

Journal of Mormon History

Volume 36
Issue 2 *Spring 2010*

Article 1

2010

Journal of Mormon History Vol. 36, No. 2, Spring 2010

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Journal of Mormon History. Vol. 36, Spring 2010: Iss. 2.

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JOURNAL OF MORMON HISTORY

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Cover illustration: Rendering of the Church of Christ's projected temple in Independence, by architect Norman Wilkinson, Kansas City, Missouri, in 1930.

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The Mormon History Association is an independent organization dedicated to the study and understanding of all aspects of Mormon history. We welcome all who are interested in the Mormon past, irrespective of religious affiliation, academic training, or world location. We promote our goals through scholarly research, conferences, awards, and publications.

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts* and *America: History and Life*, published by ABC-CLIO.

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ISSN 0194-7342

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REPLACEMENT PAGES

Note: Part of note 21 and all of notes 22–26 were inadvertently dropped from pp. 101–2 of William Shepard and H. Michael Marquardt, “Lyman E. Johnson: Forgotten Apostle,” *Journal of Mormon History* 36, no. 1 (Winter 2010). As an additional problem, p. 144 replicates p. 143. None of the text is missing. The internet version (accessed through mhahome.org which links to the Marriott Library, University of Utah) and the CD version will be correct for the entire article, pp. 92–144. The two replacement pages that follow here (vi–vii numbered 102–3) include the missing footnotes (last line of note 21 and all of notes 22–26).

son as “4 High Priests forming the council.” On May 1, they met with Landen at 6:00 P.M. with Murdock presiding. Pratt offered the opening prayer, then “laid the case before the conference by stating that Br Landing said the vision was of the Devil & he believed it no more than he believed the devil was crucified & many like things.” Landen in fact denounced it as “of the Devil” and said “would not have the vision taught in the church” for a thousand dollars.²² He defended himself, not by arguing doctrine, but by citing the sacrifices and hardships he had endured as markers of his sincerity. Murdock responded that he and others had also made great sacrifices; “but if we do not hold out to the end we do not obtain the crown.” The next morning “the church met according to appointment Br Orson led in explanation [sic] of the vision & other revelation[s] followed by my Self & Br Lyman.” Landen asked forgiveness, which was granted, and the conference allowed him to continue in his office.²³

Lyman and Orson arrived at Bath, New Hampshire, in early June and worked together until June 14. Although they held a number of joint meetings, for the most part, they worked separately, preaching in different towns. When the congregation in Charleston, New Hampshire, united in prayer, Pratt wrote in his journal: “Heard their prayers & moved upon his servant Lyman by the power of the Holy Ghost to seal them up unto eternal life & after this the Brethren arose one by one & said that they knew that their names were sealed in the Lamb’s Book of life & they all did bear this glorious testimony save two or three.”²⁴

Unhappily, Lyman Johnson was still on this mission when his fifteen-year-old sister, Mary, died on May 30, 1833, at the home of Joseph Smith in Kirtland. Joseph Holbrook recorded that her death

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830–present), April 14, 1832, October 12, 1839, LDS Church History Library; Orson F. Whitney, *The Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945), 24.

²²John Murdock, Journal, 27, May 1, 1833. It may have been because of concerns among Church members that Joseph Smith modified some of the wording of the Vision in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

²³Murdock, Journal, 27–28.

²⁴Orson Pratt, Journal, August 26, 1833, LDS Church History Library; also in Watson, *The Orson Pratt Journals*, 24; terminal punctuation added.

“caused much gloominess at the prophet’s house.” She was buried in the cemetery near the Kirtland Temple.²⁵ John Sr. and Elsa Johnson moved from Hiram to Kirtland about this time. John was ordained a high priest on June 4 and became a member of the United Firm, a partnership organized in March 1832 to help support certain Church leaders who held the office of high priest. A year later, the firm was disbanded.²⁶

MISSION WITH ORSON PRATT, 1833–34

Lyman and Orson returned to Kirtland on September 28. After briefly working on the Kirtland Temple and participating in various Church councils and activities, a council of high priests commissioned them to return and visit their brethren at Geneseo, New York.²⁷ Accordingly, they left Kirtland on November 27. This was not a spiritually satisfying mission, as they spent considerable time attempting to counter the negative impact made by Methodist ministers, to mediate disputes between members, and to deal with schismatic elements in the branches.

