*.

⁶⁴T. B. H. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, p. xix; emphasis his.

⁶⁵Tullidge, *The Life of Joseph the Prophet*, p. 693.

liever, declaring to Godbe his only "duty and obligation will again be to put the harness on." A month later, after receiving "strange facts that my pen nor tongue may never utter," apparently via a New York seance, Stenhouse plighted his faith. "I am true to you," he wrote Godbe. "Rely upon me and you will find a bosom on which your weary head at times can rest in safety. . . . May personal feelings and jealousies ever cease and never stand in the way of the great work." The following day his emotions had not cooled. "Brother William," he again penned to Godbe, "I am your brother, and your work is sacred to me and your honor's mine."⁶⁶

Obviously Stenhouse had reclaimed his sense of mission. Geographically separated from the movement's core — with the collapse of his Salt Lake fortunes he had rejoined the New York *Herald's* staff — he nevertheless assumed an important role in the heretical movement. Because of his confidential advice and personal recommendation, Godbe appointed Oscar G. Sawyer, also a member of the *Herald's* staff, to edit the *Mormon Tribune*, the Godbeite organ.⁶⁷ Even in New York, Stenhouse played an active role. W. C. Staines, Brigham Young's eastern business agent, reported that Stenhouse, along with Godbe and Eli Kelsey, who were often in the east shepherding their mining interests, were "very, very bitter." They "are doing all they can to make us trouble," Staines wrote to the church president. "Thank goodness, it is but little they can do."⁶⁸ But in this the agent underestimated Stenhouse's power with the written word. As a historian Stenhouse played his most significant role in the Godbeite dissent.

The evolution of Stenhouse's history paralleled his religious odyssey. While still Mormonism's defender, Stenhouse had envisioned a historical vindication. Accordingly he had mined the rich resources of the Mormon historical office and may have commenced a draft.⁶⁹ But with his changed commitment, his material became the fodder for his new cause. The projected *Mormon Saints* was transformed into the *Rocky Mountain Saints*, with a radically altered character and content. As the book approached publication, perhaps as an indication of both his deepening estrangement and his publisher's demands for a more salable product, material apparently was added paralleling the changes made by Fanny in her second work.⁷⁰ The radical transformation of the text however, was by no means contradictory. Throughout the text lingering and incongruent sentences, paragraphs, and even chapters remained as a testament to Stenhouse's original purpose. The circumstance was heightened by the text's acidulous footnotes which bore the unmistakable aspect of afterthought.

⁶⁶Stenhouse to Godbe, 17 January, 12 February, and 13 February 1871, William S. Godbe Papers, microfilmed copy at Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

⁶⁷B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City, 1930), 5:418; also see Stenhouse to Godbe, 17 January 1871, William S. Godbe Papers.

⁶⁸W. C. Staines to Brigham Young, 10 October 1872, Brigham Young Papers.

⁶⁹Fanny Stenhouse, "Tell It All," p. 615.

⁷⁰Compare the pre-publication advertisement for Stenhouse's book with its published title page. Fanny Stenhouse, *Exposé of Polygamy*, backpage advertisement, and T. B. H. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, p. i.

But much of the apparent incongruity of Stenhouse's narrative lay with its design, not its execution. His *Rocky Mountain Saints* was history as viewed from the Godbeite perspective, and accordingly it faithfully reflected the seeming vagaries of "New Movement" thought. The treatment of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young was symptomatic of its orientation. Mormonism's founder was sincere and heroic, who, as the text commented several times, was "one of the earth's most remarkable men." Stenhouse was willing to grant Joseph his revelations and even his possession of the Book of Mormon golden plates. But as the narrative often suggested, in actuality the Mormon prophet was no more than a gifted but unlearned medium, who, while he experienced spiritualistic phenomena, virtually always misread his message. Thus there was "another mind" behind the Book of Mormon, a spirit who apparently provided Joseph with an "incredible" translation. While Stenhouse's sympathies obviously rested with Smith, he nevertheless judged him a fallible prophet, "strong in impulse," whose proclamation of polygamy was only a means of justifying his venture.⁷¹

