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Recreating Religion: The Response to Joseph Smith's Innovations in the Second Prophetic Generation of Mormonism

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RECREATING RELIGION:
THE RESPONSE TO JOSEPH SMITH'S INNOVATIONS IN THE SECOND
PROPHETIC GENERATION OF MORMONISM

by

Christopher James Blythe

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

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ABSTRACT

Recreating Religion: The Response to Joseph Smith's Innovations in the Second
Prophetic Generation of Mormonism

by

Christopher James Blythe, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2010

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Department: History

On June 27, 1844, Joseph Smith, the founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was assassinated. In the wake of his death, a number of would-be successors emerged. Each of these leaders - part of what I call the second prophetic generation - established a unique vision of Mormonism.

In 1844, Mormonism was in the middle of a major shift in its character. Joseph Smith's death left numerous theological and practical questions unresolved. This thesis argues that, rather than merely a succession struggle of competition and power, a principal function of the second prophetic generation in Mormonism was to respond to Joseph Smith's innovations and to forge alternate coherent (re-)interpretations of the Mormon faith that could continue into the future without access to the original prophet.

Two major issues that required reframing in a post-Smith world were issues of domesticity and marriage and hierarchical structure. One or both of these issues are considered in the thought of four second-generation prophets: Alpheus Cutler, William

Smith, Charles Thompson, and Lyman Wight. Their response to these questions, ultimately, resulted in distinct traditions within the Mormon movement.

(118 pages)

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Christopher James Blythe

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On June 27, 1844, Joseph Smith, the founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was assassinated. The young faith was left without the man they had followed as their prophet. Immediately and over the next few years, a number of men emerged as would-be successors. They preached against one another, wrote tracts - and even scripture - that condemned their opponents, and excommunicated one another. Understandably, scholars have studied succession struggles, including Mormonism's succession struggle, through a lens of power and competition.¹

In distinction to this model, this study suggests that the second prophetic generation may sincerely possess different theological interpretations. At question is not only who controls the movement in the wake of a leader's death, but also how the movement will be interpreted and administered. As scholars focus on a lens of power, they are apt to look past very real and deep-seated causes for dissent. This generation of successors – here termed the second prophetic generation - is comprised more often than not bitter rivals, but the cause behind their quest for control over a movement extends far beyond a quest for power. Using the Mormon example, this thesis argues that the theological and structural developments instituted by each of these innovators were essentially interpretations of Joseph Smith's vision. The role of the second prophetic generation is to rebuild the movement, to act as a conduit to the original prophet's ideas, and to reinterpret his vision for a new time.

¹ Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 63-64; D. Michael Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994.)

Prophets

Scholars use categories to make sense of the historical similarities across the human experience. This thesis employs terminology largely borrowed from the work of the sociologist Max Weber. Although these terms are not without their limitations, they allow for applying a case study to a broader historical framework, across time and place.

Max Weber defined a prophet “to mean a purely individual bearer of charisma, who by virtue of his mission proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment.”² In turn, Weber described charisma as “an extraordinary quality of a person, regardless of whether this quality is actual, alleged, or presumed.”³ Followers accept the rule of charismatic authority because of their belief in their leader’s supernatural abilities – whether this implies the working of miracles or professed communication with the divine.

Prophets oppose the established order. Their revelations present a “break” with society and at least some aspect of culture. Thus, prophets innovate. They are the creators of religion, whether they found a religion or build from an already functioning tradition. If successful, such men organize movements and, for some, if particularly successful, they invent a people. Historian Gregory Smoak states succinctly, “Religion and identity are intertwined. Religions explain who a people are, how they were created,

² Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 46. The term prophet like numerous other words in academia has a lay understanding that clouds the scholarly use of the word. For example, Weber’s prophets come from all traditions and they may not “prophesy” of future events or even accept the existence of a deity. This latter case Weber terms the “exemplary prophet” who urges others to follow his path to enlightenment. *Ibid.*, 55.

³ Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 295.

and the nature of their relationship to the world and others.”⁴ Beyond community building and theological designs, prophets affect individuals. Their teachings influence how their followers view themselves, the world, and others. The prophet’s personality - their charisma - is the power that enables individuals to accept their innovations and forge new and “deviant” – that is deviating from the norm - identities.

To clarify: this study utilizes the term prophet to mean, a leader (1) whose followers ascribe to him extraordinary gifts, (2) who claims a mission to proclaim sacred doctrines, and (3) whose teachings are innovative or can be perceived as innovative. The term can be criticized for its limits or for its expansive nature. However, as an operational category, this definition will be adequate for this historical study of Mormonism in the nineteenth century and its application to other religious bodies.

Innovation, the prophet’s work, is anything but an orderly process. A prophet’s revelations frequently include outbursts of new information and practice: rituals, mythologies, and behavior. A prophet’s charisma justifies the deviance of his religious product, but what happens when death takes him from the scene? How can individuals and communities maintain the innovations that were dependent upon the prophet for their existence?

Often prophets spend their whole lives innovating and, as a result, components of their religious vision tend to remain incomplete and un-systematized at their deaths. After all, a prophet’s strength is rarely in organizational matters. If a new religion is to survive, succeeding leaders must complete this task, develop concepts that allow for group cohesion and identity, and establish controls on possible excesses once permitted

⁴ Gregory Smoak, *Ghost Dance and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 48.

under the founding prophet. They must find new tools to buttress cultural and theological innovations no longer supported by the presence of the former charismatic personality. And they must accomplish all of this while confronting a set of problems distinct from those faced by the founder. This next leader or set of leaders is here termed the second prophetic generation and is responsible for guiding a new religion into a permanent structure.

In 1991, Timothy Miller compiled a series of essays under the title, *When Prophets Die: The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements*. Each contributor to this volume focused on a different new religious movement in the United States and its experience following the death of its founder. J. Gordon Melton sets the stage for the other scholars in his introduction by providing a politically charged framework for the study. Eager to challenge the perception of new religions as groups dependent upon an oppressive and all-controlling “cult-leader,” the scholar argues for the ability of a movement to survive and flourish in their prophet’s absence.⁵ This key idea: new religions can survive without their founder present is the overarching theme of the book. Whereas other concepts are addressed in individual chapters, this premise is the book’s major contribution to the field. *When Prophets Die* introduced the conversation, but unfortunately, the project was fueled as much by feuds with scholars who perpetuated anti-cult generalizations of new religions, as it was by the drive to answer the question at hand: What does happen when prophets die? The movement might not join the prophet in death, as Miller’s compilation ably proves, but neither is that prophet’s death

⁵ J. Gordon Melton, “Introduction: When Prophets Die: The Succession Crisis in New Religions” in *When Prophets Die: The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements*, ed. Timothy Miller (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 1-12.

meaningless. The following effort is an attempt to continue the conversation through a study of the leaders and movements that directly succeeded the Mormon Prophet, Joseph Smith, in the nineteenth century – that is the second prophetic generation of Mormonism.

The Second Prophetic Generation: Prophets or Priests?

Weberian theory suggests that the prophet figure endowed with his charisma appears as a radical opponent to the established social order. The prophet is subversive, intent on establishing a new society. However, once this new order appears, it naturally tames the drive for revolution. The new order eventually becomes tradition for its adherents – even if considered deviant by the masses - and, thus, traditional authority replaces charismatic authority. A new structure of ‘priests’ – the keepers of tradition - replaces that of the prophet.

According to Weber, this process begins with the death of a prophet. New successors gain acceptance based on their charismatic (supernatural) qualifications. Such figures may be chosen because of “sacramental substantiation” in which a prophet has symbolically bestowed upon a follower or followers a portion of his power. This includes those successors who come from the emerging body of priests organized by the prophet. Others may find their prophet’s successor through “a belief in hereditary charisma.”⁶ This distinction is present in the two major branches of Sunni and Shia Islam: the former found their leader in Abu Bakr, one of Muhammad’s closest disciples, the latter turned to the belief that Muhammad’s son-in-law should lead as part of his hereditary rights.

⁶ Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, 297.

Although Weber provides very little insight into this new leader's specific role, later sociologists have acknowledged his existence. In 1970, Donald MacIntosh noted that frequently "the charismatic leader leaves the task of building the new order to his successor...."⁷ Although sociologist Michael Toth does not use the term second prophetic generation, he introduced a related theory of double charisma which builds on MacIntosh's insightful revelation. In this theory, Toth argues that a second leader "is able to turn the corner from charisma to routine, accomplishing it under the aegis of the more unearthly charisma of the first leader."⁸ The second leader offers the scattered and confused followers of the first charismatic figure a "new call to consolidation and organization, distinct from the earlier call."⁹ This second leader borrows from the charisma of the original prophet. Because he is leading the new religion into the formation of a tradition, he "expresses his charisma in a partially routinized form or along more routinized channels."¹⁰

These second figures are difficult to define, as Toth notes. Where do they fit in Weber's categories of prophet and priest? They appear to function in their task on the border of both, moving back and forth between the boundaries of sociological definitions. For this reason, this thesis coins the term second prophetic generation to encompass a broad range of figures. Universally, these second-tier leaders draw their authority through charisma, even if it is borrowed from another. Many act as a conduit between the private teachings of the prophet and the masses. However, as we will see through our

⁷ Donald McIntosh, "Weber and Freud: On the Nature and Sources of Authority," *American Sociological Review*, 55, no. 5 (1970): 901-911.

⁸ Michael Toth, "Toward a Theory of the Routinization of Charisma." Paper presented at Rocky Mountain Social Sciences Association, 1971. <http://web.pdx.edu/~tothm/vita/> Accessed June 10, 2010.

⁹ Michael Toth, *The Theory of Two Charismas* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

Mormon examples, the second prophetic generation may or may not legitimate their authority through heredity or priestly traditions. Jan Shipps has argued that all three of Max Weber's leaders characterized by lineage, priestly office, and charisma are present in the succession struggle following Joseph Smith's death.¹¹ Some dissent movements, equally part of the second prophetic generation as their more popular opponents, may return to a stronger charismatic legitimatization attempt. Such leaders are just as much Weberian prophets as the prophet of the first generation. The category of second prophetic generation though far from perfect, however it allows us to consider each of these figures alongside one another. To clarify: a second generation prophet is (1) a leader that seeks to continue the work of a first generation prophet in the wake of his death, (2) functions in his position via borrowed *or* individual charisma, and (3) seeks to routinize the innovations of the original prophet.

Mormonisms: Our Case Study

Fundamentally, historians of religion ask one question: How does religion change over time? Philip Barlow, the Leonard Arrington Chair of Mormon History and Culture, began his essay entitled, "Shifting Ground and the Third Transformation of Mormonism" by asking a question once posed by the ancient philosopher, Aristotle. "If a person were to replace the planks of a ship with fresh planks, one by one, at which point would the original vessel become a new one?"¹² Although he does not answer Aristotle directly, Barlow reasoned that modern-day Mormonism is "in the midst of its third transformation.

¹¹ Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 105.

¹² Philip Barlow, "Shifting Ground and the Third Transformation of Mormonism" in *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture*, ed. Peter W. Williams (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 140.

The original Mormon ark has become a new ship twice over, and is, as it approaches the twenty-first century, achieving its fourth incarnation.”¹³ These transformations included a shift from the primitivist Christianity of 1830 New York to the “half-Hebracized church-kingdom” of Nauvoo, Illinois, which then morphed into the post-1890 church “thriving for national respectability” and, finally, to the global church of the 1960s and forward.¹⁴

To be certain, “shifts” are a useful historical device to better understand change overtime, however, it is possible that they will cause us to misunderstand the real process of change. Later developments than the ones we will consider, made under the auspices of a bureaucratic board perhaps, may properly fit in the category of a clear-cut shift. Mormonism has uprooted its planks and conjured new boards throughout the entirety of its existence. The evolution of the faith was a process that began immediately. Joseph Smith was an innovator at his core and ultimately, as a religious revolutionary, he was uncomfortable even with his own established order.

For fourteen years, the Mormon Prophet developed a restoration of ancient-Judaeo-Christianity in nineteenth-century America. In a new work of scripture, Smith brought the biblical tradition to the New World. Following the Primitivist tradition, he organized his followers after the Christian organization described in the Book of Acts. Yet, Smith’s prophetic instinct demanded that he introduce more than just a church. The Mormon Prophet’s theology encompassed economic, military, marital, and political strains in his hopes to achieve a heavenly society.

¹³ Ibid., 140.

¹⁴ Ibid., 141.

Initially, Smith's organization utilized a simple structure characteristic of Presbyterian and Methodist organizations of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ Joseph Smith was recognized as the "first elder" with a "second elder" serving alongside him. These initial positions were limited to deacons, priests, and elders. The Prophet continually added to the prospective hierarchy of Mormonism. In 1831, the position of high priest was introduced shortly followed by the notion of a first presidency, bishops, and finally, patriarchs. In 1834 and 1835, respectively, a high council and quorum of twelve apostles were formed.¹⁶

For the last four years of his life, in Nauvoo, Illinois, Joseph Smith introduced a select number of his trusted followers into a series of esoteric teachings and ritual. These included new concepts of deification, temple rites associated with Freemasonry, the eternal nature of familial relationships, plural marriage, and the ceremonial anointing of individuals as Kings and Priests. In the spring of 1844, months before his impending assassination, the Mormon Prophet founded the Council of Fifty, a theocratic shadow government eventually to reign over the political and spiritual affairs of all humankind. In public, Smith spoke of an impending reformation that would restructure the church although he left the particulars for private conversations with his inner circle.

Barlow rightfully characterizes Mormonism's second incarnation as fully achieved only following the establishment of a separate Mormon commonwealth led by Brigham Young in the Desert west.¹⁷ This thesis couples Barlow's insight with his

¹⁵ Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 253.

¹⁶ For an in-depth study of the development of Latter-day Saint priesthood organization, see Gregory A. Prince, *Power from on High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 47-78.

¹⁷ Barlow, "Shifting Ground and the Third Transformation of Mormonism," 141.

insistence that we avoid the tendency to see Mormonism as one great whole consisting solely of the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah. In reality, there have been, by some estimates, nearly 400 sects of Mormonism with their own traditions and history, but sharing a common heritage with the nineteenth-century new religious tradition founded by Joseph Smith.¹⁸ For this reason, Philip Barlow has argued for the plural term *Mormonisms* to describe the rich diversity in the Mormon tradition.¹⁹ This thesis examines the first shift as it occurs in the second prophetic generation – something like the stirring of cement before it dries – in not one faction of Mormonism, but in several to capture a broader swath of the second prophetic generation.

The first study (Chapter 2) takes into account the response of the second prophetic generation to plural marriage, the most difficult of Smith's innovations. It is the only chapter to utilize a comparative approach. Three separate communities led by Nauvoo insiders are examined, thus, demonstrating an important theme in a large segment of the second prophetic generation – the bringing forth of esoteric elements of a faith, previously revealed only to a founding prophet's most trusted disciples. Simultaneously, we see that radical innovation can lead to multiple interpretations of a prophet's legacy available to his adherents. Finally, through these examples we are able demonstrate the gradual loss of a prophet's most controversial innovations.

The second study (Chapter 3) explores the development of the Church of Jesus Christ, a new ecclesiastical structure developed by second-generation prophet, Alpheus

¹⁸ Newell G. Bringhurst and John C. Hamer, *Scattering of the Saints: Schism within Mormonism*, ed. Newell G. Bringhurst and John C. Hamer (Independence, Mo.: John Whitmer Books, 2007), back-cover.

¹⁹ Philip Barlow, "Mormonisms Course Syllabus," copy in the author's possession.

Cutler. His new church was based on the foundation of Joseph Smith's organization, but features several fresh deviations. This chapter demonstrates the impact of a prophet's death and the re-evaluation of his theology through this lens (i.e. his death) plays on the re-ordering of his society.

The third study (Chapter 4) analyzes the manner in which one second-generation prophet, Charles Thompson, wrote Joseph Smith's innovations out of the scriptural record of Mormonism. Borrowing from the creative toolbox of Joseph Smith, Charles Thompson utilized narrative theology – the telling of a scriptural story – to reorient the Mormon mind away from Smith's teachings on polygamy and polytheism. Thompson's *Inspired Enoch*, one of the first Mormon scriptures to appear in the second prophetic generation of Mormonism, was an attempt to offer a feasible alternative to a threatening worldview championed by the Brighamites. In this manner, we will see the conflict between two bodies led by the second prophetic generation; the first intent on preserving and promoting prophetic innovation and the other seeking to remove and replace the same innovations.

Mormon Terms

Like any cultural study, this thesis will use a number of terms that will be unfamiliar to outsiders. For this reason, a glossary is included here. First, we will establish certain policies for capitalization and the use of certain cultural terms.

Because this thesis discusses not one Mormon Church, but many Mormon churches with very similar names (e.g. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Church of Jesus Christ, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, etc.), I use

the traditional designations to distinguish them from one another. For example, “Brighamites” or “Utah church” is used to describe those Mormons that followed Brigham Young and established their headquarters in what would become Salt Lake City, Utah or “Strangites” for those Mormons that gathered under James Jesse Strang in Wisconsin.

In addition, I freely draw from a number of other internal cultural terms in order to shed light on Mormon societies and provide variety to my writing. I refer to Joseph Smith simultaneously as the Mormon Prophet and sometimes simply as the Prophet or the Seer – terms that are capitalized to distinguish Smith from other future leaders also dubbed prophets. The terms Mormonism or the Restoration refers broadly to the religion of Joseph Smith as it functioned during his life in one movement and in various movements following his death. The terms plural marriage and polygamy will be used along with insider theological terminology coined by Joseph Smith: celestial marriage or simply, the principle. Other important terms and their definitions include:

Adoption, Law of – In the nineteenth century, some Mormon churches, including the LDS Church, believed that church members should be ritually bound together as a family unit. Thus, adherents were adopted as children of Church leaders.

Bishop – In the nineteenth century, bishops were an ecclesiastical position in charge of financial matters and traditionally directed the church’s communal efforts.

Council of Fifty – A shadow government organized by Joseph Smith in the months before his death. According to Mormon prophecies, the Council of Fifty was thought to be the organization that would eventually govern the entire world.

Endowment – a ritual drama performed in Mormon temples; believed to be necessary for salvation and a prerequisite for further ceremonies including sealings and second anointings.

First Presidency – Mormon churches are often governed by a council consisting of one president of the church and two councilors.

High Council – an ecclesiastical court; in the nineteenth century, the High Council played a large role in the government of church communities.

Priesthood – In nineteenth-century Mormonism, the priesthood was held by lay members who were authorized to perform any number of rites based on the office in the priesthood they held (e.g. Bishop, Priest, Apostle, etc.). The priesthood is divided into two orders: the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood and the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood. In the nineteenth century, the Aaronic Priesthood was in charge of “temporal” labor and the Melchizedek Priesthood was in charge of leadership positions and the performance of a different level of ritual.

Prophet – the highest leadership position in Mormon churches; one who speaks for God and receives revelation.

Quorum of Twelve Apostles – In the nineteenth century, the quorum of twelve presided over all areas outside of established LDS communities. Following Joseph Smith’s death, the quorum of twelve apostles became the presiding organization over the church in preference to other quorums and offices.

Sealing – A ritual typically performed in temples in order to place Mormons in an eternal family unit. The sealing can be performed at the same time or after a marriage. However, a marriage without a sealing is believed to end at death.

Second Anointing – a ceremony that ritually ordained its recipients as kings and priests and queens and priestesses; promised the neophytes eternal life.

Zion – a term used to describe a utopian ideal, usually associated with Jackson County, Missouri or other locations in which Mormons have gathered in large communities.