One of the most disheartening episodes was Ezra Landen’s backsliding in Geneseo. He had once again decided that the “Vision of the Three Glories” was heretical because it seemed to contradict the traditional Christian view of heaven and hell as taught in the Bible and Book

²⁵Janet Lisonbee, *In Memory of the Early Saints Who Lived and Died in the Kirtland, Ohio Area* (N.p.: Author, 2003), 8.

²⁶Lyndon W. Cook, *Joseph Smith and the Law of Consecration* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book, 1985), 57–70. See LDS D&C 96:6–9; RLDS D&C 93:2 for John Johnson Sr.’s appointment to the firm. On June 25, 1833, Joseph Smith wrote to William Phelps and other Saints in Jackson County, Missouri: “Zombre [John Johnson Sr.] has been received as a member of the firm by commandment, and has just come to Kirtland to live.” Joseph Smith et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2d rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978 printing), 1:363, June 25, 1833. See also Max H. Parkin, “Joseph Smith and the United Firm: The Growth and Decline of the Church’s First Master Plan of Business and Finance, Ohio and Missouri, 1832–1834,” *BYU Studies* 46, no. 3 (2007): 5–66.

²⁷An Epistle from a Council of High Priests, November 23, 1833, LDS Church History Library.



Walter Nugent

THE MORMONS AND AMERICA'S EMPIRES

Walter Nugent

IT'S A GREAT HONOR, GREATLY APPRECIATED, to present you with the Tanner Lecture this morning. My first and pleasant duty is to thank Kathy Daynes for inviting me. Kathy was a very memorable student in my graduate colloquia at Indiana University "a certain number of years ago." I owe thanks also to Jan Shipps, the *eminence grise* of Kathy, and me as well, in Mormon matters. Over the years, she introduced me to Leonard Arrington, Jim Allen, Davis Bitton, Tom Alexander, and Dean May, and to many aspects of LDS history.

WALTER NUGENT {wnugent@nd.edu} received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1961, taught at Indiana University for more than twenty years and at the University of Notre Dame (1984–2000) as Andrew V. Tackes Professor of History. In addition to nearly two hundred essays, articles, and reviews, he has published twelve books, the most recent being *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009). Among his fellowships are Guggenheim, Huntington Library, and National Endowment for the Humanities; he was also a Fulbright professor at Hebrew University of Jerusalem and University College Dublin. He has served the historical profession as president of the Western History Association, the Indiana Association of Historians, and the Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. He delivered this Tanner Lecture at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, Springfield, Illinois, May 23, 2009.

It's also an intimidating honor, when I look over the list of illustrious predecessors. I only hope that, like Chris Matthews's panels of journalists, I can tell you something you don't know. It is also humbling. I have given scores of talks and taught hundreds of classes, but never have I had the certain conviction that my audience knows more than I do about the subject. About Mormon history, certainly. About American imperialism . . . perhaps I can say some things you haven't heard and tie them to that history that you know so well.

My old friend, colleague, and predecessor in this predicament, Martin Ridge, said in his 1991 Tanner lecture that he perceived the series to be a clever device for forcing non-Mormon historians to think seriously about Mormon history, and, as the series charter says, to provide context from the outside—insofar as there is an outside. And as I look over those previous Tanner lectures, I see only one, really, that directly addressed the place of the Mormons in the history of American imperialism. That was by Donald Meinig, the eminent historical geographer. But he spoke twenty-four years ago, and his concern was how the American empire, political and cultural, exerted power over the incipient independent Mormon nation and ultimately forced assimilation.¹ My concern is how Mormon history fits general U.S. imperial history, or doesn't.