In contrast, the narrative was a virtual indictment of Brigham Young. It saw the churchman as defiled by his "frenzied lust of power" and his love of wealth. "Many who are silent now," Stenhouse affirmed, "will curse his memory for the cruel suffering that his ambition caused them to endure." The text nonetheless conceded that even though burdened by the most searing criticism, Brigham wasn't truly a bad man; he had merely been corrupted by his faith. And to his credit he had led the Saints in "that remarkable pilgrimage which was without parallel since Moses led the Israelites from Egypt."⁷² In each portrait, with its conflicting themes and counterpoints, Stenhouse was obedient to the Godbeite canon. To the orthodox Mormon, however, the result was an inconsistent and at times a sharply schizophrenic text, with the tone and tendency of its first third generally laudatory to the Saints — and the remainder in harsh discord.

Rocky Mountain Saints was therefore a virtual handbook of Godbeite themes. Mormonism was misconstrued spiritualism, tainted by a fallible priesthood and a provincial and erring prophet. Its "spiritual communications" had drawn its people from contemporary enlightenment into the dark spirit of Old Testament theocracy, complete with polygamy and corporal penalties. Its emphasis had become unduly temporal, not spiritual. Mormonism's best years were her first, and after cresting in the 1850s, it maintained its position only through organizational excellence. Brigham Young, far less in stature than his predecessor, had performed his role by preserving his people, whom now the Godbeites hoped would be ignited by the flame of their new revelation. Even the spirit of Stenhouse's prose testified to the cause. Its intellectual pretension and sardonic tone bespoke less of eternal verities than earthly concerns, a commentary on the Godbeite spirit.⁷³

⁷¹T. B. H. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, pp. 157–60, 182n, 186, 524, 546–52, 644.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 119, 207, 223, 416, 500, 668.

⁷³Ibid.; many of these themes are so incessant only examples can be cited: spiritualism: pp. 8, 34–35, 254–55, 546–52; priesthood fallibility: pp. 11, 51, 88n, 340–41, 563; theocracy:

Stenhouse pursued his claims with his accustomed vigor, perhaps as a badge of reclaimed courage. When without confirmatory evidence, as with his incessant charges of priesthood murder, his record was to insinuation, rumor, and the employment of inadmissible evidence. Thus while Stenhouse mildly disclaimed the rumor that the Mormons poisoned Judge Leonidas Shaver, he nonetheless accomplished his purpose by placing the fictional episode in the historical record. Similarly without verification, he darkly suggested that what murders General Johnston's soldiers and Salt Lake's riff-raff left undone "invisible hands readily accomplished." Like "*Tell It All*" which virtually restated T. B. H.'s account, *Rocky Mountain Saints* listed several pages of "blood atoning" without any conclusive documentation.⁷⁴ At several critical junctures, as in the Morrisite and Mountain Meadows episodes, the text relied upon extensive quotations from anonymous sources, understandable perhaps given the mistrust of the times, but hardly unimpeachable evidence. Nevertheless, Stenhouse's techniques succeeded in creating for the susceptible a bloody tapestry of Utah terror, highlighted by his belief that "one single murder resulting from religious hatred" was more damaging than ten thousand homicides of passion.⁷⁵

The lack of balance in Stenhouse's book was not limited to priesthood terror. Much of his work was an attempt to demonstrate his pre-ordained thesis of priesthood ignorance and guilt. Consequently the interpretive framework of *Rocky Mountain Saints* was narrowly religious and political, scarcely citing the Saints' life style and culture. Such enterprises — often abortive and fragmentary — as the lectures of the School of the Prophets, the public Seventy discourses, the Polysophical Society, the Salt Lake Theatre, the Universal Scientific Society, the Deseret University, early Utah magazines and newspapers, and pioneer crafts and architecture attested to a higher purpose than Stenhouse was willing to grant. But even within his chosen categories, his treatment was unproportional. While Mormon migration was perhaps the most efficient mass movement in American history, Stenhouse focused upon the 1856 handcart tragedy. No doubt Buchanan's Utah expedition produced some of the excesses and hysteria common to warfare, but Stenhouse cited the result without detailing the cause.