CHAPTER 2

MORMON POLYGAMY:

VARIED APPROACHES TO COPING WITH SMITH'S MARITAL INNOVATIONS

The experience of Nauvoo struck the Latter-day Saint psyche like a whirlwind. There was real religious upheaval in the bustling Illinois city.²⁰ Joseph Smith, who had previously brought forth the Book of Mormon, concepts of a modern utopia, and the restoration of the primitive Christianity, built upon these teachings concepts of temple rituals, deification, theocracy, and plural marriage.²¹ Converts thoroughly convinced of the authenticity of his early career, felt like they “hadn’t signed up for this” and in the 1840s, Nauvoo began to turn out a consistent crop of dissenters, angry at the Mormon Prophet for making a mockery of their faith. Still eagerly embracing the earlier principles, they announced that Joseph Smith no longer spoke for the Lord – that he had become a fallen prophet.²² Yet many, out of their reverence for their prophet and often with an appeal to personal revelation, came to accept the principles that at first tormented them.

Nevertheless, even the pious Latter-day Saints of Joseph Smith’s inner circle experienced real trauma when they learned of their prophet’s marital status. It was worse still when they realized that they too were expected to *live the principle* and more often to convince their female relations the same. The memoirs of the Nauvoo period overflow

²⁰ For studies of the Latter-day Saint experience in Nauvoo, see Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1965); Roger D. Launius and John Hallwas, eds., *Kingdom on the Mississippi Revisited: Nauvoo in Mormon History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Glen Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002).

²¹ Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*, 82-83.

²² D. Michael Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, 137-138.

with the great difficulties of embracing plural marriage. Even Brigham Young, thought to be the most-married man in LDS history, recalled, “desiring the grave” after Smith first approached him about the doctrine.²³

According to some accounts, this experience of trauma extended even to the originator of the practice. After marrying a number of women, Joseph Smith, fiercely adverse to sexual sin, required divine assurance that by following the “law of God,” he had not inadvertently been guilty of adultery.²⁴ His adherents insisted that the Mormon Prophet had to be divinely compelled to practice and propagate the *celestial law* among his followers. One of Smith’s wives, Eliza R. Snow, remembered that the Prophet

described the trying mental ordeal he experienced in overcoming the repugnance of his feelings, the natural result of the force of education and social custom, relative to the introduction of plural marriage. He knew the voice of God – he knew the commandment of the Almighty to him was to go forward – to set the example, and establish Celestial plural marriage. He knew he had not only his own prejudices and prepossessions to combat and to overcome, but those of the whole Christian world stared him in the face; but God, who is above all, had given the commandment, and He must be obeyed. Yet the Prophet hesitated and deferred from time to time, until an angel of God stood by him with a drawn sword, and told him that, unless he moved forward and established plural marriage, his Priesthood would be taken from him and he should be destroyed!²⁵

Smith told another plural wife, “The angel came to me three times between the years of 1834 and 1842 and said I was to obey that principle or he would slay me.”²⁶ The story of Smith’s encounter with a sword-wielding angel is reminiscent of Old Testament passages, in which a divine messenger threatens disobedient prophets with death.²⁷ As in

²³ Journal of Discourses, 3:266.

²⁴ Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 441.

²⁵ Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, 1884), 69-70.

²⁶ Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Address Delivered at Brigham Young University, 14 April 1905, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 2-3.

²⁷ The story of Joseph Smith directly parallels the account of Balaam and the sword-carrying angel of Numbers 22. In addition, the same motif of the intended divine execution of a disobedient prophet

the biblical accounts, the warning was clear. Either Joseph Smith would submit to the task of instituting God's laws or his prophetic mission and his life would be at an end. The introduction of polygamy was traumatic from its inception. The very lore surrounding its origin acknowledges this built-in turmoil as if to assure the listener that even the most holy of individuals would struggle with the unusual but divine institution.

With the death of Joseph Smith, the responsibility and burden of plural marriage passed to his successors. In the Great Basin, Young and the twelve apostles proceeded to systematize Joseph Smith's Nauvoo outbursts of revelation. They clarified, as well as developed, rules and restrictions pertaining to plural marriage. Frequent sermons cited the importance of its practice and the risks of its abuse. And eventually they achieved some level of success in their attempts to integrate polygamy into Mormon culture and belief.²⁸

Yet, Brigham Young's continuation of Mormonism was not the only version of the diverse movement that maintained Smith's marital teachings. This chapter analyzes three additional Mormon polygamist communities, each led by their own charismatic leader, who, like the apostles, had participated in plural marriage based on Smith's instructions. By exploring the issues that each of these groups faced in their introduction, application, and cessation of polygamy, we can see the staggering impact of plural marriage on the Latter-day Saint people.

occurs in Exodus 4, in which "the Lord met Moses and sought to kill him," presumably for neglecting to circumcise his first-born son – an oversight immediately corrected by the child's mother, thus, sating the anger of deity.

²⁸ Katherine Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System: 1840-1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2001); Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, The Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1984), 181-225.

While conducting this comparative study, drawing on the baseline of Utah where polygamy became fully integrated into culture, certain points will become clear.

- 1) We can more fully see the strong distaste for plural marriage by believing Latter-day Saints. Each of the Mormon peoples were eager to distance themselves from plural marriage once they ended its practice.
- 2) We can see that many regulations and theological underpinnings associated with polygamy in Utah were innovations of the twelve apostles and not fully developed under the direction of Joseph Smith.
- 3) As implied in the last point, we can see that there were multiple ways to practice plural marriage. These variations are defined in part by the personality of the leaders who undertook them.
- 4) We can reasonably conclude that geography and isolation played a key role in the successful integration and relative longevity of plural marriage in the Mormon experience in the Great Basin.

The Other Polygamists: A Sample of Three Communities

Scholars have argued the merits of the term *polygamous society*.²⁹ Rarely if ever has a large society had a majority of their males living in plural marriages; thus the bulk of the society itself might not be polygamous. Instead, scholars use the term to refer to societies in which polygamy is preferred, if it were possible. By this definition, the communities in this study are not examples of polygamous societies; rather their leaders were polygamists and in two cases, advocated polygamy as the ideal form of marriage for

²⁹ Miriam Koktvedgaard Zeitzen, *Polygamy: A Cross-Cultural Analysis* (New York: Berg Publishers, 2008), iv.

their followers. In other words, only their leaders would prefer that their communities be polygamous. Thus, we should not mistake any of these nineteenth-century sects as mirror images of twentieth or twenty-first century Mormon Fundamentalism, which conforms to the scholarly definition of a polygamous society – in that, the movement, as a whole would prefer to live polygamously. We will begin this section with a brief overview of each community with its second-generation prophet.³⁰

Community #1: Lyman Wight

Lyman Wight led a group of 250 Saints between the summer of 1844 and his death in 1858. Nicknamed the “Wild Ram of the Mountains,” he became a major figure in Mormonism most notably for his military leadership during the 1830s Missouri conflicts, and beginning in 1841, served as an apostle. Like the majority of the apostles, he was on a mission to the east at the time of Joseph Smith’s death. He returned to Nauvoo only briefly, before directing his followers to Wisconsin and later Texas.³¹ Never professing to be Joseph Smith’s prophetic successor, Wight merely considered his group an independent branch of the original church. Although he claimed that he learned about polygamy firsthand from Joseph Smith, when he first left Nauvoo, he was a monogamist as was all of his party. Yet, by the next year, Wight had married three

³⁰ Although the Strangites, a fourth polygamist sect, faced the same issues that I look at in this essay, I have determined it best to exclude them on two grounds. First, Strangite polygamy has received a relatively large amount of scholarly attention. Second, the Strangites reinvented polygamy with a clear break from the practice, as it existed in Nauvoo. Strang depended on those that had knowledge of Nauvoo polygamy to institute the practice in 1849.

³¹ Michael Scott Van Wagenen, *The Texas Republic and the Mormon Kingdom of God* (Brownsville: University of Texas at Brownsville, 1999), 54-56.

additional wives. And eventually, his colony included between five and eight polygamist males.³² In a recent work, a scholar of the Texas colony placed this number into context:

Although less than sixteen percent of the families were polygamous in September of 1850, at least thirty-three to thirty-eight percent of births were in plural households, reflecting polygamy's impact on population replacement.³³

Community #2: William Smith

In Palestine, Illinois, another polygamist tried to introduce plural marriage to his own sect. William Smith was the youngest brother of Joseph Smith. Within months of the church's founding, he was baptized and later selected as one of the original quorum of twelve apostles. After the death of Joseph Smith, William sustained Brigham Young as the head of the twelve and, thus, the head of the church.³⁴ In turn, Young appointed Smith to serve as the presiding patriarch of the church on May 4, 1845. Following a division with Brigham Young, and a brief tenure under the prophetic claimant, James Strang, William Smith founded his own church in 1847. Although he made some converts to polygamy before his Brighamite excommunication, the historical evidence specifies only one additional male polygamist in the Palestine community.³⁵ Smith's church endured only a few years before collapsing in 1854.³⁶

³² Melvin C. Johnson, *Polygamy on the Pedernales: Lyman Wight's Mormon Villages in Antebellum Texas, 1845 to 1858* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2006), 78.

³³ *Ibid.*, 84.

³⁴ William Smith to Brigham Young, 21 August 1844, Church History Library, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. [LDS Archives]

³⁵ The only additional male polygamist we can specifically identify is Joseph Wood. "Letter from William Smith to Sister C." *Dixon Telegraph*, April 30, 1853.

³⁶ For further reading on William Smith, see Irene M. Bates and E. Gary Smith, *Lost Legacy: The Mormon Office of Presiding Patriarch* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Paul M. Edwards, "William B. Smith: A Wart on the Ecclesiastical Tree" in *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History*, ed. Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher, 140-54 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Kyle R. Walker, "William Smith's Quest for Ecclesiastical Station: A Schismatic Odyssey, 1844-93" in *Scattering of the Saints: Schism Within Mormonism*, ed. Newell Bringhurst and John C. Hamer, 92-114 (Independence, Mo: John Whitmer Books, 2007).

Community #3: Alpheus Cutler

Our third inroad into the world of post-martyrdom polygamy is a community led by Alpheus Cutler between 1847 and 1864. Publically, Cutler's most noteworthy office was as a member of the high council in Nauvoo, yet privately Joseph Smith trusted him with his new theology well before others. Following the death of the Mormon Prophet, Cutler was fiercely loyal to Brigham Young, even participating in the excommunication of the apostles' rivals.³⁷ On February 3, 1846, eager to embrace *the principle*, Alpheus Cutler married five plural wives in the Nauvoo Temple.³⁸ Likewise, two of his daughters married the apostle, Heber C. Kimball. Cutler, along with many future Cutlerites began the trek westward, until Young assigned them to establish a mission to the Native Americans in what is today Kansas. After conflicts with neighboring Mormon communities, the Cutlerites were excommunicated.³⁹ They continued their mission, until in 1851 they moved to Iowa. In 1853, Alpheus Cutler reorganized the church with himself as head over the organization.⁴⁰ Yet sometime along the way, the once five-times-polygamist had abandoned the practice, along with the entirety of his flock.

³⁷ Fred Collier, *The Nauvoo High Council Minute Books* (Hanna, Utah: Collier's Publishing, 2005), 156–57.

³⁸ Danny L. Jorgensen, "The Old Fox: Alpheus Cutler, Priestly Keys to the Kingdom, and the Early Church of Jesus Christ" in *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History*, ed. Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 162.

³⁹ The next chapter will discuss this conflict in detail.

⁴⁰ Organization of the Church, September 19, 1853, box 1, folder 1, Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerites) Collection, 19th Century Western and Mormon Americana, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Introducing Plural Marriage

The dissemination of plural marriage from the prophet to his adherents is a dangerous moment for any religious movement, as is true of other forms of sexual or marital innovation. The introduction of such volatile, deviant beliefs could fracture a church, as it did under Joseph Smith and later Brigham Young. Smith had an advantage that none of his successors possessed. Over time, he had gained his follower's adoration and trust. By the early 1840s, the Mormon Prophet had become an indispensable and integral part of their faith. The brand of leadership provided by any of his proposed successors was less powerful and less captivating. Yet, Smith was decidedly careful in the introduction of plural marriage. When the Mormon Prophet first introduced his marital innovations, he limited his confidants to members of the religious elite, a trusted inner circle, often bound to maintain secrecy through personal agreement and even religious ceremony.⁴¹

Cutler, Wight, and Smith each had to determine their own level of secrecy concerning their practice. Tracing the history of plural marriage from Joseph Smith to the Great Basin, we can see that the Utah Mormons practiced polygamy with three levels of openness. This included the initial period when knowledge of its practice was reserved strictly to the Mormon elite. Later, during the Nauvoo Temple experience and subsequent trek west, a new phase began in which the leadership shared this knowledge with fellow church members.⁴² Finally, the Latter-day Saints practiced plural marriage openly, following the announcement of 1852, until the Manifesto of 1890.

⁴¹ See George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy: "...but we called it celestial marriage"* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 402.

In post-martyrdom Nauvoo, when the practice of plural marriage was still limited to the covenant bound, William Smith became a strong advocate for living plural marriage in the open. In the summer of 1845, he gave a sermon entitled “the first Chapter of the Gospel of Saint William” announcing his own polygamous status. This fomented tensions between William Smith and members of the quorum of twelve, who were still eager to remain *in the closet*.⁴³ After his falling out with the twelve apostles, Smith’s position on polygamy changed drastically, if temporarily. In 1845, when he left Nauvoo, he also apparently left his wives behind.

William quickly became conscious to the dangers of publicizing polygamy – a realization that he worked to his advantage. In 1849, he began a letter writing campaign against the proposed State of Deseret, in which he exposed the Brighamites, his former allies.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Smith strategically attempted to introduce plural marriage within his own ranks. Five months after Smith’s letter to congress, Isaac Sheen, his 2nd-in-command, exposed Smith, in suit. To congress, he wrote, “I find that his accusations against the Deseret Mormons are the ebullitions of a malicious heart, and have been made by him to divert attention from his own outrageous villainy and licentiousness.”⁴⁵ Sheen claimed that Smith had openly taught him the doctrine. Unlike his attitude in Nauvoo, Smith responded with a series of denials.

In the following years, the Mormon Prophet’s youngest brother tried to introduce the practice to other members of his sect. He did so, like Joseph Smith, in the context of an oath bound society termed the Priests’ lodge. According to Jason Briggs, an apostle in

⁴³ William Smith Sermon, with remarks by John Taylor, 17 August 1845, LDS Archives.

⁴⁴ *Journal of History*, Volume 7, 453-457, Community of Christ Archives.

⁴⁵ Isaac Sheen to Honorable R.H. Stanton, 4 May 1850, Community of Christ Archives.

Smith's movement, "at a conference in October 6th of that year (1851), they threw off the mask, in a council called the Priests' Lodge, and confessed to the practice of polygamy in the name of the Lord."⁴⁶ Polygamy did not become a public practice in Smith's church; rather Jason was trusted with this knowledge, once initiated into the lodge. For him, *the mask was thrown off*. Others remained in ignorance, such as William Blair, who was baptized during the same conference, without any knowledge of polygamy.⁴⁷

As more and more Smithites discovered that polygamy existed within their community, a steady trail of members began to exit the movement. If plural marriage had not turned off his followers, Smith's hypocrisy and public criticism against other Mormon polygamists compounded their distaste.

Geography played a role in the decision to live plural marriage openly. Of our three examples, only Lyman Wight in the confines of Texas may have done so. He published a pamphlet defending *the principle*, but even then, his intended audience was likely members of the colony.⁴⁸ The evidence suggests that Wight did not feel able to live polygamy as openly as the Great Basin apostles led by Brigham Young. This seems to be the case due to contradictory reports by neighboring settlers whether his community was actually polygamous or not. Most likely, when it came to outsiders, Wight neither hid, nor flaunted his plural families.

The Cutlerites are unique in this study. Unlike the followers of Lyman Wight who left Nauvoo in 1844 or the followers of William Smith who largely resided in the east, the Cutlerites participated in the Nauvoo Temple experience, as well as began the

⁴⁶ "History of the Reorganization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," The Messenger of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Volume 2:1 (November 1875).

⁴⁷ W.W. Blair, *Memoirs of W.W. Blair* (Lamoni: Herald Publishing House, 1908), 1.

⁴⁸ Gideon Carter, "Gideon Carter Statement," LDS Archives.

trek westward. Cutler had not introduced them to plural marriage, rather they had learned of the practice with the rest of the Brighamites. In addition, we currently have no record of any plural marriages taking place in the Cutlerite tradition, following the relationships solemnized in the Nauvoo Temple. Although it is reasonable to expect that such developments occurred during the polygamous era in Silver Creek (i.e. before 1853), historians have yet to provide evidence.

Unique Developments

The Nauvoo theology of plural marriage raised many questions. For example - Who would be allowed to participate? Who could conduct or “seal” a plural marriage? What was the role of marriages not performed under the new system? Could such marriages be annulled? How did plural marriages relate to the rituals associated with the Mormon temple? Was polyandry – a woman having more than one husband - also a principle of plural marriage? Based on rumors or knowledge of Joseph Smith’s actions in Nauvoo, the post-martyrdom polygamists pondered each of these questions. Because of the secret nature of polygamy, these issues seemingly remained unresolved during Smith’s lifetime. In turn, each of these leaders sought their own understanding of polygamy, sometimes drawing their solutions through an interpretation of Joseph Smith’s behavior and sometimes through the reception of independent revelation.

Lyman Wight seems to have been the most innovative in his theology associated with plural marriages. Some of these ideas were quite controversial, including what the polygamist George Miller referred to as “false teachings in regards to lineage and

matrimony.”⁴⁹ This teaching involved the first example of clan endogamy in the Mormon tradition. For over a decade, Mormon religious figures known as patriarchs had provided Latter-day Saints blessings in which they identified the faithful as descendents of the ancient twelve tribes of Israel. Although this portion of the ceremony had great theoretical importance, the specific choice of one tribe over another had no practical application for the Saints. Under Lyman Wight, tribal designations determined marriage options. A member of the Texas colony, John Hawley, remembered, “Lyman had taught us in selecting a wife we should get one of our own tribe and lineage.”⁵⁰ Wight likely based this practice on Old Testament marriage laws, forbidding the intermarriage of the tribes due to property concerns.⁵¹

In Texas, only the tribe of Ephraim was free from this proviso. According to Hawley:

[Those believed to be descended from Ephraim, the] highest lineage...could save any woman whether they are of this tribe or not, for said Lyman this lineage could have a wife from every tribe but in the resurrection he would have to place her in her own tribe. But he would have power to visit her as a wife.⁵²

Wight’s critics worried that there was room for abuse in this system of selecting a spouse. Rumors suggested that occasionally, Pierce Hawley, the patriarch for the colony, would discover that a man and woman, previously married, were of different lineages. In such a situation, “a change [was] necessary and promptly effected.”⁵³ Research for this thesis has uncovered only one example in which a man, after exiting the community,

⁴⁹ Miller, George, *Correspondence of Bishop George Miller with the Northern Islander...*, ed. Wingfield Watson (Burlington, WI: Hajiceck Press, 1916), 42.

⁵⁰ John Hawley, *Autobiography of John Hawley*, Community of Christ Archives, 7.

⁵¹ Numbers 36:6-8.

⁵² John Hawley, *Autobiography of John Hawley*, 7

⁵³ Orson Hyde, George A. Smith, and Ezra T. Benson, “Report to Brigham Young and Council of Twelve,” LDS Archives, 2.

claimed that Wight had sought to separate him from his wife on this basis, shortly after the colony's departure from Nauvoo.⁵⁴

Whether this doctrine was as far reaching as to divide previously entered marriages, it certainly affected courtships.⁵⁵ Even then another of Wight's marital innovations would have superseded clan endogamy; the practice of arranged marriage, referred to by Hawley as "the order of the Patriarchs."⁵⁶ The effects of these rules were a cause of contention and dissent in the community.