To get my feet wet for this lecture, I visited Salt Lake City last October and was kindly received by Richard E. Turley, assistant Church historian, and his associates at the LDS Church History Library. Rick asked what I would be talking about. I replied that I was at a very early stage, but I thought I would start by observing that, when Brigham brought the Saints to Utah, his main objective was not to expand the boundaries of the United States, but something quite different—to establish the kingdom of God on earth. However, very quickly the borders of the United States rose to include Utah, or Deseret, and he and the people would have to come to terms with it. And at some later

¹D. W. Meinig, "The Mormon Nation and the American Empire," in Dean L. May and Reid L. Neilson, eds., *The Mormon History Association's Tanner Lectures: The First Twenty Years* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 126–37. Meinig placed the Mormon culture area in the wider western context in "American Wests: Preface to a Geographical Interpretation," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 62 (June 1972): 159–84. An interesting overview is G. Homer Durham, "A Political Interpretation of Mormon History," *Pacific Historical Review* 13 (June 1944): 136–50.

point—a turning point—I needed to find out just when—he or his successors brought the Church and the people into conformity with the national consensus about empire-building. Such was my working hypothesis.

Rick then talked for a few minutes. As I heard him, he was telling me to go slowly—that Mormon history was full of ambiguities; not all of its lines run straight. He reminded me of the Yankee and New York state origins of the first Saints; the traumas suffered in Missouri and Illinois; that dissent as well as assent marked the early years (and later ones too). The more I have read, the more I have realized the wisdom of his remarks. Floyd O'Neil wrote something similar in 1978 in the *Utah Historical Quarterly*: "As with Mormon history generally, just when things seem to be typically American the unique has a way of asserting itself and begging for analysis. Mormonism's stormy Midwestern experience, its New England heritage, its scriptural base [the injunction to redeem the Lamanites, and hence the Indian missions and farms], and its schizophrenic view of government in the nineteenth century combined to create its own script" produced and directed by Brigham Young.² The more I pursued my self-taught courses in Mormon history 101, 201, even 301, over the past several months, the more I appreciated Rick's and Floyd's admonitions. The pioneers were refugees, escaping Midwestern persecutors; but in another sense they were extending not only the earthly kingdom but American culture. Joseph Smith's "Views," his presidential platform of 1844, is evidence of that. But my working hypothesis turned out to be wrong, as we shall see.

THE CONTINENTAL EMPIRE

Let me lay out for you the outline of what I see as the overall pattern of American empire-building. The United States has constructed three empires in its history: the continental empire to 1848 or 1854; the offshore empire from the Alaska Purchase to the 1930s; and the global empire we have erected since 1945.³

The continental empire consisted of several successive acquisitions. In each case, the acquisition involved three stages. First came

²Floyd O'Neil and Stanford J. Layton, "Of Pride and Politics: Brigham Young as Indian Superintendent," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46 (Summer 1978): 237.

³For detail and documentation, see Walter Nugent, *Habits of Empire: A*

the legal or quasi-legal acquisition of the real estate by treaty with Britain, Spain, France, Indians, or Mexico. The second step was dealing with the previous occupants—mainly Indians but also, sometimes, French, Spanish, Mexicans, even Brits—by removal, subjugation, chasing them off, displacement, or reconcentration. And third, the phase that took the longest, was the actual occupation or settlement of the area by Anglo-Americans (sometimes with African American slaves).

The early continental acquisitions were, in 1782, Trans-Appalachia; in 1803, Louisiana; and from 1810 to 1819, in chunks, Spanish Florida. The first acquisition, Trans-Appalachia, is often overlooked because we have been accustomed since grade school to maps of the United States as it was after the 1783 peace settlement, extending out to the Mississippi; that territory appears small compared to its doubling in 1803 and its spread to the Pacific by 1848. But as of 1782–83, the United States had neither conquered Trans-Appalachia nor settled it, and it was only by the brilliance and stubbornness of Benjamin Franklin, America's senior negotiator at the Paris peace talks, that the United States gained its Mississippi River boundary at that moment. Thereafter, settlers poured into the region; and by 1803, Kentucky, then Tennessee, then Ohio became co-equal states in the Union. Then came Napoleon's decision to sell Louisiana, and Thomas Jefferson's decision to seize the opportunity by which the national territory doubled. A few years later came the conquest of Spanish Florida, a complicated story involving settler uprisings and filibusters in which agents of President James Madison were involved, followed by Andrew Jackson's destruction of the Creeks in 1814 and his war on the Seminoles in 1818, both full-scale ethnic cleansings.