Yet despite its partisan and propagandistic tendencies, *Rocky Mountain Saints* was more than a polemic of the times. As the *New York Times* commented, its contents in many respects were "fresh and original."⁷⁶ After refuting the standard anti-Mormon works for years, Stenhouse now employed them, especially Thomas Ford's *History of Illinois*. But he also made extensive use of Mormon sources, particularly newspapers, memoirs, the LDS hymnal, and the writings of Orson Pratt. His citations from government documents and from his own wide-ranging correspondence — he vigorously solicited and received materials from even Presidents Millard Fillmore and U. S.

pp. 499–500; Mormon decline and organizational excellence: pp. 9–10, 472, 567; praise of the exodus: p. 223; intellectual pretention: pp. 4, 361n, 481n, 630.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 279, 417, 467–71.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 457.

⁷⁶*New York Times*, 6 March 1873, p. 3.

Grant — now appeared for the first time in print. Surprisingly and disappointingly, he drew little directly from his own Mormon experience, perhaps because it embarrassingly failed to confirm his thesis, but also, as he claimed, because of the sanction of intimate trust. Nevertheless the book's use of sources was the broadest to the date of its publication and established it as an important source book for Mormon history.

As the first significant Mormon historical survey, *Rocky Mountain Saints* left an indelible mark upon subsequent historiography. While Stenhouse's spiritualistic interpretation of Mormon origins was, if understood, unappreciated, his secondary holdings have proven more enduring. By juxtaposing the Mormon theocracy and the national government, sectarianism and pluralism, provincialism and contemporary culture, he helped to create the dominating models of nineteenth century Utah history. If some of his more specific interpretations have been discarded, such as the Floyd conspiracy thesis to explain the Mormon war, others have worn well.⁷⁷ Probably most historians would concur that, whatever the relative weight of their respective offenses, both the Saints and the Missourians sinned in their confrontations; that a principal root of the Nauvoo turmoil lay in political jealousy; and that Governor Ford, when confronted with the possibility of Joseph Smith's assassination, "was not the man to fight and conquer the contemplated crime." Indeed despite statements of some Mormon leaders to the contrary, Stenhouse documented that the raising of the Mormon Battalion was hardly a governmental conspiracy to inhibit the Mormon migration.⁷⁸

Throughout his history, Stenhouse's journalistic talents were on display. Overlooking his frequent editorializing and occasional clinchés, his narrative prose was among the most spritely and vivid in Mormon historical writing. His images were often telling. He saw Sidney Rigdon as "the Boanerges of the new faith." Brigham Young's voting assemblies he likened to the "ancient parliaments of France, which were only convened to ratify the arbitrary edicts" of the monarch.⁷⁹ His aphorisms were pungent. "It is an ever-recurring feature in religious history that repeated evidences of defeat are never accepted as lessons of premonition."⁸⁰ Like many stylists he occasionally sacrificed precision for effect, as when he described the title of the Mormon scripture "Pearl of Great Price" as "more applicable to its cost than its quality."⁸¹ Doubtless his jibes at times were unfair and calculated to make the faithful uncomfortable. Yet in spite of themselves, they often conveyed welcome relief, for wit and style in Mormon historiography have proven too infrequent — too often the sole prerogative of the unsympathetic.

When it was published in 1873, *Rocky Mountain Saints* was generally acclaimed. The *New York Times* found it "a thoroughly trustworthy record." *Harper's* reviewed it as "full, accurate, and trust-worthy," "an indictment

⁷⁷T. B. H. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, p. 346n.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 80–108, 139, 157, 236–49.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 206, 208.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 507.

after a patient, unprejudiced, unfearing, and indefatigable investigation."⁸² Almost as popular as his wife's companion volume it was reissued five times before 1905, becoming one of the nineteenth century's standard references on Mormonism. Consequently like "*Tell It All*," it helped to create the negative image of nineteenth century Mormonism. The national climate of opinion which demanded the abolition of Mormonism's polygamy and theocracy and thus prevented Utah's entrance into the Union of its own terms was partially the creation of the Stenhouses. *Rocky Mountain Saints* and "*Tell It All*" doubtless succeeded when judged by the objectives of their authors.