In addition, Wight instituted strict rules concerning sexuality, even in marriage. The apostle taught that a husband should be "absent [from] the bed of [his] companion for eight days" during menstruation, thirty-three days after the birth of a son, and sixty-six days after the birth of a daughter. Like the concept of clan endogamy, Hawley suggested that these sexual restrictions were the "law of Moses, corrected and revised."⁵⁷

Polygamy existed in yet a different form under William Smith in Palestine. Smith likely borrowed from his brother's polyandrous practices, to institute a form of plural marriage with some strong similarities to complex marriage. His nephew, Joseph Smith III, later distinguished his uncle's version of marriage from "Utah polygamy," noting that William Smith's system existed as "a sort of promiscuity of affinities under the guiss [guise] of a 'priestess lodge."⁵⁸ In later years, Isaac Sheen would recall that Smith had come clean about his beliefs in plural marriage and offered "me his wife on the same

⁵⁴ Journal History, September 30, 1844.

⁵⁵ See Hawley, 10.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 10

⁵⁸ Joseph Smith III, letter to Warren E. Peak, 4 January 1911, Miscellaneous Letters and Papers. P13, f1073, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

terms that he claimed a partnership with other men's wives."⁵⁹ It is unknown if others left with Sheen at this time. In fact, it would appear that the church continued to prosper, though the same issues would again confront William and this time with more lasting penalties.

By design, the Priest and Priestess Lodge immolated Joseph Smith's clandestine organization in Nauvoo, the Holy Order. The Mormon Prophet inducted dozens of followers as members of this elite body, who were exclusively privy to the esoteric rituals, later to be associated with the temple. Within this organization, there were two levels of initiation, respectively for those who had received the endowment and those who had been selected to receive the second anointing in which they would become ritually kings and priests and queens and priestesses.⁶⁰

One of the few revelations of William Smith to survive this period describes the relationship between Smith's polygamy and his lodge system. Plural wives entered the Priestess Lodge

by being sealed to my servants William Smith and Joseph Wood; and have been washed and anointed under their hands having been received into the priestess lodge – having taken the covenant thereof; if they or either of them, shall fall, or altogether turn therefrom, she or they shall be excluded therefrom and from my church also; and shall not come forth in the resurrection of the just.⁶¹

In addition, based roughly on the Nauvoo precedent, these men "exalted" their wives by performing the Second Anointing ceremony, making them their Queens.⁶²

⁵⁹ "William Smith – Fornication – Adultery," *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, May 22, 1850.

⁶⁰ See David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Signature Books, 1994), 58–68.

⁶¹ "Letter from William Smith to Sister C." *Dixon Telegraph*, April 30, 1853.

⁶² *Ibid.*

There is no evidence that William Smith urged his male followers to enter plural marriage, with the exception of Isaac Sheen and Joseph Wood, both men who served in a special capacity with him to “hold the keys of the dispensation.” Rather he instructed his followers “that he had a right to raise up posterity from other men’s wives [and that] it would be an honor conferred upon them and their husbands, to allow him that privilege, and that they would thereby be exalted to a high degree of glory in eternity.”⁶³ Although plural marriage in Palestine, Illinois looks very different from plural marriage as it evolved in Utah or Texas, William Smith also borrowed from a Nauvoo precedent as he tried to produce an authentic version of his brother’s innovations.

The Demise of Plural Marriage

Historically no Mormon organization has been able to maintain plural marriage since the days of Joseph Smith. Some families have continually lived polygamously since the beginning, but no organization has espoused the practice for as long. In each faction, both internal pressures from membership and external pressure from non-Mormon neighbors were the central causes for suspending the practice of plural marriage.

To place this into context, it is worthwhile returning to the history of the Brighamites in the west. Mormonism in the Great Basin was able to maintain the practice of plural marriage openly from 1852 until 1890 and in religious elite circles until 1904 or shortly thereafter. The primary reason for issuing the Manifesto and its accompanying end to public polygamy was to end polygamous prosecution. This worked and in 1896, the United States accepted Utah as a state in the Union. During the Reed Smoot hearings, when it became increasingly difficult to hide further clandestine

⁶³ “William Smith – Fornication – Adultery,” *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, May 22, 1850.

marriages from the prying American eye, the church hierarchy ended even polygamy's secret practice.⁶⁴

Danny Jorgensen, professor of Religious Studies at Florida International University, has hypothesized that a similar process occurred in the Cutlerite movement.⁶⁵ In 1851, an associate of Cutler's, F. Walter Cox, three-times-polygamist was threatened with imprisonment in Iowa. At the same time, Jorgensen suggests that Cutler must have "put away his plural wives," in the face of persecution. Following the early 1850s, four of Cutler's five plural wives disappear from the historical record. Only one plural wife remained in the Cutlerite camp and eventually remarried.⁶⁶

On the other hand, there was real trauma associated with plural marriage. Thus, it is not at all surprising that there was also an internal desire to let the system go – a desire that Cutler may have developed quickly. For example, Alpheus Cutler may have soured to plural marriage after the seemingly abandonment of his daughters by their husband, Heber C. Kimball, who led many Saints west.⁶⁷ Both internal and external pressures mounted and by 1853, with the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ, Cutler suspended the practice of plural marriage.

The termination of plural marriage in William Smith's sect also involved public exposure of the practice. This occurred first with the departure of Jason Briggs and other

⁶⁴ See B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 164.

⁶⁵ Danny Jorgensen, "The Old Fox: Alpheus Cutler" in *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History*, ed. Linda Thatcher and Roger D. Launius (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 169.

⁶⁶ Clare B. Christensen, *Before & After Mt. Pisgah* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 1979), 183.

⁶⁷ Richard E. Bennett, "Lamanism, Lymanism, and Cornfields," *Journal of Mormon History* 13 (1986/87), 50.

disgruntled members, but more importantly with a messy divorce trial and an exposé published in the local newspaper.⁶⁸ Smith eventually fled Palestine, when the court issued a warrant for his arrest. Soon thereafter, the youngest brother of Joseph Smith lost the drive to continue with his polygamous lifestyle and teachings.

The practice of plural marriage under Lyman Wight seems to have ended because of internal pressures, despite some persecution from outsiders. Following the publication of the previously mentioned pamphlet, members still proved unreceptive. Thus, Wight announced that the law was suspended, because “the people were not pure enough to live up to that order of marriage.”⁶⁹ The four polygamists, still loyal to the colony, maintained their families and plural marriage ended with Wight’s death in 1856. A decade later, the majority of Wightites joined the monogamist Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. According to historian Melvin C. Johnson, the decision to find their home in the RLDS Church signaled a further distancing from their polygamous past.⁷⁰

For the followers of Lyman Wight and Alpheus Cutler, theological consequences accompanied the loss of plural marriage. With the lack of interest and available women, Wight reevaluated the principle and determined that plural marriage was not a necessary law for salvation but only added to a man’s status in the afterlife. According to one of his followers, “the theory was that the man that had more than one spiritual wife, would enjoy a greater measure of glory than the man that had only one.”⁷¹ Because plural

⁶⁸ “Letter from William Smith to Sister C.” *Dixon Telegraph*, April 30, 1853.

⁶⁹ “Gideon Carter Statement,” LDS Archives.

⁷⁰ Melvin C. Johnson, *Polygamy on the Pedernales: Lyman Wight’s Mormon Villages in Antebellum Texas, 1845 to 1858*, 197.

⁷¹ *The Temple Lot Case*, 456, Community of Christ Archives.

marriage was intimately connected to the idea of celestial marriage in Nauvoo, with the abandoning of plural marriage, the Cutlerites eventually lost their concept of eternal marriage altogether, one of Smith's most potent doctrines.⁷²

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

Ultimately, the reaction to William Smith's polygamous teachings resulted in the creation of *the* monogamist faction of the Restoration, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Initially Smith had suggested that he would relinquish his role as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator to his nephew, Joseph Smith III, when the teenager had reached the proper level of maturity. Although, Smith later changed his views in favor of the eventual succession of his own children, this doctrine had attracted most of his followers. His beliefs concerning the Smith lineage and his vehement public resolve against plural marriage were the two-part foundation of his movement. His adherents were converted to these principles.⁷³

When one of the Palestine church's apostles, Jason Briggs, discovered Smith's deceit, he was devastated. On November 21, 1851, he received and announced a revelation that would forever after alter the face of Mormonism. According to the revelation, William Smith had been the proper guardian for Joseph Smith III, but had "forfeited that which pertained to him." Concerning plural marriage, the revelation continued:

That which you received as my celestial law is not of me, but is the doctrine of Baalam. And I command you to denounce it and proclaim against it...write the

⁷² The connection of plural marriage to the belief in eternal marriage, see B. Carmon Hardy, *Doing The Works of Abraham: Mormon Polygamy: Its Origin, Practice, and Demise* (Norman, Okla.: Arthur H. Clarke Company, 2007.)

⁷³ D. Michael Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, 235.

revelation and send it unto the Saints at Palestine, and at Voree, and at Waukesha, and to all places where this doctrine is taught as my law....⁷⁴

The revelation was distributed throughout the region. Many heard Briggs' message and promptly aligned themselves with the new movement. Following the establishment of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, excluding the Brighamites, the scattered factions of the original church became largely united under the new organization.⁷⁵ For many, this church was a sanctuary from the teachings of polygamy. Those who found themselves safely inside the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints could fervently denounce the *abominable practice*. Following William Smith's original plans, Joseph Smith III was ordained the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator over the new church on April 6, 1860.⁷⁶ Most frequently, under the platform of Joseph Smith III, the "Josephites" attributed its creation to Brigham Young, although the smaller sects might have conjured up the practice through independent innovation.

Romanan Wight, the son of one of Lyman Wight's plural wives, later returned to Texas on an RLDS mission. He recorded his thoughts while visiting his childhood homestead.

As we stood on the old site and saw only the rock foundations of the old houses, we were filled with thoughts of the past, and we wondered what the result would have been if [Wight's colony] had remained there and proved loyal to the original tenets of the church. The effects can never be known.⁷⁷

There is trauma in Romanan's words. The assumption, of course, was that his father had not maintained the original teachings of the church. As Romanan embraced the RLDS

⁷⁴ "History of the Reorganization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," *The Messenger of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* 2 (November 1875): 1.

⁷⁵ Newell G. Bringhurst and John C. Hamer, "Introduction" in *Scattering of the Saints: Schism within Mormonism*, ed. Newell G. Bringhurst and John C. Hamer (Independence, Mo.: John Whitmer Books), 5.

⁷⁶ Roger D. Launius, *Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1988.)

⁷⁷ *Saints Herald* 49:682.

tradition, his rejection of plural marriage now colored his vision of his father's work in the Texas colony. By 1860, the vast majority of the Restoration was firmly bifurcated between the polygamous LDS and the monogamous RLDS. There was no room for a middle ground on this position.

Of the three communities, we have analyzed here, only the Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerite) remains as a distinct sect of the Restoration, although RLDS missionaries depleted their ranks throughout the nineteenth century.⁷⁸ The Cutlerite experience demonstrates that the pain of plural marriage extended even to future generations. With the decision not to participate in plural marriage, the subject became taboo. Cutlerites frequently criticized the Brighamites for their continued practice of the principle. Unfortunately, for the Cutlerites not-so-subtle reminders of their polygamous roots remained in the community: the polygamous progeny of Mormon apostle, Heber C. Kimball and two of Alpheus Cutler's daughters. According to one of these children, Abram Alonzo Kimball, the community coped by insulting the youth, referring to them by popular polygamist names such as Brigham or Heber.⁷⁹ Today, the Cutlerites have firmly establish their identity as a sect strictly opposed to polygamy, even when there is hardly a threat of its reoccurrence. The institutional memory of the sect followed the popular RLDS idea that Joseph Smith Jr. was innocent of the crimes of polygamy.

⁷⁸ See, Barbara Bernauer, "Gathering the Remnants: Establishing the RLDS Church in Southwestern Iowa," *John Whitmer Historical Association* 20 (2000): 4-33; Danny Jorgensen, "The Scattered Saints of Southwestern Iowa: Cutlerite-Josephite Conflict and Rivalry, 1855-1865," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 13 (1993): 80-97.

⁷⁹ Abram Alonzo Kimball, "Autobiography of Abram Alonzo Kimball," LDS Archives.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have analyzed plural marriage as it existed under William Smith, Lyman Wight, and Alpheus Cutler. Each of these figures sheds additional detail on the Mormon experience with polygamy. From Lyman Wight, we have a clear example of the experimental nature of the principle. The apostle knew something of what had occurred in Nauvoo, but did not understand the theological justifications behind it. For example, men were severed from their wives in Nauvoo, Wight introduced the concept of lineage to explain this. From the Wightite experience, we can also see the hesitancy many Latter-day Saints felt to enter into the principle. In addition, Wight's belief that polygamy was not essential for exaltation represents one response to the issue of not having enough women for every man.

Under William Smith, we can see a novel use of Joseph Smith's clandestine fraternity structure, as it pertained to polygamy. He demonstrates another response to the dearth of women, namely a "partnership of wives" practiced by only the very top leaders. William Smith, personally, enlightens us on the desire for polygamists to practice their religion openly, despite the knowledge that in the nineteenth century, if they remained in close proximity to outsiders, they needed to do so privately. Most importantly, we saw that the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the continuation of William Smith's church without the always-problematic leadership of William Smith. Jason Briggs's November 1851 revelation was a revelation to revolt. Thus, the enduring impact of polygamy in the East was the unintentional creation of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, a sanctuary for those traumatized by its practice.

The Cutlerite experience with plural marriage shows first, the true reticence even of top leaders to continue the practice. Without Joseph Smith present to buttress the innovation and despite his having married five women, Alpheus Cutler quickly discarded the practice a few years later. The Cutlerite experience demonstrates the theological implications of giving up plural marriage, which went hand-in-hand with the continued practice of marital sealings “for time and all eternity.” Finally, the Cutlerites serve as a key example for the recreation of memory in the wake of a prophet’s death.

Scholars of Mormonism have extensively studied plural marriage as it was practiced by Joseph Smith and into the Brighamite experience in the west. Yet, research on polygamy’s continuation in various Mormon schisms has historically received only cursory attention and has only recently been the focus of academic studies. Although these sects provide additional knowledge concerning the Mormon experience in nineteenth century America, such studies could provide a needed contrast to the polygamy of the Great Basin.

CHAPTER 3
RENEWING COMMUNITY AND HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE: A CASE STUDY
IN ECCLESIOLOGY (1853-1864)

The Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerite), though largely based on a Nauvoo precedent, developed a singular ecclesiastical structure once isolated from other Mormon influences. Developments included the incorporation of two new additions to the church hierarchy—namely the church interpreter, a charismatic officer in charge of interpreting spiritual gifts, and a president of the church as a separate and distinct position from the president of the priesthood. There were also important omissions in Cutler’s hierarchy in that the new organization had no quorum of twelve apostles, no seventies, and no bishops. Through the process of analyzing these deviations from the model of the church as it existed during the lifetime of Joseph Smith, and coupling this new insight with Cutlerite theology, this chapter suggests that Alpheus Cutler’s theological emphases – his interpretation of Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo innovations - guided the evolution of his community’s ecclesiastical structure. Thus, Alpheus Cutler as church organizer and theologian becomes a case study in how organization is translated through the experience of the death of a prophet. This chapter is divided into three parts: first, a general history of Alpheus Cutler and his followers between the martyrdom of Joseph Smith in 1844 and Cutler’s reorganization of the church in 1853; second, a discussion of Cutlerite theology; and finally, an examination of the development of the Cutlerite religious organization.

Alpheus Cutler and the Creation of the Cutlerites

Before his split from the main body of the Saints and his subsequent excommunication, the Mormon people regarded Cutler highly. Having served as a member of the Nauvoo High Council and the temple committee, his credentials were exceptional. In addition, Cutler was among the few trusted followers of Joseph Smith to receive their endowments during the Mormon Prophet's lifetime. And when Smith revealed the pinnacle ordinance of Mormonism, the second anointing, Cutler was the sixth person to receive it—on November 15, 1843, a week before the president of the quorum of twelve apostles, Brigham Young, received his second anointing. Through this ceremony, Joseph Smith ordained Cutler to the office of king and priest, a position that contained the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood.⁸⁰

On March 11, 1844, Alpheus Cutler was introduced to the final phase of Joseph Smith's evolving understanding of theocracy, when he became a member of the Council of Fifty.⁸¹ In this Council, Joseph Smith selected members to colonize new Mormon communities in such places as Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, and Texas. Missionaries accepted diplomatic-like assignments to journey to Russia, France, and the Republic of Texas.⁸² Specifically, Joseph Smith appointed Alpheus Cutler to re-establish missionary work among the Native Americans, whom the Mormons called Lamanites. This assignment would become Cutler's focus for the remainder of his life. Nevertheless, he understood,

⁸⁰ Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977), 322.

⁸¹ William Clayton, *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 126–27.

⁸² Klaus Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), 85–87.

via Smith's instructions that other events must occur before a successful missionary effort could take place.

For this reason, Cutler sided with Brigham Young and the twelve apostles following the martyrdom of Joseph Smith and continued to serve on the Nauvoo High Council. In this capacity, he participated in the excommunication trials of those Saints who opposed the quorum of twelve, including Sidney Rigdon, James Strang, William Smith and their followers. During a heated high council discussion concerning succession claims, Cutler declared, "he felt bound to sustain the Twelve, and all the Quorums of the Church with its present organization, for on that his salvation depended."⁸³

Alpheus Cutler's loyalty to the twelve can be documented for the next several years. In the winter of 1845–1846, Cutler with other members of the Holy Order administered the temple ordinances to those Saints striving to maintain "Joseph's measures."⁸⁴ He began the trek west with the Saints, crossing Iowa during the summer of 1846; and at Winter Quarters, became the president of the Municipal High Council.⁸⁵ In 1847, no one considered Cutler a rogue member of the church, but that would soon change.

A major turning point occurred when Brigham Young appointed Alpheus Cutler to take a company and begin missionary work among a group of Delaware Indians living in Kansas Territory.⁸⁶ Cutler led an expedition and established a small colony, the Silver

⁸³ Fred Collier, *The Nauvoo High Council Minute Books*, 156–57.

⁸⁴ *Times and Seasons* (Nov. 1, 1844): 694.

⁸⁵ Danny L. Jorgensen, "The Old Fox: Alpheus Cutler," 163.

⁸⁶ See Danny L. Jorgensen, "Building the Kingdom of God: Alpheus Cutler and the Second Mormon Mission to the Indians, 1846–1853," *Kansas History* 15 (1992): 192–209.

Creek Branch, over which he served as president.⁸⁷ Although the branch had official sanction from Brigham Young, who was functioning as the president of the church, difficulties and suspicion on the part of the apostles would later result in a branch investigation by the church's high council. During these trials, which took place in 1849, members of Cutler's group stated their leader had been "ordained to lead this people and bring about the redemption of Zion."⁸⁸ The High Council disfellowshipped several Cutlerites and suspended the colony's Lamanite mission.⁸⁹ In 1851, Cutler was excommunicated.

Members of the Silver Creek Branch continued to pursue their missionary efforts among the Native Americans. Later, the Cutlerites, themselves, disappointed by their lack of success, suspended the Lamanite mission.⁹⁰ In 1852, Cutler gathered his followers and moved. They founded the town of Manti near present day Shenandoah, Iowa, where on September 19, 1853 Alpheus Cutler reorganized the Church of Jesus Christ with himself as "the head."

Cutlerite Theology

A unique doctrinal emphasis defined the Cutlerite people at least from the time of their initial struggle with the high council in Iowa. Ultimately, the severed ties arising from this conflict allowed Cutler to establish and mature his own theology without regard to loyalties to the twelve apostles. Three doctrinal keys form the focus of Cutlerite

⁸⁷ Silver Creek Branch was located in Mills County near present-day Silver City, Iowa.