Territorial acquisitions then stalled for about twenty-five years. Americans in ever larger numbers accelerated their moves into Trans-Appalachia and across the Mississippi into Arkansas, Missouri, and Iowa. And among them were the first of the Saints, led by Joseph Smith, migrating from central New York to Kirtland and to Missouri and, in the late 1830s, to Nauvoo. Mormon history was, from then on, part of Americans' westward expansion and empire-building.

Acquisition resumed in the mid-1840s, the heyday of Manifest Destiny. Texas joined the Union in 1845; Oregon came in by treaty with Britain in 1846. Simultaneously with that, Polk contrived to bring

about war with Mexico, ending in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that transferred the Southwest, including Utah, to the United States. The Gadsden Purchase five years later was a fund-raiser for Santa Anna. With it the continental boundaries were in place. Subjugation of the Indians and settlement of the land followed over the subsequent decades into the twentieth century.

ENTER THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS AND JOSEPH SMITH'S "VIEWS"

By this time the history of the Latter-day Saints was well begun and was becoming affected by and intertwined with national history. Are we looking at convergence, or divergence, or some of both? Contrary to my initial hunch, considerable convergence existed at the start. I discovered that the pioneers in Nauvoo were in a sense escaping—certainly from Missouri—and they would soon do so from Nauvoo as well. But in another sense, they were taking part in the general American story. Joseph Smith's announced candidacy for U.S. president in early 1844 included the document you are all familiar with, "General Smith's Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States," dated February 7, 1844. Here Smith laid out his platform. He favored the abolition of slavery with compensation to owners. On territorial acquisition, he was very clear: "Oregon belongs to this government honorably, and when we have the red man's consent, let the union spread from the east to the west sea . . . and make the wilderness blossom as the rose; and when a neighboring realm petitioned to join the union of the sons of liberty, my voice would be *come*; yea come Texas; come Mexico; come Canada; and come all the world—let us be brethren: let us be one great family; and let there be universal peace."⁴

This is no secessionist, no would-be émigré. Smith sought the presidency and, most agree, quite seriously.⁵ He did not use the words "re-annexation" or "re-occupation" as Democratic candidate James K. Polk would do a few months later, but Smith did not tempo-

⁴For analysis, see Richard D. Poll, "Joseph Smith and the Presidency, 1844," Martin B. Hickman, "The Political Legacy of Joseph Smith," and the text of Smith's "Views," in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3 (Autumn 1968): 17–38.

⁵Leland Hargrave Creer, *The Founding of an Empire: The Exploration and Colonization of Utah, 1776–1856* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1947), 207–9; Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the*

size either, as Whig candidate Henry Clay, would do. Joseph Smith was clearly stating the American expansionist position.

POLK AND THE MORMON BATTALION

A little more than two years later, Joseph Smith was gone, and Brigham Young had led the Saints to Iowa, heading west as best they could. And along came another chance to prove their American bona fides and at the same time benefit themselves: the opportunity of the Mormon Battalion. Polk took the United States into war with Mexico by falsely claiming the Nueces Strip⁶ to be part of Texas, which it never was, and then sending an army under Zachary Taylor there, provoking almost certain resistance by Mexico. That happened in April 1846. Then, on May 11, Polk asked Congress to declare war and provide troops on the claim that “American blood has been shed on the American soil.”⁷ Polk also hoped to channel Mormon migration without seeming to do so, and Brigham used the situation to benefit the Church. Klaus Hansen and Michael Scott Van Wagenen relate how, in March 1844, Joseph Smith and the Council of Fifty sent Lucien Woodworth to negotiate with Sam Houston about the possibility of the Saints’ emigrating to the Nueces Strip. Oregon was no longer attractive because so many Missourians were moving there, and California was still Mexican. After Smith was killed, Brigham Young realized that moving to the Nueces Strip would not avoid Gentile interference, but insure it. Hence, he dropped the idea and made