Yet if history is more than the assembling of facts and its object is the re-creation of activity, the Stenhouse books must be judged harsher than their contemporaries found them. For their authors, like many who have succeeded them, pursued their task with limited empathy and sympathy, and as a result too often they created caricature not reality. They sought folly in the Mormon experience and there, as in any human activity, they found it. But so overdrawn was their portrait, they unintentionally raised and left unanswered a dilemma which undermined their thesis: If Mormonism's corruptions were so manifest and her fruits so bitter, how possibly had it, as a church devoted to Christian ideals, maintained its group loyalty and social energy? And why indeed had the Stenhouses tarried so long?

IV

From a Mormon perspective, the subsequent career of the Stenhouses seemed anti-climactic. While Stenhouse was writing his history in New York, remnants of his estate in Salt Lake were legally attached for nonpayment of debts, an action initiated by F. A. Mitchell, Godbe's former business partner who remained loyal to Mormonism.⁸³ Upon completing his book, Stenhouse was embittered. The Mormons "had done all but kill me," he wrote Fanny, and they "would have that chance if they desired it."⁸⁴ The latter apparently was a declaration of his intention to return to Salt Lake. But in Utah he was a Loyalist without a cause. Despite its early promise, by 1873 the Godbeite movement possessed a pallor incapable of firing his advocacy. When his young daughter eloped, the Salt Lake magistrate charged Stenhouse with assaulting and threatening to murder her suitor. Although the city's sympathies in the matter rested with Stenhouse and apparently the charges were dropped, the incident could only have deepened his disenchantment with Utah.⁸⁵

During the halcyon days of the early 1860s, Stenhouse had pledged that no "consideration but duty" could induce him to leave Deseret.⁸⁶ Now he

⁸²*New York Times*, 6 March 1873, p. 3; *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 47 (July 1873): 299.

⁸³Godbe and Mitchell v. T. B. H. Stenhouse, Third District Court, Case No. 230, 27 November 1871, Utah State Archives. Several city lots and "the undivided half" of the Job Printing Office were attached.

⁸⁴Extract of a letter, T. B. H. Stenhouse to Fanny Stenhouse, n. d., Stenhouse Name File.

⁸⁵*Deseret Evening News*, 3 February 1874.

⁸⁶Stenhouse to George Q. Cannon, 22 May, 1863, quoted in the *Millennial Star* 25 (20 June 1863): 397.

had found that consideration. Residing briefly in the Nevada mine fields, he authored a series of published letters which reportedly received international attention.⁸⁷ In 1875 he and Fanny moved to San Francisco, where T. B. H. continued his long association with the New York *Herald*, and was recognized as "probably the best known active journalist on the coast."⁸⁸ His dispatches defended his newly adopted city with his accustomed fervor. In addition to being its correspondent, quite possibly he represented the *Herald* as its agent in the celebrated but ill-fated Arctic expedition of George Washington DeLong. He died on March 8, 1882, at the age of fifty-eight, a victim of jaundice which produced "deadly sickness and awful agony."⁸⁹ The Improved Order of Red Men, Pocahontas Tribe No. 11, performed the obsequies, with leading San Franciscans acting as pall bearers and the minister of the Central Presbyterian Tabernacle pronouncing the prayer. The San Francisco newspapers unitedly declared his individual merit — but financial penury. His burial expenses were paid by Feramor Little, Salt Lake City's former mayor who happened to be in California on business.⁹⁰ Fanny survived her husband by more than twenty years. She may have continued her anti-Mormon lectures, which during her career received acclaim throughout the United States and even Australia. Apparently her Mormon antipathy never substantially cooled, though her concerns increasingly centered upon her family. She died in Los Angeles in 1904, her last decade debilitated with near-blindness. On both a Mormon and larger stage, the Stenhouses had performed their evolutions, cut their capers, played their part, and exited.

⁸⁷*San Francisco Daily Examiner*, 8 March 1882.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁸⁹Edward W. Tullidge, "In Memory of T. B. H. Stenhouse," *Tullidge's Quarterly Magazine*, 2 (April 1882): 91–92, quoting the *San Francisco Merchant*, 10 March 1882.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, *Millennial Star* 45 (30 July 1883): 495; *Daily Alta California*, 8 March 1882; *San Francisco Weekly Bulletin*, 8 March 1882.

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