⁸⁸ Orson Hyde, George A. Smith, and Ezra T. Benson, "Report to Brigham Young and Council of Twelve," 16, Brigham Young Correspondence, LDS Archives.

⁸⁹ For a more complete discussion of these trials, see Richard E. Bennett, "Lamanism, Lymanism, and Cornfields," 44–59; Danny L. Jorgensen, "Conflicts in the Camps of Israel: The 1853 Cutlerite Schism," *Journal of Mormon History* 21 (Spring 1995): 25–64.

⁹⁰ The Cutlerite endeavor to convert the American Indians was reestablished only after the death of Alpheus Cutler and the colony had moved to Minnesota.

theology: (1) the church is dependent on the kingdom—the latter being a separate and higher organization, (2) the death of Joseph Smith signaled the change of an era and a major shift in the work of God, and (3) the redemption of Zion was impending and would be accomplished through the principles of unity and consecration. Each of these premises was based on early Mormon teachings already introduced largely in the Nauvoo period, whether publically or privately. In the Silver Creek period, the Cutlerites developed their own identity as a people with a mission, drawing upon this theology to rationalize their agenda. In the Manti period, in which we are particularly interested, Cutler utilized these same foundational doctrines to form a church organization.

In the summer of 1843, Joseph Smith made a surprising and controversial announcement. He would resign as prophet of the church in favor of his brother Hyrum, who would then serve in that office. When a group of panicked Saints protested his decision, Joseph stated that his comment was only designed to try them. He responded with surprise that his followers did not have a proper understanding of the priesthood, declaring that he had only intended to “advance from Prophet to Priest and then to King.”⁹¹ This scenario implies that in Joseph Smith’s mind the president of the church, and even the role of prophet, seer, and revelator, was an inferior position to other offices. Joseph saw his own advancement through the ranks of greater organizations, specifically as a priest over the Holy Order and as a king over the Council of Fifty.⁹²

⁹¹ Joseph Smith, *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, ed. Scott H. Faulring (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 399.

⁹² Joseph Smith, *Words of Joseph Smith The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1980), 233. According to a letter from Willard Richards to Brigham Young in reference to this sermon, Joseph Smith “did not tell them [the church as a whole] he was going to be a priest now, nor a King by and by.” In other words, Joseph did not fully explain the situation. He was already operating as priest over the Holy Order and would soon become king within the Council of Fifty.

Alpheus Cutler did not cite Joseph Smith's proposed reorganization of the church hierarchy as evidence for his theological statements. Yet, his theology emerged from this period in Nauvoo, when private ordinations provided a tier of authority above that recognized by the church. In the only extant literature written by Cutler himself— a letter explaining his views to an opposing sect— he wrote:

Can a stream rise above its fountain, or can a stream rise without a fountain above it to supply it? ... Surely God must have a principle of greater and lesser in all things revealed that none can deny; now if the Church is the greater, or greatest, what is the lesser? If the Church is the lesser, what is the greater? Herein is the stream and fountain illustrated. I boldly answer this short question; the Kingdom of God on the earth is the greater and by this authority were all revelations given in 1828 and 1829, as well as since, and by this authority was the church organized on the 6th of April, 1830.”⁹³

The Kingdom of God held authority or priesthood *above* the church. Cutler believed that the church could rebel and although it would no longer be a legitimate organization, the kingdom would continue to possess God's blessing. When the church rejected the priesthood, God would reject the church. A new organization could be formed by those in possession of the appropriate authority, when commanded by God. Cutler's letter also speaks specifically of a quorum of seven men, “a regular” but secret quorum of the priesthood, which had governed the church since before its official organization.

Following Alpheus's death, the Cutlerites would begin to consolidate their founder's claims. Cutler rarely discussed the Council of Fifty, yet his comments, quoted above, indicate that he recognized a *kingdom of God over the church*. In retrospect, Cutler's followers would place these two components of Cutler's ideology together. All

⁹³ Alpheus Cutler to Zenos H. Gurley, January 29, 1856, qtd. in Rupert J. Fletcher and Daisy Fletcher, *Alpheus Cutler and the Church of Jesus Christ* (Independence, Mo.: The Church of Jesus Christ, 1974), 268–69.

references to the Kingdom of God were seen as references exclusively to the *Seven* and vice-a-versa. Cutler was likely not the author of this equation.

However, Cutler based his claim to succession, as being the last surviving, faithful member of this council of seven men, ordained as prophets. Cutler revealed that during the lifetime of Joseph Smith, he ranked number seven in this quorum with the number six position being held by John Smith.⁹⁴ Cutlerites as far back as the 1850s suggested scriptural and historical precedence for such a quorum. Nevertheless, today there is a scholarly consensus that Cutler's succession claims grew out of his reception of the second anointing and membership in the Council of Fifty, though the specific explanations vary. D. Michael Quinn has suggested that the *Quorum of Seven* existed as an executive committee in the Council of Fifty.⁹⁵ Whether Quinn is correct or not, there is no "smoking gun" so to speak in the Cutlerite church records. Regardless of the details, Alpheus Cutler saw the hope of the Saints in the Kingdom of God, a quorum of priesthood above and separate from the church. Through his position in the kingdom, he had the authority to reorganize the church.

Latter-day Saints ascribed to the notion of dispensationalism. Theologians commonly divided the history of time into seven acts, in each of which God dispensed his work anew, often differently than before. According to the Book of Mormon, the last period would be subdivided into two parts: *the Times of the Gentiles* and *the Times of Israel*. During the Times of the Gentiles, people of European descent would receive the Mormon Gospel and through missionary efforts have the opportunity to become

⁹⁴ Fletcher and Fletcher, *Alpheus Cutler and the Church of Jesus Christ*, 54.

⁹⁵ D. Michael Quinn, "The Council of Fifty and Its Members, 1844 to 1945," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 2 (1980), 183.

“numbered among the House of Israel.” Yet eventually, “when the Gentiles shall sin against [the] Gospel,” a new period would begin in which the Lamanite people would be the central focus of God’s work. These prophecies included apocalyptic allusions to war and disaster for the unbelieving Gentile people (i.e. the Whites) at the hands of the House of Israel. The House of Israel “shall go through among them, and shall tread them down....”⁹⁶

Cutlerites believed that the last days of Nauvoo signaled the shift to this new era. They based this on two major events: the martyrdom of their prophet, Joseph Smith, and the delayed completion of the Nauvoo Temple. The former represented the rejection of the gentile people as a whole, while the latter represented the rejection of the church.

The rejection of the church was based on a divinely appointed deadline for the construction of the Nauvoo Temple. In 1841, Joseph Smith received a revelation commanding the Saints to build a temple and boarding house in the vicinity of Nauvoo. The revelation also announced that the newly revealed ordinance of baptism for the dead was to be performed exclusively within the temple walls. However, the revelation allowed the Saints to continue the performance of vicarious baptisms outside of the temple until they “have had sufficient time to build a house unto me.” Deity warned the Saints if they did not complete the temple before the “the end of the appointment [they would] be rejected as a church, with [their] dead.”⁹⁷ Later, Smith announced that the Saints could no longer perform baptisms until the temple had been completed. In retrospect, the Cutlerites and others interpreted this announcement as a divine rejection of the original Mormon Church.

⁹⁶ 3 Nephi 16:9–15.

⁹⁷ Doctrine and Covenants 124:32.

Although there is no evidence that Alpheus Cutler held this view before the Silver Creek period; well before 1853, the Cutlerites had come to believe that the church had been rejected. This concept may have stemmed from the teachings of Lyman Wight, who had interaction with the movement in the late 1840s.⁹⁸ Wight had concluded as early as February 1844 that the church would not live up to its responsibility to construct the temple “in a reasonable time.”⁹⁹ Regardless of whether Lyman Wight and Alpheus Cutler had come to this conclusion independently or in response to the other, Cutler had accepted the concept of the rejected church by the 1840s. In 1849, LDS apostle Orson Hyde suggested that the Silver Creek Branch was teaching “that there is no organization, nor in the [Salt Lake] Valley; that the church is disorganized at present.”¹⁰⁰

The second aspect of the Times of Israel was the rejection of the gentiles as a whole. Following the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints halted missionary work among those of European descent in the United States. For example, Brighamite missionaries did not proselytize in the United States again, until 1854.¹⁰¹ The Cutlerites also subscribed to this view, but emphasized the new missionary endeavor that would occur among the House of Israel, specifically the Native Americans (Lamanites). As one Cutlerite, Marcus Shaw, explained in an 1863 conference address: there was a “work that was to be carried out after the death of the Prophet [Joseph Smith] and of the work going to the house of Israel and of Alpheus

⁹⁸ Jorgensen, “Conflict in the Camps of Israel,” 41–42.

⁹⁹ Lyman Wight to First Presidency, February 15, 1844, in *History of the Church*, ed. B.H. Roberts (Salt Lake City, Utah: 1912), Volume 6, 255.

¹⁰⁰ *Frontier Guardian*, May 2, 1849, 1:7.

¹⁰¹ “St. Louis Missouri, Conference Minutes, 1852-1856 ... From Bill Hartley Notes,” series IX, box 33, folder 13, item 17, Leonard Arrington Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

Cutler carrying the same to them.”¹⁰² In another sermon, Shaw preached, “show me the man that has carried the gospel to the house of Israel for that individual holds authority above all other authorities that may come.”¹⁰³ For the Cutlerites, this man was Alpheus Cutler. As explained by Luman Calkins during the high council investigations of 1849, the Cutlerites believed that Cutler held full directional control of Mormon-Indian affairs.¹⁰⁴

Certainly from the beginning of his mission to 1851, Cutler’s full attention was turned to the Native American people or, as they were often called by Cutlerites, Lamanites, Israel, or “the red men of the forest.”¹⁰⁵ The Lamanites would be a key in fulfilling Last-Days prophecy, particularly the establishment of the rule of the Kingdom of God. Even after the suspension of the Kansas mission, the responsibility to convert the Lamanites remained a crucial part of the Cutlerite psyche. In the 1860s, following the death of Alpheus Cutler, the Cutlerites traveled to Minnesota with renewed hopes of bringing the Mormon gospel to the local Native Americans.¹⁰⁶

The third theological focus was the continuation of the overarching emphasis of Joseph Smith’s ministry— the creation of Zion.¹⁰⁷ According to an 1831 revelation, the Lord had appointed a spot for the establishment of a future utopia in Independence,

¹⁰² Minutes of conference, April 6, 1863, box 1, folder 2. Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerites) Collection, 19th Century Western and Mormon Americana, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. [Hereafter, Church Records].

¹⁰³ Minutes of church meeting, February 22, 1863, box 1, folder 5, Church Records.

¹⁰⁴ Orson Hyde, George A. Smith, and Ezra T. Benson, “Report to Brigham Young and Council of Twelve,” 15, Brigham Young Correspondence, LDS Archives.

¹⁰⁵ Jorgensen, “Building the Kingdom of God,” 195.

¹⁰⁶ For a full discussion of the Cutlerites efforts among the Native Americans of Minnesota, see Biloine Whiting Young, *Obscure Believers: The Mormon Schism of Alpheus Cutler* (St. Paul, Minn.: Pogo Press, 2002), 138–156.

¹⁰⁷ For a full comparative study on Zion (specifically Jackson County) in Restoration thought, see Craig S. Campbell, *Images of the New Jerusalem: Latter Day Saint Faction Interpretations of Independence, Missouri* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004).

Jackson County, Missouri.¹⁰⁸ The Saints envisioned a temple in the frontier town to fulfill the biblical prophecy of Isaiah: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established ... and all nations shall flow unto it... for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”¹⁰⁹

In 1833, the Latter-day Saints were driven from Jackson County and later from Missouri altogether. Yet the *redemption of Zion* remained a prominent theme throughout nineteenth-century Mormonism. An 1834 revelation informed the Saints of the reasons for their exile from the designated city of Zion. Specifically they were “not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom; And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom.”¹¹⁰ They were not united as a people, nor had they implemented the law of consecration.

The Cutlerites, although participants in the trek west across Iowa, believed the greater exodus west would only delay the true task of redeeming Zion.¹¹¹ In Cutlerite prophecy, the Lord’s people would be brought into the Promised Land through the efforts of a modern-day Joshua. Their leader, Alpheus Cutler, would perform this messianic role. This was in part because, in 1838, Cutler had been appointed to be the master-workman or chief architect of the temple at Far West, Missouri.¹¹² A prophecy soon spread among the people, stating “Father Cutler’s trowel is going to ring in the Temple walls of Jackson County.”¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Doctrine and Covenants 57.

¹⁰⁹ Isaiah 2:2–3 [King James Version].

¹¹⁰ Doctrine and Covenants 105:3–4.

¹¹¹ Richard E. Bennett, “Lamanism, Lymanism, and Cornfields,” 49–50.

¹¹² Fletcher and Fletcher, *Alpheus Cutler and the Church of Jesus Christ*, 25.

¹¹³ Hyde, Smith, and Benson, “Report to Brigham Young and Council of Twelve,” 14.

During a January 6, 1861 church service, Cutler specifically prophesied that he would be “standing in Zion, if he lived to be 80 years old.”¹¹⁴ That gave the Saints approximately four years, until Cutler’s 80th birthday on February 29, 1864. The memoirs of Joseph Smith III provide us with an outsider commentary on what the young prophet perceived as fanaticism in response to this prophecy:

“They had become imbued with the idea that God would soon command them to gather to Zion. So strong was this belief among them that they had made ready wagons, tents and other appurtenances of nomadic life—and were ready, at a moment’s notice, to throw their household goods into the vehicles and start for Independence ... Among these people who held to Elder Cutler, there was so strong a belief that such a call would soon come, that they would not furnish their houses enough to even make themselves comfortable, nor make proper improvements upon their lands, notwithstanding the fact that they were located in one of the very best and most fertile parts of Southern Iowa.”¹¹⁵

In the 1860s, Cutlerites came to consider it their responsibility to remain always prepared to begin the great trek back to Jackson County, Missouri that would begin the fulfillment of God’s promises to his people. This theme was recalled often during the first several decades of Cutlerite history, until a group of Cutlerites in the 1920s constructed a church in Jackson County, near the temple site.¹¹⁶

The Cutlerites made several attempts throughout their history to implement the communal teachings of Joseph Smith. However, they interpreted consecration differently at different times. The first communal efforts at Silver Creek ended with a scandal referred to cryptically as the “*tight jacket*.” Although, the Cutlerite Church Records do not provide the details of this communal attempt, the Cutlerites remembered that they had

¹¹⁴ Box 1, folder 3, 87–88, Church Records.

¹¹⁵ Joseph Smith III, *Memoirs of Joseph Smith III*, ed. Mary Audentia Smith Anderson and Richard P. Howard (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1979), 98–99.

¹¹⁶ Biloine Whiting Young, *Obscure Believers*, 186. See also Danny L. Jorgensen, “Back to Zion: The Emergence of the Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerite) and Its Return to Independence, Missouri” in *Scattering of the Saints: Schism within Mormonism*, ed. Newell G. Bringhurst and John C. Hamer (Independence, Mo.: John Whitmer Books, 2007), 161–76.

been deceived into believing that Cutler had approved of their efforts, when he actually had not.¹¹⁷ After their arrival in Manti, Alpheus Cutler encouraged his followers to consecrate informally, by meeting the needs of their neighbors. Chancey Whiting later described this teaching as “come down with all but not put it in his hand.”¹¹⁸ Alpheus Cutler also became trustee-in-trust over the organization and sometimes requested specific properties and funds for the church. An organized United Order was not formed during Cutler’s lifetime; nevertheless, Cutlerite sermons promised that when members of the Church of Jesus Christ would truly live the law of consecration, “the earth will begin to quake before us, then you will begin to see the Lamanites receive [the gospel], and that Zion can be redeemed.”¹¹⁹

For Cutlerites, this meant the communal order was essential. The Saints would have to come to a point by which they were worthy to participate in the assignments God had in store for them, then they could effectively teach the Lamanites the Restored Gospel, and finally, they could return to Jackson County.

The Organization

On the basis of the above theology, the Cutlerites founded a new Mormon church to replace the previously rejected organization. Realizing their proselytizing efforts were rendering little to no results, the Cutlerites left Silver Creek. They arrived in Fremont County, Iowa in 1852. Alpheus Cutler, always mindful of *sacred space*, had seen the area

¹¹⁷ Minutes of council meeting, July 14, 1868, box 1, folder 7, Church Records. Cutlerites discussed the “tight jacket” during a July 14, 1868 meeting, in which members covenanted to once again dedicate all they possessed “to be governed by the voice of the council of High Priests.” During this meeting, certain individuals objected to the new covenant based on their previous experience at Silver Creek.

¹¹⁸ Box 2, folder 6, Church Records.

¹¹⁹ Statement from Joseph E. Fletcher, 1884, box 1, folder 4, Church Records.

in a vision before their arrival.¹²⁰ They later named their new town Manti, after a city in the Book of Mormon. Manti was designed to be a way station where the people could begin to work towards the threefold process of the Last Days, as discussed above. The Cutlerites frequently spoke of “preparation.” They prepared by becoming worthy to bring the Gospel to the Lamanites and to redeem Zion.

In Manti, Cutler’s theology began to take on an organizational form. On September 8, 1853, Alpheus baptized several individuals into the Kingdom of God. He had determined that without a divinely recognized church, the Saints could claim membership in the Kingdom of God via baptismal rites. Ultimately, this situation was temporary, awaiting a commandment to re-establish the church organization. According to a twentieth-century history, Cutler witnessed a divinely appointed manifestation—two back-to-back half moons in the sky. The sign confirmed his revelation to reorganize the church.¹²¹

On September 19, 1853, Cutler conducted the first baptisms into the newly reorganized Church of Jesus Christ. The rejection of the original church had subsequently rendered all previous ordinances void; thus, over a period of time each of Cutler’s followers was rebaptized.¹²² In contrast, again according to the twentieth-century history,

¹²⁰ Minutes of council meeting, December 26, 1859, box 1, folder 2, Church Records. For further reading see Michael S. Riggs, “The Cutlerite Migration to Minnesota: An Epic Perilous Journey into Diaspora,” in *Scattering of the Saints: Schism within Mormonism*, ed. Newell G. Bringhurst and John C. Hamer (Independence, Mo.: John Whitmer Books, 2007), 177–89.

¹²¹ Fletcher and Fletcher, *Alpheus Cutler and the Church of Jesus Christ*, 47.

¹²² “An Extract from Some of Chancey Whiting’s Writings,” box 1, folder 4, Church Records. According to Chancey Whiting: “In view of rejecting the Church ... he required baptism of all old or new members who united with him. This move entirely separated him and his followers from all the present factions of the Church.”

“Father Cutler did not suffer himself to be rebaptized, stating that he would not sever the tie between himself and Joseph Smith.”¹²³

A similar pattern followed in regard to priesthood ordinations and other ordinances. Just as previous baptisms needed to be performed anew, priesthood ordinations, with the exception of Cutler’s own, were considered invalid. Even those men Cutler ordained between 1846 and 1853 were reordained under the new organization. The recording of the first reordinations refers to this process as a “reconfirmation” of the priesthood, suggesting that the men would have considered themselves previously possessed of ecclesiastical authority.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, reordinations, like rebaptisms were more than a formality. This was the design of a new people. Cutlerites frequently proclaimed that their movement received the priesthood entirely through Alpheus Cutler.¹²⁵ These reordinations were a crucial step in forming an independent body of the Restoration, no longer linked to any other group.

The process of reordination provides insight into Cutler’s methods of leadership. Whereas, he could have promptly organized the church hierarchy with all of its quorums as they existed in Nauvoo (the resources were available), he opted to begin a slow process, lasting several years, of reordaining individuals as they proved themselves faithful. Cutler was less concerned with organization than with the development of his followers. When Cutlerites were eventually chosen by church leaders to receive reordination, those who had served as elders and high priests were ordained to the office

¹²³ Fletcher and Fletcher, *Alpheus Cutler and the Church of Jesus Christ*, 54.

¹²⁴ List of ordinations, box 1, folder 1, Church Records.

¹²⁵ Minutes of church meeting, January 8, 1860, box 1, folder 1, Church Records. Cutler himself stated that “the Priesthood the people of Manti had got, had come from him, and if they did not use it right he would take it from them, and take it home.”

they previously possessed. However, Cutler ordained those men who had been seventies, the most popular priesthood office in Nauvoo, to the office of high priest.

In Manti, religious life revolved around *advancement*. The Cutlerites, as a community, strived to advance to greater righteousness to eventually be worthy of Zion. As individuals, they sought self-mastery in order to be considered for advancement in the priesthood.¹²⁶ Males were ordained first priests in the Aaronic Priesthood, then elders in the Melchizedek Priesthood, and finally high priests. Cutlerite sermons from this period stressed the essential nature of the office of high priest. Yet during an 1860 church service, Cutler warned his followers not to think that even the high priest ordination was sufficient, for there were “two keys” remaining, an allusion to ordination as a king and priest through the second anointing ceremony associated with the Holy Order and later with the temple in Nauvoo.¹²⁷ This was the same ritual that had provided Alpheus Cutler with the *fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood* and was thought to guarantee exaltation for its recipients.¹²⁸ These final *keys*, along with the preliminary endowment ceremony, pertained to entrance in the Kingdom of God.

In 1868, Cutlerite leader Calvin G. Fletcher declared that “this Church stands in a different situation [than the Church in 1844] and of the most belonging to the Kingdom.”¹²⁹ Cutlerites distinguished between the kingdom order, which according to their understanding, came to mean a governing quorum of seven men, and the kingdom in a broader-sense consisting of all those who had advanced. When a man or woman, received the temple ordinances, they became a part of the kingdom. According to many

¹²⁶ See for example, conference minutes, October 6, 1863, box 1, folder 2, Church Records.

¹²⁷ Minutes of church meeting, January 29, 1860, box 1, folder 1, Church Records.

¹²⁸ See David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness*, 58–68.

¹²⁹ Conference minutes, April 6, 1868, box 1, folder 7, Church Records.

Cutlerite sermons of the period, Alpheus Cutler was building a kingdom of priests. One was first a member of the church and then advanced to the kingdom.

Cutler's reorganization stemmed from his theology: namely, the concept that the church was subordinate to the Kingdom of God. The Times of Israel, with its corresponding rejection of the earlier church, demanded the creation of a new organization; and thus, in 1853, Cutler acted under the authority of the kingdom to reorganize the Church of Jesus Christ.

Church Government

While the basic framework for the church followed the 1844 church organization, there were several innovations, reflecting Cutler's views of changing times. Most noticeably within Cutler's 1853 reorganization, is the absence of three major priesthood offices: apostle, seventy, and bishop; and the additions of two unique positions in the hierarchy: church president and church interpreter.

Nevertheless, at the founding meeting of the Church of Jesus Christ, only three positions were recognized. According to the minutes, "firstly Br. Alpheus Cutler [was] chosen our head or chief councilor and sustained by a unanimous vote. Secondly Br. Edmund Fisher [was] chosen and sustained as President of the Church of Jesus Christ by clear vote. Thirdly Chauncey Whiting [was] chosen and sustained as Clerk of the Church of Jesus Christ by clear vote."¹³⁰ Later, both Alpheus Cutler as the president of the Melchezidek Priesthood and Edmund Fisher as president of the church had two counselors to assist them in their responsibilities.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Organization of the Church, September 19, 1853, box 1, folder 1, Church Records.

¹³¹ Conference minutes, April 6, 1856, box 1, folder 1, Church Records.

The division between Cutler's role as *head or chief councilor* and Fisher's role as president of the church was based on a precedence left by Joseph Smith. As Joseph Smith had desired to make Hyrum Smith the prophet in Joseph's place, Alpheus Cutler had instituted a position below his own to deal with the *business affairs* of the church organization. However, the comparison between Cutler's organization and Joseph's proposal to have Hyrum take over the office of prophet is limited. The Church of Jesus Christ did not consider Edmund Fisher to be a prophet. Alpheus Cutler was clearly the prophet in his position of chief councilor. Rather Fisher's position consisted of day-to-day affairs.

Cutler's position of chief counselor was a not-so-veiled reference to his position in the Council of Fifty. In the Kingdom of God meetings in Nauvoo, the council was ranked according to age. In 1853, seventy-three year old, John Smith was the only surviving Council of Fifty member ranked ahead of Alpheus Cutler. Considering John Smith out of the quorum, Cutler was thus the eldest member of the Council of Fifty. If in 1853, Joseph Smith were alive and still meeting with his council, Cutler would have been the first-voice in the meeting— Smith's right-hand man or chief councilor.

The addition of a church presidency does not suggest that Cutler was forming a more complicated church hierarchy than the original. Rather, Cutler separated the operational side of the church from the charismatic. The existence of a church president allowed Cutler to focus on receiving revelation—acting in the role of a traditional prophet. Of course, dividing the two positions may have appealed to Cutler for another reason; in 1853, he was nearly seventy years old and it had become important for others to assist him with the day-to-day direction of his people.

Cutler did eventually establish a more practical church government, including priesthood quorums: first, an elders' quorum in 1856; a priests' quorum in 1857; and finally, a high priests' quorum in 1858.¹³² On April 6 1858, Alpheus was sustained in a second role as president of the high priests' quorum.¹³³ These quorums seem to have largely followed their Nauvoo precursors. Yet unlike Nauvoo, the Church of Jesus Christ had neither a quorum of apostles nor a quorum of seventies. As has been suggested, such variants can only be understood by considering Cutler's theology— in this case, as it relates to the Times of Israel.

Between 1835 and 1844, the specific responsibilities of the quorum of twelve apostles, under Joseph Smith, gradually developed.¹³⁴ The initial concept of the apostleship was a travelling council providing leadership over evangelistic efforts and church government outside the organized Stakes. Those in the position of seventy acted as assistants to this missionary and leadership effort. Eventually, under the apostolic administration of post-martyrdom Nauvoo, the offices of apostle and seventy evolved into a new level of prominence throughout the church.¹³⁵

The exclusion of a quorum of twelve apostles in the Cutlerite Church has caused many scholars familiar with typical Mormon ecclesiastical structure to wonder at the cause.¹³⁶ For example, D. Michael Quinn has suggested that Alpheus Cutler secretly accepted the original twelve apostles as the legitimate head of the Restoration. In this

¹³² Box 1, folder 1, Church Records.

¹³³ Conference minutes, April 6, 1858, box 1, folder 2, Church Records.

¹³⁴ Ronald K. Esplin, "Joseph, Brigham, and the Twelve: A Succession of Continuity," *BYU Studies* 21 (1981): 308–12.

¹³⁵ See William G. Hartley, "Nauvoo Stake, Priesthood Quorums, and the Church's First Wards," *BYU Studies* 32 (1991): 1–20.

¹³⁶ See, for example, Danny L. Jorgensen, "Fiery Darts of the Adversary: An Interpretation of Early Cutlerism," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 10 (1990): 77.

theory, because there could be only one quorum of twelve apostles, Cutler did not establish their rivals in his organization.¹³⁷ Quinn cites as evidence, the report of a private statement by Cutler to his grandson Abraham Alonzo Kimball: “I know that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God, and I know that Brigham Young is his legal successor, and I always did know it!”¹³⁸

However, the absence of the seventy, as seen in the church records, must be seen as a complementary anomaly. Both quorums were in charge of missionary efforts outside of the central gathering of the Saints. Joseph Smith’s revelations had not placed a limit to the number of seventies who could be appointed in the church; thus, even if Quinn’s suggestion is correct concerning the Twelve, this could not also be true of the seventy. Cutler could have ordained members of the seventy without rivaling the twelve, but did not.

Of course, the serious flaw in this theory is that it privileges the private account of a single and likely biased memoir to Cutler’s own well documented views and actions. Quinn’s idea requires a belief that Alpheus Cutler, though bold in his statements concerning a rejection of the church, was hesitant in doing anything that would officially sever the two organizations.

The reorganization of the twelve apostles would have been meaningless in Manti. Missionary work had not been a focus since the establishment of Cutler’s church. Specifically, the absence of the quorum of twelve was an outgrowth of Cutler’s views regarding proselytizing during the Times of Israel. Alpheus Cutler believed that the

¹³⁷ D. Michael Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, 209.

¹³⁸ Cited in Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, 209.

authority to perform missionary work among the Native Americans had been re-invested in the Council of Fifty, which included him, rather than the twelve apostles.

The missing office of bishop is somewhat more unusual in a community that emphasized the law of consecration as a means to redeem Zion. Bishops had traditionally directed the church's communal efforts, as Luman Calkins did as a bishop in the Silver Creek Branch. Like other colonies, the bishop worked alongside the branch president, as one of the two essential community officers. Yet, once Cutler reorganized the church, Calkins ceased to function in his temporal capacity.

On December 9, 1877, over a decade after Cutler's death, a Cutlerite council debated the propriety of having a bishop in the church.¹³⁹ Two suggestions were offered to explain why Cutler had been reluctant to utilize the position. First, it was suggested that the position of bishop belonged to Luman Calkins by right and because Alpheus Cutler knew "what kind of man he was, did not want him to for one."¹⁴⁰ In the Silver Creek Branch, Calkins had considered himself Cutler's right hand man.¹⁴¹ On January 22, 1858, however, Calkins had been excommunicated for "unlawful acts with his daughter" and his reputation in the church had been greatly diminished.¹⁴²

Why was it Calkins' right to be the community bishop? According to an 1831 revelation, a man had a "legal right" to the office of bishop if he was a firstborn son of Aaron.¹⁴³ Calkin's patriarchal blessing declares his lineage was not Levi through Aaron,

¹³⁹ Conference minutes, December 9, 1877, box 1, folder 11, Church Records.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Jorgensen, "Conflict in the Camps of Israel," 41.

¹⁴² Minutes of high council, April 22, 1858, box 1, folder 1, Church Records.

¹⁴³ Doctrine and Covenants 68:15–21.

but through Ephraim.¹⁴⁴ Though frequently referred to as the royal bloodline, lineage through Ephraim did not provide Calkins any right to the office of bishop. So, then, why were some under the impression that Calkins would have been the obvious choice for bishop of the colony? The answer is that Luman Calkins had previously served as the community bishop before the 1853 reorganization. At some point before 1853, this ordination, as all others, had ceased to be recognized.

Yet, in the December 9, 1877 meeting, one Cutlerite reasoned that just as all priesthood offices were reordained in their exact same position as previous to the Cutlerite reorganization, Cutler would have felt the necessity to appoint Calkins to his old calling. For early Cutlerites, with few exceptions, such as priesthood advancement, callings were permanent throughout a man's association with the church. Being released from a position, without attaining to a higher rank, seems to have been reserved strictly as a method of rebuke.

On the other hand, another Cutlerite provided a counter-argument for the lack of a bishop, arguing that the true cause was the unique situation of the Cutlerite people: they had a prophet who could act as the mediator over consecration, rather than provide a tier of middle management to the church hierarchy. The responsibility of consecration was too essential for the redemption of Zion to be delegated to another. According to this argument, "the people would take a step down to have a bishop."¹⁴⁵

Though this is a reasonable suggestion, it would appear that the financial concerns of the church were decided by the council of high priests, rather than invested to one man, whether it was a bishop or Alpheus Cutler. Instead, the reason Cutler failed to add

¹⁴⁴ Pliney Fisher, "Pliney Fisher Patriarchal Blessing Book," Community of Christ Archives.

¹⁴⁵ Conference minutes, December 9, 1877, box 1, folder 11, Church Records.

the position of bishop was the anticipation of the church's return to Zion. A bishop who established inheritances for the Saints seemed advantageous for a permanent structure, but not so much for a church that saw itself on the verge of an exodus.

There is one position in the Cutlerite Church hierarchy that has never been duplicated in other expressions of the Restoration—the church interpreter. In 1860, Alpheus Cutler ordained Squire Eggleston to the calling of an interpreter. With that ordination, Eggleston became responsible for interpreting the spiritual gift of tongues, a practice that was quite prevalent among the early Cutlerites. Like other church leaders, Eggleston was sustained (that is publically recognized and symbolically ratified) annually in his position during general conference. He frequently spoke in church meetings concerning the spiritual gifts and was more often called upon to use his power of interpretation. On at least one occasion, Squire Eggleston provided the interpretation for a patriarchal blessing that had been revealed through the gift of tongues.¹⁴⁶

Cutler's institution of this office cannot be explained by the earlier theological discussion. Rather this position seems to be practical. The gift of tongues, if interpreted by fringe members, could have disastrous results. Thus, Cutler chose a trusted follower to define the gift. Ultimately, the calling of interpreter became established in the Cutlerite psyche and would be seen as an integral part of the church organization.

With Eggleston's excommunication in the 1860s, another interpreter was appointed to fill his place. With the loss of a major portion of church membership at this time, there was a shift in the practice of spiritual gifts during public meetings. A discussion of seemingly spiritual dreams replaced the manifestations of tongues. Again,

¹⁴⁶ Patriarchal blessing given to Chancey Whiting, February 1, 1856, box 1, folder 4, Church Records.

the calling of interpreter was re-envisioned to meet the need to explain and define spiritual dreams.¹⁴⁷ The office of interpreter existed through the turn of the century, but disappeared from the records by the 1920s.

Conclusion

Individuals have often wondered why the Cutlerite ecclesiastical organization looks so different from that of other Restoration churches. This includes the major absence of the quorum of twelve apostles and the separation of the church president from the president of the priesthood. This chapter argued that Alpheus Cutler developed the distinct Cutlerite Church structure as he was guided by the theology of early Mormonism, yet determined by his own specific doctrinal emphasis. Specifically, the theological seeds of the Nauvoo period were already sown in the group's thought, from at least the Silver Creek period. This thought process included primarily three doctrinal focuses: first, the Cutlerites asserted that there was a kingdom order in authority above The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; second, a new era was ushered in following the assassination of Joseph Smith and the delayed completion of the Nauvoo Temple; and, third, the redemption of Zion and the return of the Saints to Jackson County were imminent events, yet could only be brought about through the advancement of the Saints individually and collectively, by living the necessary laws of consecration.

This theological formula was based on a Nauvoo precedent and established in the Cutlerite psyche in Silver Creek. It later formed the ecclesiastical organization of the newly organized Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerite). Their understanding of the priesthood

¹⁴⁷ See for example, minutes of council meeting (February 8, 1885), box 2, folder 2, Church Records.

above the church, justified the reorganization, allowed the Cutlerites to bring the prophet position out of the every-day mundane responsibility of leading a religious group, and instituted an understanding of advancement. The Cutlerite understanding of the Times of Israel rendered unnecessary the offices of apostle and seventy. A zeal for the Redemption of Zion overshadowed more organized efforts of consecration; thus, the community had no functioning bishop.

It is worthwhile to consider a counter argument to my thesis; namely, that Alpheus Cutler had a limited number of resources from which to draw his leadership. Therefore, he organized his ecclesiastical structure based on constraints—namely lack of manpower. According to this line of reasoning, his theology then developed in response to his restrictions. This paradigm is useful for explaining the structural changes that have occurred within the church in the twentieth-century. A lack of resources demanded that the Cutlerites begin to use women in church positions that would have otherwise been reserved solely for men. For example, during a 1956 conference, President Clyde Fletcher stated: “I think we are short on officers. The only way I can see how to work is to put Amy Whiting in as acting secretary until other arrangements can be made.”¹⁴⁸ Another example of the reluctant use of women is the case of Edna Fletcher, from whom we are indebted for access to the wealth of Cutlerite records. In 1960, she was called as custodian of the church records, and in 1963, as church historian.¹⁴⁹ Likewise, a lack of males explains the late twentieth-century practice of one man serving both as a member of the presidency of the church and the presidency of the Melchezidek Priesthood.

¹⁴⁸ Minutes of conference (October 6, 1956), box 2, folder 8, Church Records.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*; Minutes of Conference (April 6, 1963), box 2, folder 8, Church Records.

Yet this paradigm does not sufficiently explain the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ. Despite having limited numbers, Cutler certainly had enough members to form a quorum of twelve apostles. This was the first step undertaken in other organizations, including the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Cutler's first step was to divide the office of church president from the president of the kingdom. This peculiar decision and others have been explained within the context of Cutlerite theology. In addition, because these doctrines predated the Cutlerite church we can be sure they did not develop in response to constraints brought about by structure.

Since the death of Alpheus Cutler, the Cutlerites have gone through changes, such as their use of female adherents to perform tasks previously done only by males. The community no longer believes in the ease of revelation and the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and dreams have gradually diminished. Even the President of the Priesthood—the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator—Stan Whiting waits with his church, for the coming “Moses man,” a messianic figure, who will redeem Zion and unite the Restoration.¹⁵⁰

Following the 1920s, the Cutlerites found themselves enmeshed in interdenominational discussions in Jackson County, Missouri. Their participation in this theological dialogue helped them redefine themselves as a church. Cutlerites today do not stress their identity through Alpheus Cutler— rather, they look back to Joseph Smith. They have taken the view that Joseph Smith instituted the only teachings of Mormonism that should be considered canonical. Thus, Cutlerites defend the Lectures on Faith and the 1844 version of the Doctrine and Covenants, as Joseph Smith, not Alpheus Cutler, was the lawgiver to this dispensation.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Stan Whiting, February 4, 2002.

The Cutlerites, however, have not forgotten Joseph Smith’s vision of an esoteric gospel. According to an important Cutlerite president and theologian, Rupert J. Fletcher:

Few people grasp the greatness of the plan of salvation as held forth in the scriptures, because of the unwritten part which they never see and never know, unless they advance far enough to be taken through the higher order of the priesthood, as these things are handed down from one generation to another and this is the only way they are obtained.¹⁵¹

The Church of Jesus Christ has preserved this “higher order” in the upper room of their chapel through the perpetuation of endowment ceremonies associated with the Nauvoo Temple.

Structurally, the movement seems to have followed a similar pattern under Cutler’s successors. A bishop was eventually appointed and after relocating to Minnesota, the church instituted a more enduring form of the United Order. The separation of church president and president of the Melchizedek Priesthood remains a crucial component of the Cutlerite worldview—even when the lack of priesthood holders forces some men to serve in both presidencies.

¹⁵¹ Rupert J. Fletcher, *The Scattered Children of Zion* (Independence, Mo.: privately published, 1959), 43.

CHAPTER 4:

CHARLES B. THOMPSON AND THE USE OF NARRATIVE THEOLOGY TO
ALLEVIATE THE TENSIONS OF INNOVATION

In their adolescence, religions often formulate a permanent canon of scripture. They find a consensus on which written works are acceptable as the standard of faith and which works belong only on the shelves of heretical dissenters. Such a process leads to the development of a religious orthodoxy. The canon of scripture consigns the phenomenon of divine revelation to earlier times. And, most importantly, it ensures that new *heresies* are unable to claim scriptural legitimacy. As a result, for many established religious traditions, debates over scripture revolve around the interpretation or weight of key passages. This sort of scriptural rivalry is familiar to many: whether across the dinner table, over the pulpit, or in the academic classroom. These contests, limited to a common scriptural tradition (e.g. the bible) have played a role in the fissuring of theologically orthodox forms of Christianity. Even with the benefit of a universal text, schismatic bodies can find support for heterodox beliefs.

This essay examines rival narratives being produced either in the period before traditions *close* their canons or when radical movements ignore the constraints imposed by the orthodox majority. Rather than merely debate the details of worn passages, innovators can appeal to entirely new sources. Continuing the prophet's craft, they can develop fresh sources by which they work out the issues of their times through sacred lore.

The scholarship of Elaine Pagels examines this process as it occurred in early Christianity before the biblical canon was established. An expert in twentieth-century

Gnostic discoveries, Pagels has shown how texts such as the Gospel of Thomas or the recently unearthed Gospel of Judas were written as rebuttals of mainstream scriptural accounts and vice-a-versa. She paints a portrait of diverse Christian sects each relying on scriptures credited to a specific follower of Jesus of Nazareth. The story of their struggles for dominance, or at the very least, the struggle for legitimacy is documented within these accounts. However, she notes that these scriptural conflicts “involve more than power struggles: they involve the substance of Christian faith. As the stories themselves show, at stake is the central question of Who is Jesus, and what is the gospel (good news) about?”¹⁵²

Her point: scriptural rivalry is not *only* about power, but about subverting those teachings opposed to the *true* interpretation of the Christian faith. Pagels suggests that the Gospel of John’s introduction of the figure of *Doubting Thomas*, while simultaneously emphasizing the divinity of Jesus, is an attempt to undermine the Thomas Christians and their more-human understanding of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, the heterodox Gospel of Judas features narratives designed to undermine the authority of those that considered themselves followers of Peter. Beyond the power struggle, the second-century scripture responds to Christians’ zeal to die unnecessarily as martyrs. But it is the teaching of second-century theologians that advocate these “human sacrifices” and, thus, concerns the author of Judas. The narrative that seeks to reformulate early Christian ideas of martyrdom presents a scene in which the twelve apostles dream that twelve priests offer a sacrifice of their own wives and children. They turn to Christ for the proper interpretation of this disturbing vision and are told that it was the apostles

¹⁵² Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*, 63-64.

themselves who offered the unholy sacrifices.¹⁵³ This type of scriptural rivalry has occurred frequently in religious history, whether with Mahayana Buddhists in first-century India or with the Moorish Science Temple, a heterodox Muslim sect in the twentieth-century United States.

Kathleen Flake, scholar of Mormon history, documents a similar approach in the religion-making of Joseph Smith. Flake goes so far as to credit Smith's success to his use of narrative "to challenge the Christian tradition in ways not possible through discursive debate or speculative theology."¹⁵⁴ Unlike other Christian bodies of the time, who exchanged "creedal statement and dogmatic restatement" to define their communities, "Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, wrote stories."¹⁵⁵

Thus, this study is informed by both Flake's study of Mormon narrative and Pagel's study of sectarian rivalry. Here, our focus will be on the time period following Smith's death and the subsequent atomization of the Mormon tradition. Previous studies have demonstrated how those prophets who followed Smith reproduced, if not mimicked, the *process* of his revelatory gift in order to cement their own legitimacy as religion-makers.¹⁵⁶ Here, we will discover a more sophisticated borrowing from Joseph Smith – the use of narrative theology. Through probing Inspired Enoch, a scripture produced in

¹⁵³ Elaine Pagels and Karen L. King, *Reading Judas: The Gospel of Judas and the Shaping of Christianity* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 59-75.

¹⁵⁴ Kathleen Flake, "Translating Time: The Nature and Function of Joseph Smith's Narrative Canon." *Journal of Religion* 87, no. 4 (October 2007): 500.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 497.

¹⁵⁶ D. Michael Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, 209-212; Robin Scott Jensen, "Mormons Seeking Mormonism: Strangite Success and the Conceptualization of Mormon Ideology, 1844-50" in *Scattering of the Saints: Schism with Mormonism*, ed. Newell G. Bringhurst and John C. Hamer (Independence, Mo.: John Whitmer Books, 2007):115-140. See also Roger Van Noord, *King of Beaver Island: The Life and Assassination of James Jesse Strang* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1988), 33-35. For a discussion of "process" in the ministry of Joseph Smith, see, Terryl Givens, "Joseph Smith: Prophecy, Process, and Plenitude" in *Joseph Smith Jr.: Reappraisals after Two Centuries*, ed. Reid L. Neilson and Terryl L. Givens (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 107-117.

the decade following Smith's death, we will find that, like the early Christians, dissenting thinkers within Mormonism used the medium of story to provide the Saints usable alternatives to the formidable position of Brigham Young.

The Book of Enoch

In 1773, James Bruce, a British explorer, returned from a journey through modern-day Ethiopia where he discovered what had become for the Western world a lost book of the Bible, the Book of Enoch. Ancient peoples among both Jews and Christians accepted the tome attributed to the patriarch that, according to the biblical record, “walked with God and ...was not; for God took him.”¹⁵⁷ Even the Epistle of Jude, included in the traditional Western canon, quoted from the lost (but not forgotten) text.¹⁵⁸ However, Ethiopia remained unaffected by the councils that shaped Western Christian thought, and there the volume survived as part of an alternative canon. For nearly fifty years, Bruce's discovery was housed at the Bodleian library at Oxford, until in 1821, Richard Laurence, a professor and Anglican clergyman translated the ancient scripture into English.¹⁵⁹ Due to ongoing interest, at least four editions of his work appeared over the next several decades.¹⁶⁰ Yet, no Christian denominations embraced the controversial work. According to Brigham Young University professor, Hugh Nibley, “the Christian ministry of all denominations neither liked Laurence's Enoch nor wanted it. It was not

¹⁵⁷ Genesis 5:24.

¹⁵⁸ Jude 1:14-15.

¹⁵⁹ For a concise history and commentary of the Book of Enoch, see Margaret Barker, *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and its Influence on Christianity* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005).

¹⁶⁰ *The Book of Enoch, the Prophet : an Apocryphal Production, Supposed for Ages to Have Been Lost...*, trans. Richard Laurence (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1821,1830, 1833, 1883). Thompson seems to have used the 1838 edition for his translation.

circulated by them but suppressed.”¹⁶¹ The story of the Book of Enoch in the Restoration was a different one altogether. After all, Mormons were understandably sympathetic to the idea of newly discovered holy books.

With the publication of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith opened the canon closed by Christian councils over a millennium before resulting in a rich tradition of new and restored scriptures. The purportedly ancient American scripture promised further holy books: the Brass Plates, an extended 600 BCE Old Testament collection; the records of the Lost Ten Tribes; and the Sealed Portion, a continuation of the Book of Mormon text. Later, Joseph Smith produced further revelations which predicted the return of more lost records: the Book of Joseph of Egypt, the Book of John the Baptist, and the Book of Enoch.

After the death of Joseph Smith, numerous Mormon prophets brought forth their own contributions titled after the promised volumes. For example, in 1850, James Strang published the Book of the Law of the Lord, a purported translation of the brass plates. At least four prophets have brought forth the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon.¹⁶² And Charles B. Thompson, an early Mormon apologist turned sectarian prophet, published the Book of Enoch “Revised, corrected and the missing parts restored by Divine Inspiration....”

This work, which is here termed Inspired Enoch, was to Laurence’s translation of the Book of Enoch what the Inspired Version or Joseph Smith Translation was to the King James Version of the Bible. Charles Thompson’s Inspired Enoch is a thoroughly

¹⁶¹ Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1986), 107.

¹⁶² Steven Shields, “Revelation in the Latter Day Saint Movement: Prophets, Seers, and Revelators in the Modern Era,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 29 (2009), 141.

Mormon scripture, capturing both in content and concept key elements of Joseph Smith's scriptural tradition. Published in 1852-53, the singular production of *Inspired Enoch* offers insights for understanding nineteenth-century Mormonism as it existed outside of Utah. *Inspired Enoch* was an attempt at producing a scriptural response to the controversial theology of mid-century Mormonism namely plural marriage and the plurality of gods. An outgrowth of the continuing controversy over prophetic succession was a conflict between rival factions, rival thinkers, and rival theologies. The Utah faction embraced Joseph Smith's controversial doctrines of the Nauvoo period and with scriptural precedence, largely borrowed from the patriarchal narratives of Genesis and the still secret revelations of Joseph Smith, they defended their understanding of the Mormon faith. *Inspired Enoch* produced legitimacy for Thompson's rival ideology by returning to the figure of Enoch, who is portrayed as a staunch monogamist. Thus, narrative theology again had utility for prophets of Mormonism as they shaped their understanding of what it meant to be a Latter-day Saint and rivaled competing and, in their minds, dangerous voices.

Ethiopian Enoch and the Restoration

In the summer of 1830, Joseph Smith began his 'translation' of the bible with a new narrative of Moses beginning just before the first chapter of Genesis and continuing into the traditional text, chapter by chapter. The newly minted prophet modified, edited, and amended the text. In December, Smith arrived at the first reference to Enoch in the fifth chapter of Genesis when he recorded the following in his journal:

Much conjecture and conversation frequently occurred among the Saints, concerning the books mentioned, and referred to, in various places in the Old and

New Testaments, which were now nowhere to be found. The common remark was, “They are lost books”; but it seems the Apostolic Church had some of these writings, as Jude mentions or quotes the Prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam.¹⁶³

Smith then produced a largely expanded version of the Genesis account. When finally published, the text extended the traditional 5 verses into 110 verses.¹⁶⁴ Smith introduced details about the enigmatic prophet that “God took,” providing details of his ministry which foresaw the coming of the flood. Enoch established Zion, a holy city, which God removed from the Earth to preserve it from the impending destruction. The newly restored prophecies pointed to the coming millennium when the City of Enoch would return to meet a last days Zion established by the Saints. According to Philip Barlow, in Enoch’s narrative, “the sacred past merged with the Mormon present and future.”¹⁶⁵ In the story of the City of Enoch, the Mormons had a myth in which to encourage their own utopian endeavors, thereafter, referred to as the Order of Enoch.

Scholars have debated whether Joseph Smith himself may have been familiar with the 1821 edition of the *Book of Enoch* and used it as a source text for his own Enoch narrative.¹⁶⁶ To be sure, Charles Thompson was not the first Mormon to discover Laurence’s translation. The earliest definite reference to the “lost book” appeared in the *Millennial Star* in July, 1840.¹⁶⁷ When the early Mormon theologian, Parley P. Pratt, discovered the Book of Enoch, he was ecstatic. Within its pages he saw evidence both

¹⁶³ Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, by himself*, 2nd rev. edition, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: The Deseret Book Company, 1957), 131-133.

¹⁶⁴ Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 138.

¹⁶⁵ Philip Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 49.

¹⁶⁶ See D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, Revised and Enlarged* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 190-192; Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 105-106; Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 138.

¹⁶⁷ Parley P. Pratt, “The Apocryphal Book of Enoch,” *Millennial Star* 1 (July 1840): 61.

for the scripture's ancient origins and more importantly, for Pratt, prophecies of the Mormon restoration. Enoch had predicted:

the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and the mission of our Elders, which they are now performing among the nations, together with the late persecution which has befallen our people in America, with the conduct of the rulers of that Republic, in refusing to give us redress; yes, in fact, it predicts the final result of that matter, and the complete triumph of the saints.¹⁶⁸

Following an enthusiastic introduction, the early apostle presented a small portion of the text “without further comment, [leaving] our readers to form their own judgment in regard to this remarkable book.”¹⁶⁹

Over the next two centuries, many other Saints across denominational factions became interested in the Book of Enoch. One early example is Warren Post who included notes from the text in his diary. As might be expected of a nineteenth-century Saint, Post was particularly interested in Enoch's references to various angelic beings and their prescribed responsibilities.¹⁷⁰ In the late 1860s, the *Saints' Herald*, the official periodical of the RLDS Church, serialized Laurence's translation of the Book of Enoch. In the mid-1900s, Mormon Fundamentalists discovered the text. Numerous authors published excerpts with particular emphasis on Enoch's symbolism-rich “prophecy of the ten weeks,” an apocalyptic timeline.¹⁷¹ Later in the century, LDS scholars from Brigham Young University, including Hugh Nibley, would probe the work in great detail. These apologists sought to demonstrate the ancient nature of Joseph Smith's narratives of Enoch by appealing to similarities in the Ethiopian record and other ancient Enoch literature.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Warren Post, Warren Post Diaries, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

¹⁷¹ See for example, Francis M. Darter, *Michael Adam God* (Salt Lake City: Self Published, 1949) and Ross Wesley LeBaron, *Proclamation....* (Salt Lake City: Self Published, 1964.)

There have been numerous Saints interested in this mysterious book with its discussion of angels, prophets, and highly symbolic visions. Of course, this point could be overemphasized. If a theologically-minded, perhaps apologetically motivated, class of Mormon thinkers read and discussed the Book of Enoch, it never held a place within the average Saint's psyche. But, Charles Blancher Thompson was a prime example of a Mormon thinker.

Like many who united with the fledgling church, Thompson was engrossed in the concept of modern-day revelation and the coming forth of ancient records. In 1841, he published *Evidences in Proof of the Book of Mormon*, a 255-page volume, which received high praise within Mormonism as one of the first defenses of the Book of Mormon.¹⁷² Thompson's passion for scripture likely played a role in his attraction to the prophetic leadership of James Strang, as depicted in a poem he wrote in 1846: "For the Prophet Joseph's dead/ And the Lord through him hath said,/ James I've planted in his stead, / To lead the Church in Righteousness. / And a holy Angel then, / Brought the interpreters to him; / That he might translate for them, / Ancient Records sacredly. / Even James he now inspires, / Yea, his heart he truly fires; / With the light that he desires, / For the work of Righteousness. / In Voree the plates were found,/ Showing who were there cut down; / Unto James the same were shown, / And he translated sacredly."¹⁷³ The poem extolled the new prophet for his ability to bring forth scripture, including his gift of translation as evidenced by the discovery of the Voree Plates.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² *Times and Seasons* 3 (Jan 1, 1842): 640-644.

¹⁷³ *Voree Herald* 1 (August 1846): 36.

¹⁷⁴ Strang purportedly discovered the Voree plates near Burlington, Wisconsin. His angel-guide offered him the same urim and thummim device provided to Joseph Smith by the angel Moroni. From the three small brass plates, he produced a translation of two paragraphs: a record left by Rajah Manchou of

Beyond the scriptural tradition continued by Strang, Thompson saw in this successor of Joseph Smith a continuation of the church's ecclesiastical structure. He left Strang's movement only after he determined that God had earlier rejected the church as an organization.¹⁷⁵ Like other dissenters of the period, Thompson believed that the Saints' delay in completing the temple in Nauvoo had resulted in the fulfillment of a divine warning received through Joseph Smith. The same revelation that commanded the construction of the edifice, cautioned that, following a "sufficient time" to complete the work, the disobedient Saints would "be rejected as a church."¹⁷⁶ If there was no church, Thompson concluded, there was no need for a President of the Church, no matter how closely his (Strang's) leadership paralleled Smith's.¹⁷⁷ In January of 1848, Thompson had his first experience with with the production of scripture. According to his account, he heard a voice, which announced itself as Baneemy, the true successor of Joseph Smith.¹⁷⁸ Thompson, not unlike a Spiritualist medium of the time, recorded the utterances of this unseen messenger who was in turn the conduit of divine revelation. The image is Thompson as a scribe analogous to the role of Oliver Cowdery, who recorded much of Smith's recital of the Book of Mormon translation. Later in his career, Thompson claimed the title of Baneemy for himself.

Vorito, the lone survivor of an ancient civilization destroyed as a result of wickedness and war. The Voree Plates concludes with a prophecy of Strang. For further information, see Vickie Speek, *God Has Made Us a Kingdom: James Strang and the Midwest Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006), 24-26; Roger Van Noord, *King of Beaver Island*, 33-36.

¹⁷⁵ Bill Shepard has documented the concept of early Mormonism becoming a "rejected people" throughout the Restoration. See Bill Shepard, "The Concept of a 'Rejected Gospel' in Mormon History, Part 1." *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 2 (Spring, 2008): 130-181; "The Concept of a 'Rejected Gospel' in Mormon History, Part 2." *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 3 (Summer, 2008): 142-186.

¹⁷⁶ Doctrine and Covenants [LDS Edition] 124: 32-33.

¹⁷⁷ Charles B. Thompson to James J. Strang, April 29, 1848 in *Zion's Harbinger and Baneemy's Organ*[*ZHBO*] 2, no. 3 (March, 1852):22-24.

¹⁷⁸ *ZHBO* 2, no. 8 (August 1852), 61.

In 1848, the prophet-still-acting-as-medium organized his movement initially titled Jehovah's Presbytery of Zion.¹⁷⁹ Previous to his revision of the Ethiopian Enoch, Thompson had produced several revelations through Baneemy's voice, in addition to what he termed "true translations" of biblical excerpts. Without a question, Thompson quickly became one of the most prolific of Mormon revelators.

Inspired Enoch appeared in *Zion's Harbinger and Baneemy's Organ*, the Presbytery's official periodical in fourteen installments from October 1852 to December 1853. As this newspaper includes the only known references to Inspired Enoch, we do not know if the new narratives ever obtained substantial use even among the Presbytery's adherents. However, we can be assured that this was Inspired Enoch's intended purpose. There were several occasions in which Thompson and other theologians cited the text of Inspired Enoch in published treatises. Regardless, whether it had a large impact on the Restoration, which it did not, or was read by only a few of the most devoted "Baneemyites," Inspired Enoch provides us with a case study in the Mormon construction of scripture.

The Mormonization of an Ancient Scripture

During the lifetime of Joseph Smith, he alone produced the vast majority of written revelation, certainly the vast majority of that which received scriptural status. With his death, numerous would-be successors claimed to have heard the voice of God for themselves. Others brought forth scriptural records akin to the Book of Mormon. Each would-be prophetic voice built on the framework of revelation Smith had

¹⁷⁹ For a history of Thompson's community, see Junia Braby, "Charles B. Thompson: Harbinger of Zion or Master of Humbuggery?" *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 23 (2003):149-163.

introduced during his ministry. In order to demonstrate the truly unusual nature of Thompson's contribution to this literature, we will consider the four major divisions within the scriptural tradition Smith pioneered: (1) historical translations; (2) faith translations; (3) correction literature; and (4) contemporary revelation.¹⁸⁰ Providing a framework for a study of Latter-day Saint scripture is no simple matter. As Philip Barlow noted, Mormon scripture includes comparatively unconventional forms such as "oral scripture, private scripture, noncanonized scripture, temporary scripture, and others."¹⁸¹ Yet, these four categories broadly encompass the canonized scriptural tradition of Mormonism.

The first category, historical translations, refers to ancient scripture brought forth through a scholarly translation process. For example, if Thompson had canonized Laurence's translation *as is* then it would fall under the category of historical translation. Faith translations, on the other hand, are based on purportedly ancient documents that have undergone an inspired process without verification from academic sources. Traditionally, the biblical text is the exclusive historical translation accepted by the Restoration movement. The Book of Mormon, a record originally written in "Reformed Egyptian" and translated by the "gift and power of God" is a clear example of what we here define as a faith translation.

The third category, correction literature, is an amalgamation of the above two processes. Whereas, faith translations consist of an entirely new restoration of an earlier

¹⁸⁰ When the Book of Commandments (1833) and Doctrine and Covenants (1835) were compiled, they also included documents and public statements, which were considered of importance for the Saints. This category encompasses these portions of the canonized record, in as much as these statements are received by the Saints as "contemporary revelation."

¹⁸¹ Philip Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible*, x.

text, correction literature utilizes a historical translation as the foundation for further inspired modifications, including both additions and subtractions from scholarly productions. The Joseph Smith Translation or Inspired Version of the King James Version of the Bible is the only piece with which most Mormons will be familiar. The fourth category consists of revelations with a tendency to begin with the words “Thus Saith the Lord,” written as if deity himself uttered each word.

Despite the importance ascribed to the Joseph Smith Translation, the production of correction literature ebbed quickly. Or rather it became officially limited to the accepted Old and New Testaments. On March 9, 1833 when Smith arrived at that portion of the Bible referred to as the Apocrypha, he received a revelation that rendered inspired revisions unnecessary for that section:

there are many things contained therein that are true, and it is mostly translated correctly; there are many things therein that are not true, which are the interpolations by the hands of men... Therefore, whoso readeth it, let him understand for the Spirit manifesteth truth; and whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain benefit therefrom...¹⁸²

Although this revelation referred explicitly only to the apocryphal books published in the King James Bible, Restoration churches have drawn from its message when considering whether to include new historical records to the canon or the possibility of prophetically correcting a historical translation. Thus, the answer for established Restoration churches whether they should again open the canon for fresh discoveries of ancient scripture has strongly tended (with few fringe exceptions) to “No.” Individuals are assured that they might gain personal benefit from such records in a private setting,

¹⁸² Doctrine and Covenants (1835), Section XCII; also D&C (LDS), Section 91; D&C (CofC) Section 88.

assuming that they are truly *enlightened by the spirit*. Yet, leaders have found that divine approval or divine editing remains unnecessary based on the March 9, 1833 revelation.

This revelation was a major force in the future development of Mormon scripture. It prevented giving in to the very real tendency to embrace a very large canon; an issue that would have been all the more pressing with the colossal discovery of ancient records in the twentieth century. The concept of correction literature could have allowed for any and all of the world's great works to be mutated into Restoration literature. Yet, as it happened, the prophets of Mormonism have only very seldom produced correction literature. Charles B. Thompson's *Inspired Enoch* is one of very few examples.

Such works demand a level of controversy. The very existence of correction literature implies an accusation against those that brought forth the uncorrected version. When Joseph Smith revised the King James Bible, he suggested at least three means or three culprits possibly responsible for the text's corruption. Smith explained: "I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors."¹⁸³

Despite the glut of scenarios that could have resulted in the mutilation of the text, Charles Thompson offered only one setting for Ethiopian Enoch's corruption. Rather than place the blame ambiguously on apostate or well-meaning scribes in the distant past, his indictment was of modern scholarship. According to an editorial published in *Zion's Harbingers and Baneemy's Organ*, "The English translator [meaning Laurence] has labored hard to cover up the most important, and consequently to this generation the most objectionable truths contained in it." He added a sympathetic explanation of Laurence's

¹⁸³ Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977), 327.

apparent subterfuge stating, that “undoubtedly.... He was conscientious in doing so, thinking thereby to bring the book in better repute among the Christians of the present day.”¹⁸⁴

On one hand, Thompson’s indictment of Laurence as a willful, but “conscientious” fraud was risky. If by some miracle Inspired Enoch received wide distribution, a comparison with the original record would prove that Thompson erred in his revisions.¹⁸⁵ Seen this way, the critique could very well be evidence that Thompson believed his correction literature was genuine. On the other hand, Thompson may have sensed, whether accurately or not, that the real enemy of Mormon scripture was with present-day intellectuals. After all, ancient scholars could not write critiques of nineteenth-century scriptural productions. Thus, he took the offensive when dealing with what was potentially his most serious set of opponents – not Laurence necessarily, but someone with the same claims on intellectual, rather than spiritual, authority.

The amount of Thompson’s contribution to the text varied. In my opinion, the fourteen installments bear signs of having been produced at separate intervals for publication, which might explain the wide-ranging intensity of Thompson’s participation on the text. In some installments, an initial albeit minor reference taken whole cloth from the Book of Enoch begins a several page treatise with no semblance to the original. This occurs notably in the first installment of Inspired Enoch when Thompson includes a mildly corrected version of the first two chapters of Laurence’s translation, before

¹⁸⁴ ZHBO 2 (October 1852): 80

¹⁸⁵ Newer translations demand that we either believe that later scholars were also in on the conspiracy or that Thompson’s revisions were something other than a literal rendering of the original text.

inserting a five page Creation and Garden of Eden narrative.¹⁸⁶ Other installments draw almost exclusively from Laurence's translation. For example, the sixth installment included the almost complete reproduction of Laurence's Enoch chapters 96 through 103 with only minor emendations.¹⁸⁷ Finally, there are occasions in which short phrases from the Book of Enoch are dispersed through passages with only a minor relationship to their original placement.

Taking Thompson's October 1852 comment at face-value, then we must assume that he insisted that the complete manuscript of the Book of Enoch in its Ethiopian incarnation would, when properly translated into English, mirror Inspired Enoch, word-for-word. However, Thompson promised a text "revised and corrected, with the missing parts restored by Divine Inspiration." Giving the St. Louis prophet the benefit of the doubt, we can assume that his statement referred only to that portion that was "revised and corrected," leaving a significant segment of Inspired Enoch to consist of "missing parts restored." Thus, he seems to have claimed that the full Ethiopian text was present in his corrected version, but this reading allows that he was frank about new accompaniments. These interpolations were quite extensive, but not all were original with Thompson, rather he acted in the role of prophet-compiler, a major motif within Mormon scripture. The Book of Mormon was, according to its own assertions, produced under the inspired editorial work of Mormon and his son, Moroni. In the Books of Moses and Abraham, respectively, the protagonists, both of who served as something like divinely-appointed archivists, claimed access to earlier records to which they added their own contributions. Joseph Smith's own revelations were compiled to form new

¹⁸⁶ ZHBO 2, no. 10 (October, 1852):73-78.

¹⁸⁷ ZHBO 3, no. 3 (March, 1853): 17-19.

amalgamated texts in the published editions of the Book of Commandments or Doctrine and Covenants. In this tradition, Inspired Enoch is a conglomerate text consisting of Laurence's translation of the Book of Enoch, the Book of Jasher, revelations of Joseph Smith, the published excerpts of the Joseph Smith Translation, (i.e. the Book of Moses and the Prophecies of Enoch). The Book of Jasher, another recently discovered apocryphal text documenting the history of the patriarchs, represented as much of the text of Inspired Enoch as the Book of Enoch itself.¹⁸⁸ Other portions bear a clear resemblance to the narrative of the ritual endowment drama performed within the Nauvoo Temple and the creation account of the Book of Abraham. Of course, as in Thompson's creation narrative published in the first installment, there were occasions in which he produced these missing parts entirely "from scratch" – so to speak.

Thompson never mentioned his sources. The October 1852 statement is the only extant explanation of the text. One fact is certain: we do not know that Thompson concealed the origin of his writings from his followers in order to perpetrate a fraud. It is possible that he was not forthcoming with his references in order to maintain an aura of mystique surrounding his new publication. In fact, instead of deliberately misleading his audience through plagiarism, Thompson brought forth materials that were identified as missing parts which rightfully belonged within the original Ethiopian work. It is interesting to note that he altered the compiled revelations of Joseph Smith and the Book of Jasher, like he did the Laurence's translation of the Book of Enoch, itself. This might provide a clue to the text's construction, suggesting that he first compiled his sources

¹⁸⁸ The *Book of Jasher* was embraced with great interest by segments of both the LDS and RLDS Church. For example, *Jasher* was republished in Utah by George Q. Cannon & Sons in 1883. The RLDS Church distributed copies of the 1840 publication, as advertised in the *Saints Herald*.

together and then treated each of his pieces as ancient parts of “the original book written by Enoch.”¹⁸⁹

Although the motif of the prophet-compiler is present in Mormonism with Mormon, Moroni, Moses, and Joseph Smith, who each had access to a greater scriptural tradition from which they compiled and paraphrased portions, Mormonism holds a more prominent, but related motif of prophets whose calling includes authorship. Prophets were record-keepers and often wrote scripture in texts akin to a journal. This motif of the first-person prophet is present, though not as pronounced, in the Bible. Smith sought to remedy this. For example, tradition holds that Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament; yet, the text does not make this claim – featuring the Hebrew’s own death. The first restoration Joseph Smith made to the biblical canon was a prologue that ensured that the reader understood that Moses was, in fact, the book’s rightful author. The creation narrative that followed in the first three chapters of Genesis was now presented as Moses’ own personal record of a cosmic vision.

Thompson was well aware that it was prophets that record scripture in the Restoration tradition. The Book of Enoch, in its original, claims to be the record of Enoch, but does not employ the first-person throughout. The Book of Jasher and the revelations of Joseph Smith did not use the first-person for Enoch. Thus, one way that Thompson united the texts was by emphasizing the telling of the story through the voice of Enoch. Like the Book of Mormon’s opening, “I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents....” or the Book of Abraham’s, “...I, Abraham, saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence,” the Book of Enoch shifted from the initial phrase

¹⁸⁹ ZHBO 2 (October, 1852): 80.

“The word of the blessing of Enoch” to “I, Enoch, the son of Jared...having been instructed in the mysteries of those things that were before the foundation of the world.”¹⁹⁰

Another detail important to Mormon scripture is setting. The prophets of the Restoration, based on Joseph Smith’s precedence, have been unwilling to produce ancient scripture set solely in the mythological cosmos. Instead, such scripture tells the story of how a prophet obtained his knowledge of the mythological cosmos. Through the Book of Mormon, Smith introduced a scriptural world with a historical setting that occurred all around the modern believer. When in New York, he was led to the Hill Cumorah, near where the ancient Nephites fought their last battle. When in Missouri, he received a vision of Adam-Ondi-Ahman, where Adam held a council of his faithful sons before his death. It is more unusual to provide the location of correction literature, such as the Joseph Smith Translation or Book of Enoch, because these records were not discovered in the Americas, but in the Near East. Because Joseph Smith placed the first man, Adam in America, the pre-flood events of the Book of Enoch would have naturally occurred in the New World. A brief notice following the thirteenth installment of Inspired Enoch referred to the physical remains of two mythological beasts discussed within the Enoch text, “A part of the jaw bone of one of those monsters Enoch speaks of, has been found near Peru, Illinois. The teeth measured across three and five inches.”¹⁹¹

Thus, Thompson, like Smith, introduced and reinforced a literal setting for the narrative. Beyond the continuation of prominent motifs, style, and genre, Inspired Enoch was, also, Mormon in its content. This was after all the design of correction literature –

¹⁹⁰ ZHBO 2 (October, 1852): 73.

¹⁹¹ ZHBO 3 (November, 1853): 83.

to bridge the gap between ancient scripture and modern movements.

In 1830, Alexander Campbell wrote his famous treatment of the Book of Mormon, condemning the text not because it offered insufficient information to be meaningful to a nineteenth-century reader, but because it offered too much to be convincing as an ancient text.

This prophet Smith, through his stone spectacles, wrote on the plates of Nephi, in his Book of Mormon, every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies -- infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call of the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of free masonry, republican government; and the rights of man.¹⁹²

At its very core, scripture is designed to answer pressing questions, to share or establish a worldview, to comfort, and to condemn. When Alexander Campbell wrote that the Book of Mormon “decides all the great controversies” – he stated what the informed reader, believer or skeptic, should expect from any scriptural text. If the books of the Bible, themselves, did not seek to answer the problems of their day, then they did not meet their principal purpose. This is true whether they were of divine or human origins.

Campbell’s sentiments suggesting that the text was designed to answer theological issues could also be said of Thompson’s revisions of the Book of Enoch. *Inspired Enoch* addressed every error and almost every truth [being] discussed throughout the Restoration movement of the 1850s. As would be expected, a very different list of controversies confronted the Saints of the 1850s than those faced by the Protestant world of 1830. In 1852, the most pressing theological issues that concerned

¹⁹² *Millennial Harbinger* II (February, 1835): 85.

the Saints in all factions involved the plurality of gods, Christology, succession, polygamy, prophecy, and matters of race. *Inspired Enoch* deserves scholarly attention through the lens of each of these doctrines however, this essay confines itself with those matters introduced as a part of Joseph Smith's Nauvoo theology.¹⁹³

Before we proceed in this portrayal of Thompson as a dissenter waging a sophisticated battle against Nauvoo innovations, we should not neglect to acknowledge his dependence on the experience of Nauvoo. Examining the person of Charles Thompson and the movement he founded helps us to see a division between the Nauvoo theology of Joseph Smith and the mode by which it was propagated. The theology associated with Nauvoo revolved around eternal relationships, theocracy, deification, plurality of gods, and, most controversially, plural marriage. The mode by which these concepts were promulgated included the secret organizations of the Holy Order and Council of Fifty; oath-based societies entrenched in fraternal esoterica. When George Bartholomew Arbaugh undertook a study of Charles Thompson in his *Revelation in Mormonism: Its Character and Changing Forms*, he wrote:

[The acceptance of Freemasonry] changed the essential nature of Mormonism by converting it into a mystery cult.... The great Brighamite church preserved Mormonism as a mystery religion but it was quite satisfied with that religion just as Smith left it. Consequently we turn with interest to Charles Thompson, for in him we find the continuation of the metaphysical and Masonic tendencies.¹⁹⁴

Arbaugh saw within the Presbytery of Zion numerous examples of Masonic motifs including the movement's organizations, the titles of its officers, degrees of

¹⁹³ Other works to consider Thompson's theology include: Newell G. Bringhurst, "Forgotten Mormon Perspectives: Slavery, Race, and the Black Man as Issues among Non-Utah Latter-day Saints, 1844-1873," *Michigan History* 61 (Winter, 1977): 352-370; Newell G. Bringhurst, "Charles B. Thompson and the Issues of Slavery and Race," *Journal of Mormon History* 8 (1981): 37-47; George Bartholomew Arbaugh, *Revelation in Mormonism: Its Character and Changing Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932): 159-171.

¹⁹⁴ George Bartholomew Arbaugh, *Revelation in Mormonism*, 159-160.

membership, as well as the traditional oaths, keywords, and signs, all shrouded by secrecy. Arbaugh accurately documented within the Presbytery a continuation of the mode of esoteric instruction used in Nauvoo, but what of the theology? Whereas, the movement embraced the Masonic-like ritualism as its principal mode of organization, Thompson rejected much of what scholars associate with Mormonism in Nauvoo: most particularly plural marriage and the plurality of gods. An 1853 letter addressed to the followers of Brigham Young in St. Louis declared as much:

Mormonism, as it now exists, is nothing more nor less than a new edition of heathen mythology, corrected and revised, and cloaked under the guise of revelation. Polygamy – upon which rests their salvation, and exaltation in the eternal worlds, is nothing more than a heathen and uncivilized custom.... The doctrine of plurality of Gods, is likewise a heathen and idolatrous doctrine of Brahmins, Chinese, Hindoos, and all heathen nations.¹⁹⁵

Inspired Enoch was an all out assault on this new strain of revised Heathenism: polygamy and the plurality of Gods. The remainder of this paper will analyze two key narratives and how they provided an alternate mythology in order to rebut what were perceived as Brighamite heresies.

Inspired Enoch's Creation Narrative: Addressing the Plurality of Gods

Throughout his prophetic career, Joseph Smith continued to revise the story of creation: the inspired translation of the first chapters of Genesis, the Book of Abraham, the May 6, 1833 revelation [D&C 93 LDS], the Joseph Smith Translation of the first chapter of the Gospel of John, the King Follett Discourse, and the Nauvoo Endowment drama. Each time Joseph Smith re-presented the story of the creation, he added a new layer to the religion's mythology. If his goal was a radical reformulation of the faith,

¹⁹⁵ George Hickenloper, "To the Council of the St. Louis Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, February 18, 1853." *ZHBO* 3 (March, 1853): 24.

then what better place to begin than with the start of mankind - helping the Saints to reconceive the universe and their place in it. As Smith stated, when he publically introduced the idea of deification, “If we start right, it is easy to go right all the time; but if we start wrong, we may go wrong, and it be a hard matter to get right.”¹⁹⁶

The Mormon story of creation transformed the traditional ex-nihilo origin of the universe, as related in the orthodox interpretation of Genesis, to an “organizing” of already existing matter. This act, rather than being carried out by one God or a God and his son is instead performed by a quorum of deities, who served under one head God. In 1842, the Book of Abraham synthesized many of the more innovative concepts of Latter-day Saint thought which had been brewing for the past decade, into a coherent – Genesis-like - seven-day creation narrative. In this account, Abraham witnesses the events of creation beginning with a vision of the “intelligences that were organized before the world was.”¹⁹⁷ Among them were “many of the noble and great ones” who would serve as rulers on the earth. Jesus Christ appeared as a separate being from God the Father, “like unto God” and above the rest of creation. The future Savior declared “We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these [spirits] may dwell....”¹⁹⁸ Following the traditional division between the righteous and wicked angels, these noble and great ones led by Jesus begin the creation. This collective body is, thereafter, referred to as “the gods.”

The Book of Abraham helped to revolutionize the Saints’ cosmology. While translating this record, Joseph Smith came to believe there was more to the plurality of

¹⁹⁶ Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 343.

¹⁹⁷ Abraham 3:22, *The Pearl of Great Price*, [LDS].

¹⁹⁸ Abraham 3:24.

gods than simply the deification of spirits through the mortal experience. He cited the premise made by Deity in the Book of Abraham that “these two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; [then] there shall be another more intelligent than they....”¹⁹⁹ From this passage, Smith came to the conclusion that even God himself must have a father through an endless lineage of deities.²⁰⁰

In his famous King Follett discourse, Joseph Smith explained “how God came to be God and what sort of a being he is.” He reasoned that the God of this world had once been “a man like one of us and that God himself, the father of us all, once dwelled on an earth.” He then explained the implications to his audience:

You have got to learn how to make yourselves Gods in order to save yourselves and be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done—by going from a small capacity to a great capacity, from a small degree to another, from grace to grace, until the resurrection of the dead, from exaltation to exaltation—till you are able to sit in everlasting burnings and everlasting power and glory as those who have gone before, sit enthroned.²⁰¹

Smith then revealed an equally controversial insight, although it had been contained in the revelations since 1833, that there was a part of mankind - his intelligence - that can neither be created, nor made.

We say that God Himself is a self-existent God. Who told you so? It's correct enough, but how did it get into your heads? Who told you that man did not exist in like manner upon the same principle?...the mind of man—the intelligent part—is as immortal as, and is coequal with, God Himself.²⁰²

This concept of eternity was absolute. There was no first god and no true beginning of all things. Both matter and spirit were self-existent and were not the creation of a supreme deity.

¹⁹⁹ Abraham 3:19.

²⁰⁰ Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 373.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 346-347.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 352-353; Joseph Smith, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 359.

The nature of God and his relationship to mankind is at the very essence of religious ideologies. Thus, it is not surprising that Joseph Smith's radical departure from orthodox Christianity resulted in real psychological distress. On one hand, there were dissenters, most notably the Reformed Mormon Church, founded by William Law and Robert Foster, who saw this polytheistic system as another example of a fallen prophet's "false doctrine." The one and only publication of the group, the *Nauvoo Expositor* announced the plurality of gods, following that of polygamy and the church's involvement in politics – the latter, likely designed to gather outside support. According to the statement, a belief in many gods is:

one of the most direful [doctrines] in its effects that has characterized the world for many centuries. We know not what to call it other than blasphemy, for it is most unquestionably, speaking of God in an impious and irreverent manner.²⁰³

On the other hand, there were dedicated Saints devoted to the organization and leadership that wanted to be supportive of Joseph Smith's theological innovations, but felt unable to embrace them fully. Internally, Smith's denial of the traditional "first cause" did not satisfy some orthodox Mormon thinkers, including Orson Pratt. The apostle suggested that Smith's comments were certainly true of the deity of this world, but that this being was subservient to a higher self-existent divinity. Pratt referred to this entity as the "Great God," who governed all things. This set of ideas was controversial in that it seemed to rival, at least, the popular interpretation of Joseph Smith's theology. Eventually the Brighamite faction relegated Pratt's dissenting thought to heresy.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ *Nauvoo Expositor* (June 7, 1844): 3.

²⁰⁴ Loyd Ericson, "The Great Grand Executor": *The Development of the Holy Spirit in the Thought of Orson and Parley Pratt*. Unpublished. Copy in the author's possession.

Charles Thompson shared Pratt and Law's concerns with the new theology. By re-presenting the creation narrative of Mormonism – maintaining enough of the existing narrative to build on its legitimacy – Thompson rivaled the most controversial portions of the Nauvoo innovations. The creation narrative of Inspired Enoch began by responding to the question of whether there exists an endless progression of deities or an initial deity of the first cause. Siding with the latter, Inspired Enoch canonized an argument similar to Pratt's. According to the text:

In the beginning, before any of the creations had taken place, Iame, (which signified the embodiment of all intelligence,) by his wisdom constructed Iada, (which signifies the place of light,) out of Zebo, (which signified unorganized matter,) and clothed himself therewith. In Iada were constructed many wombs; and Iame quickened Iada, so that Iada became a living being, and principle of power with Iame; and Iame impregnated Iada with the seed of intelligence. Iada, therefore brought forth from her variously constructed wombs many Intelligences of various forms, clothed with semile (which signifies very refined matter.)²⁰⁵

Iame is the equivalent of all intelligence, in other words, he is an entity present in all things. This consciousness organized his own material body through self-existent matter and then, in turn, constructed a female principle, Iada, who aided in the organization of the universe. The cosmic union of Iame and Iada brought forth individual intelligences or spirits. Iame then:

finding these Spirits imperfect as to the quantity of intelligence they possessed, by his wisdom concerted a plan to increase their intelligences and thereby make them perfect; and having completed the plan, he called them together to consult them in reference to their willingness to enter into his plan; and when he had made known his plan to them they were glad, and he organized them that they might accomplish his will and be made perfect.²⁰⁶

So far into the narrative, Inspired Enoch followed closely the creation accounts of the Book of Abraham and the King Follett Discourse. Inspired Enoch made use of the

²⁰⁵ ZHBO 2, no. 10 (October, 1852): 73.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

narrative of Abraham, in which deity discovered that the spirits varied in intelligence and in the King Follett Discourse, in which “God himself finds himself in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was greater, and because he saw proper to institute laws, whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself...”²⁰⁷ Like in Abraham, the next step for Iame was to organize his leadership.

And he chose seven Chief Ones and placed them over the rest of the Spirits, and he Ordained them, and he Ordained three of these, Chiefs over the seven and he Ordained one of the three, who was elected over all, to be over the three, and he was called the Elect One; and one of his fellows was anointed to represent him in the flesh, and he was called the Anointed, his other fellow was to remain concealed under the appellation of the Father, until the consummation of righteousness; therefore he was called the Concealed One. And Iame chose twenty-four of the most noble remaining Spirits, and he Ordained them to minister for the seven; (and he called them Arch-Angels;) and he chose, Ordained and Organized four grand Quorums of Angels of different grades of authority; and their number is written down in the Heavens, and their names are all there recorded. And when Iame had completed their Organization, they rose up with one accord and called Him the Lord of Spirits; and prostrating themselves before him, they worshipped him, calling Him God Almighty. And Iame blessed those he had Ordained, calling them the Sons of God, then the Morning Stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy.²⁰⁸

This angelic hierarchy parallels the throne-room vision of John in the Book of Revelation. John witnessed seven “spirits of God” and twenty-four elders surrounding the celestial throne. Thompson’s heavenly hierarchy built on this image suggests that the seven spirits are the heads of the twenty-four elders, who are, in fact, archangels. Specifically, three of the seven took on roles equivalent to the Christian godhead: the Father referred to as the *Elect One* in Inspired Enoch and identified as Adam or the Archangel Michael; the Son referred to as the *Anointed One* and identified as Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit referred to as the *Concealed One* and identified as Baneemy.

²⁰⁷ *Times and Seasons* 5:15 (August 15, 1844): 615.

²⁰⁸ ZHBO 2, no. 10 (October, 1852): 73-74.

Throughout the text, Iame is referred to as the Lord of Spirits or God Almighty. He, alone, is God, serving above the “sons of God” including the three equivalents to the Christian trinity. Although, in this model, Adam or Michael presides over Jesus, this is not the Adam-God doctrine proposed by Brigham Young. Instead, this represents the elevation of Adam in Latter-day Saint thought, as well as an adoptionism present in Inspired Enoch’s theology, likely borrowed from the teachings of James Strang. Thus, the text is unitarian, emphasizing only one true God, despite many assistants.

Unlike the Book of Abraham, which re-couches the Genesis creation to speak of Gods (plural) forging the world on each respective day, Inspired Enoch softens the blow of plural creators by referring to them as Sons of God. Abraham has these same Gods command the creation of the world and wait for the earth to obey. Instead, Inspired Enoch shows the Sons of God praying to Iame beckoning him to perform the desired tasks of organization. It is God Almighty who performs the creation, according to the prayers of his children.

Thompson presented a new creation story, in a compromise between Nauvoo theology and more traditional understandings of deity. God Almighty is the self-existent “first cause.” Inspired Enoch replicated the Christian trinity, but in a subservient role to the one true God. Thus, Smith was correct about the progression of a deity through mortality, except that the scenario did not apply to the supreme deity. Nevertheless, Thompson allowed for progression to a type of sub-divinity operating under the reign of the Lord of Spirits.

Inspired Enoch’s Fallen Angels Narrative: Addressing Plural Marriage

Before 1852, many Saints were only aware of plural marriage through hearsay - rumors published by former Brighamites. The faithful of most sects outside of the Great Basin could deny that their leaders participated in the practice, largely because they did not know. Yet, this all changed in the first few years of the 1850s. At that time, controversy and fracture followed in the wake of the exposure of plural marriage as practiced both by the followers of James Strang and William Smith. It is likely no coincidence that two months before the first installment of *Inspired Enoch* was published in *Zion's Harbinger and Baneemy's Organ*, Orson Pratt officially announced the Brighamite practice of plural marriage.

Pratt's announcement on August 29, 1852 was the first time that an official spokesman from within Mormonism publically defended *the principle*. Pratt argued for the practice on several major counts. First, he purported that there were numerous spirits who still waited to be embodied, before the Second Coming of Christ. If the righteous Latter-day Saints could have more children through plural marriage, then "many spirits that are more noble... [could be born] through a just and righteous parentage."²⁰⁹ Second, Pratt posited that cross-culturally polygamy was the preferred form of marriage. According to his statistic, 80% of the world's cultures practiced polygamy. Third, Pratt drew on the biblical Abraham narratives to legitimize the newly restored marital structure. Finally, with this announcement, the Brighamites publically issued the 1843 revelation of Joseph Smith that commanded the practice of plural marriage as "a law of

²⁰⁹ Deseret News Extra, September 18, 1852.

the holy priesthood.”²¹⁰ Inspired Enoch’s addressed each of these points through the use of narrative.

In traditional Mormon accounts of the pre-existence, Lucifer and his one-third are cursed to remain as spirits. They failed in the pre-existence when they rejected the Christ in favor of Lucifer. This argument does not occur in Inspired Enoch at all. Thompson’s one-third do not debate over future saviors, but over which of deity’s children would possess the first mortal body:

Now it came to pass when Iame Organized the sons of God, He appointed the Elect One to receive the first Tabernacle because he was elected by the voice of two-thirds of all the sons of the Morning. But Lucifer who received one-third of the votes, disputed with Michael in reference to that matter, and wished to take the first Tabernacle: but Michael referred the matter to Iame who rebuked Lucifer, and appointed Michael to receive the first Tabernacle; so Michael entered into his Tabernacle, and Iame blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and thus man became a living soul. But Lucifer was angry, and he sought from that time forth to frustrate the plan of Iame.²¹¹

Inspired Enoch frequently returns to this crucial theme of embodied angels. The narrative continues – in stark contrast to Smith’s teachings of devils left eternally without bodies - with Lucifer eventually receiving his own tabernacle in Cain. Later, after receiving instruction from the archangel Raphael, Adam prays for “one of the holy angels, to be with me in this flesh, that I may council with him.”²¹² Raphael is then born as Adam and Eve’s second son, Abel. Established in Thompson’s first installment, the theme of embodiment finds great utility as a tool to transform a major plot of Ethiopian Enoch – likely designed to explain the origins of evil – into a response to plural marriage.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ ZHBO 2, no. 10 (October, 1852): 75.

²¹² Ibid., 77.

As Inspired Enoch expanded and altered the account of Ethiopian Enoch, the latter text, itself, was an extension of a story found only briefly in the sixth chapter of Genesis. According to the biblical record:

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose... There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.²¹³

In the Enoch narrative, two-hundred angels, identified as *watchers*, make an agreement each to marry mortal women. Their interspecies union produced a race of giants, which were responsible for the greatest evils among mankind.²¹⁴

Based on the concept of embodiment, Inspired Enoch portrayed the watchers as mortal men who held the priesthood – angels, sure, but embodied angels. This group made a covenant to practice plural marriage, despite a rule that “the Sons of God, shall not take to themselves wives of the daughters of men, for the Lord will give them each a wife of the seed of his chosen race.”²¹⁵ When they entered these marriages, their offspring emerged as a race of giants mirroring Ethiopian Enoch.

In the Book of Enoch, the prophetic author bears a formal message to the fallen angels condemning them for their rebellion. A list of severe punishments for them and their seed are outlined. Inspired Enoch built on this passage, but applied the castigation to the polygamists and their descendents. Keeping in mind Orson Pratt’s defense of

²¹³ Genesis 6:1-2, 4.

²¹⁴ In Nauvoo, Joseph Smith may have advocated this interpretation of the Genesis text based on his reading of Josephus. The Autobiography of George Laub quotes Smith as saying, “Now the history of Josephus on speaking of angels came down and took themselves wives of the daughters of men (see Genesis 6:1-2). These were resurrected bodies [who] violated their laws.” George Laub, Autobiography of George Laub, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

²¹⁵ ZHBO 3, no. 8 (August, 1853): 57.

plural marriage as a means to bring forth righteous seed, Inspired Enoch suggested that God specifically did not want righteous Saints to enter plural marriage. The argument is that the Saints do not need to do so, because they know that life continues after death. (Presumably, the desire to have many, many children was to continue one's legacy.) However, unbelievers, likely the 80% of the world population that Pratt suggested accepted polygamy, could "take as many wives as they choose, that sons might be born unto them, and that they may continue their seed upon the earth."²¹⁶ Those giants born of the polygamous unions were not the celestial spirits of Pratt's polygamous unions, but "terrestrial spirits who have been born in carnal blood."²¹⁷ Certainly, to be born the product of a polygamous marriage was no favored status.

Point-by-point, Thompson's Enoch responded to Pratt's arguments. Pratt said that plural marriage would allow for the coming of more children, Enoch admitted this was so, but regarded it as unnecessary for those who understood eternal life. What is the point of a numerous offspring, if one's offspring would be cursed to die and become evil spirits, as Enoch portrayed? Pratt argued that, cross-culturally, polygamy was the norm. Enoch agreed, but clarified that these practitioners were unbelievers, not the faithful Saints. Finally, Pratt cited Smith's revelation that portrayed plural marriage as a law of the Holy Priesthood. Enoch declared the exact opposite. There was a law of the Holy Priesthood. It was monogamy.²¹⁸

The Brighamites justified their practice of polygamy through scriptural precedence, namely the polygamy of Abraham and the 1843 revelation of Joseph Smith.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 60.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ ZHBO 3, no. 2 (February, 1853): 10.

Thompson found utility for the Book of Enoch in delegitimizing these same concepts. If the Brighamites could turn to Abraham for support, then why couldn't he appeal to Enoch? Such a figure could potentially trump even Abraham.

Final Thoughts

The most effective way to look at Inspired Enoch is as a cultural artifact. At its core, the new scripture demonstrates scriptural rivalry in the second prophetic generation of Mormonism. Specifically, Inspired Enoch was a response to what Charles Thompson viewed as the Brighamite borrowing of Heathen beliefs – albeit “corrected and revised” – under the auspices of Mormonism. The volume legitimized Baneemyism's adherence of traditional American monogamy and a not-so-traditional Unitarian interpretation of deity, while it delegitimized the Nauvoo innovations of Celestial Plural Marriage and the plurality of Gods.

Many were threatened by the shift within Mormon beliefs. Inspired Enoch had the potential, if accepted by Mormonism's believing dissenters, to buttress a counter-theological position that could alleviate the adherents' psychological stresses. Hypothetically, Inspired Enoch could have established the borders of a formidable new Mormon identity in the Eastern states. After all, the Book of Mormon had performed a similar task a generation before.

However, we must conclude that, in fact, Inspired Enoch impacted only a miniscule percentage of nineteenth-century Mormonism. It has had no perceivable impact on twentieth-century Mormonism and may be known by little more than a handful within the scholarly community today. Why was such a fascinating and creative volume

doomed to obscurity? Interestingly enough, this was because of a competing product in the mid-century spiritual marketplace, namely the Reorganization.

In November of 1851, Jason Briggs, like individuals in several Mormon sects at the time, rejected his affiliation with William Smith based on the former's advocacy of plural marriage. That month he received a "thus saith the Lord" revelation, which stated in part: "Behold, that which ye received as my celestial law [i.e. plural marriage] is not of me, but is the doctrine of Baalam. And I command you to renounce it and proclaim against it."²¹⁹ The revelation instructed Briggs to take the message to all of the places that polygamy had been taught. Over the next several years, those that embraced Briggs' revelation began to coalesce and build the foundation of what would become the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Both the Reorganization and the Presbytery of Zion had largely the same goals in mind. They both offered legitimacy via revelation for believing Saints, who preferred not to accept the innovations of Nauvoo Mormonism. Thus, the question becomes: why the one excelled in uniting the various sectarian factions of Mormonism, while the other declined and ultimately became one of the denominations absorbed? Although such a question deserves serious consideration in future endeavors, a preliminary solution will be offered here. Namely, that the beliefs and practices of the Presbytery of Zion were simply more rigorous – more expensive in the spiritual marketplace of 1850s Mormonism - than those of the future Josephites. For example, Thompson promoted communal living through the concepts of consecration and established gathering places. Thompson required rebaptism and re-ordination. Finally, the Presbytery emphasized esoteric rituals

²¹⁹ "History of the Reorganization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," *The Messenger of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* 2 (November, 1875): 1.

associated with the Mormon priesthood. The Reorganization did not require rebaptism, promote communal endeavors, or accept any form of secret ritual. These three emphases alone would have made the Presbytery a less attractive option. In short, the reason that the Presbytery did not flourish despite the great potential of Inspired Enoch was that believing dissenters found legitimacy and solace in the teachings of the Reorganization. This left the true test of Inspired Enoch's utility as a scripture, untried.

Yet, as a scriptural artifact Inspired Enoch has – to make a metaphor of a literal prophecy concerning ancient records in the Book of Mormon - “retain[ed] its brightness.”²²⁰ Through its pages, we can document the continuation of Mormonism's narrative tradition. Most importantly, we can document the intellectual rebellion that occurred in response to the introduction of plural marriage and Joseph Smith's heterodox teachings concerning deity. Others tried to rebut Nauvoo theology, as it emerged throughout the Restoration, yet none as creative as was Charles B. Thompson. His was a sophisticated dissent.

²²⁰ Alma 37:5, *Book of Mormon* (LDS).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The concepts behind this thesis were inspired by Philip Barlow's discussion of *shifts* and *incarnations* in the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the most prominent version of Joseph Smith's Mormonism. Barlow suggests that the first shift did not fully occur until the establishment of the Saints in Deseret territory.²²¹ Thus, a shift is a turning of a religious movement's character – while the movement is in a state of flux, whereas an incarnation is a movement in a period of relative stability. The purpose of this thesis was partly to demonstrate this shift as it occurs with the death of a prophet - as a process, a conversation between the second prophetic generation and his interpretation of the first generation prophet's religious vision.

To return to Aristotle's metaphor: prophets are perennially uprooting planks. They haphazardly toss new boards on to the fresh gaps. Sometimes they nail the boards down and other times they leave them bound to the new ship with only a bit of paste and a prayer that they will hold. Their tendency to be irresponsible with the building supplies leaves future craftsmen (the second prophetic generation) the task of sanding and providing smaller planks to the greater project. They sometimes must even pry up some of the new planks and provide an even more recent model (e.g. Charles Thompson) or perhaps find some of the old planks left in the warehouse and nail them back onto a vessel they worry is too flimsy to travel (e.g. Joseph Smith III).

²²¹ Philip Barlow, "Shifting Ground and the Third Transformation of Mormonism," 140-141.

Due to the exaggerated state of fragmentation following Smith's death, Mormonism proves an ideal case study of exploring the second prophetic generation. For example, Jan Shipps has argued that the post-Smith succession crisis was:

a struggle between forms of legitimacy – almost in class Weberian terms. Among the early Mormons the chief charismatic claimant, Strang, proved to be unimportant. Here *lineage*, i.e. the Smith family, was brought into competition with *office*, i.e. Brigham Young and the Quorum of the Twelve.²²²

These three types of authority are each present in the second prophetic generation in Mormonism and may be present in the second prophetic generation of any faith.

This thesis sought to take Weberian insights to the next level, rather than simply classifying these figures. In the examples used in this study, we can determine additional motifs – specifically in how new leaders respond to the first prophet's innovations. For example, we can document the second prophet generation's transformation of esoteric theology introduced by the Prophet into a suitable public expression of a new movement. We can demonstrate the use of mimicry, as new leaders borrow from the charisma and the process of revelation used by the first-generation prophet. We can document the uneasy state of innovations and the stresses upon our new religion-makers.

The second chapter used Joseph Smith's innovation of plural marriage and its integration into three separate communities to illuminate the role played by the second prophetic generation. These three figures each initially integrated the Prophet's radical marital innovations into their version of Mormonism. By developing strict regulations surrounding polygamy, they were able to stabilize the great stresses such an innovation naturally brought upon adherents. Ultimately, polygamy died out due to outside persecution or internal pressures, including failures of the second prophetic generation.

²²² Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*, 105.

The relative longevity of plural marriage in the Great Basin was dependent on the development of a genuine routinized Mormon culture developed in the isolation of the desert west. The only movement to survive their second-generation prophet's death, the Cutlerites, worked to develop a usable past by collective amnesia.

The third chapter used the Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerite) as a case study for the re-organization of a religious community under a second-generation prophet. A complete alternative to Brigham Young's Utah Mormonism, Alpheus Cutler forged a new organization as comprehensive – if not as successful – as any other variants of the Restoration. Acting as a conduit for the esoteric teachings of the Nauvoo, Smith's secret doctrines became the foundations of the exoteric (and esoteric) teachings and organization of the Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerite.)

The second-generation prophet interprets theology – theology introduced by the founding prophet – through a lens of the first-generation prophet's death. Thus, we saw that Cutler interpreted Smith's death through prophecies of dispensationalism and for lack of a better term, “rejection” theology.

In the fourth chapter, we analyzed the scriptural writings of Charles Thompson, another distinct example of the second prophetic generation. Unlike Cutler, Wight, and William Smith, each men who had personal experience with Joseph Smith, Thompson had little direct involvement with the Mormon Prophet. Rather, he imitated Smith's prophetic gift through the production of scripture. By using mechanisms that the founding prophet introduced, this example of the second prophetic generation was able to un-write the most controversial innovations of Mormonism.

This study explored what the second prophetic generation is and how they function. Future studies will examine the lenses by which the second generation operates – specifically, the lens of trauma, an underlining theme in chapter two, and the lens of grief.

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