Council of Fifty in Mormon History (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), 75; Dale Morgan, “The State of Deseret,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 8, nos. 2–4 (1940): esp. 70–149; Grant Underwood, “Early Mormon Perceptions of Contemporary America: 1830–1846,” *BYU Studies* 26 (Summer 1986), 49–61, is a cultural approach. For kingdom theology, see George W. Pace, “Kingdom of God: in Heaven, on Earth,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1992), 2:790–91.

⁶The Nueces Strip is the land between the Nueces and the Rio Grande rivers. The Nueces empties into the Gulf of Mexico at Corpus Christi. From there, the Strip runs south along the Gulf Coast for about 150 miles. It runs westward more than 200 miles to the sources of the Nueces River.

⁷Walter Nugent, “The American Habit of Empire, and the Cases of Polk and Bush,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 38 (Spring 2007): 5–24; Nugent, *Habits of Empire*, chap. 7.

the Rockies his target.⁸

In his diary entry for January 31, 1846, Polk recorded that Senator James Semple of Illinois talked with him about "the intended emigration of the Mormons of Illinois to Oregon." Polk piously told Semple "that as President of the U.S. I possessed no power to prevent or check their emigration; that the right of emigration or expatriation was one which any citizen possessed. I told him I could not interfere with them on the ground of their religious faith, however absurd it might be considered to be; that if I could interfere with the Mormons, I could with the Baptists, or any other religious sect; & that by the constitution any citizen had a right to adopt his own religious faith."⁹ By the time the war began in May, Polk suspected that any Mormon migration would head not for Oregon but California.¹⁰ In early June, he ordered Stephen Watts Kearney to lead troops to California, conquering Santa Fe on the way. Kearney, Polk wrote on June 2, "was also authorized to receive into service as volunteers a few hundred of the Mormons who are now on their way to California, with a view to conciliate them, attach them to our country, & prevent them from taking part against us."¹¹

Since the first weeks of his administration in March 1845, and probably earlier, Polk's unannounced agenda was acquiring Alta California for the United States. With war declared against Mexico, all that remained was to send an army to California to execute the takeover. The extent to which Polk feared that the British might capture it

⁸Hansen, *Quest for Empire*, 82–88; Michael Scott Van Wagenen, *The Texas Republic and the Mormon Kingdom of God* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 23–40.

⁹James K. Polk, *The Diary of James K. Polk during His Presidency, 1845 to 1849*, edited by Milo M. Quaife, 4 vols. (Chicago: McClurg, 1910), 1:205–6.

¹⁰Why he thought California was the Mormons' target is unclear. He may have learned about the group of Mormons, headed by Samuel Brannan, who sailed from New York on February 4, 1846, and who landed at Yerba Buena (San Francisco Bay) on July 31. But his *Diary* specifically speaks of Mormons migrating overland, "from Nauvoo and other parts of the U. S. to California." Polk's hidden agenda—of acquiring California with its Pacific harbors—likely made him fearful that the British, possibly with Mormon support, might beat him to it. That the Mormons might be heading for the Great Basin apparently never occurred to him.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 1:444.

first has been long argued. I think it was a baseless fear. Had Britain so intended, it could easily have done so with its more powerful naval forces in the eastern Pacific. But it made no such move. Polk worried nonetheless; and when he received a letter dated June 1 from Jesse C. Little, appointed in early 1846 as the Church's eastern representative, hinting that the Saints might support the British, Polk decided to try to co-opt them.¹² On June 3, Polk met with former Postmaster General Amos Kendall and Little, originally of Petersborough, New Hampshire. According to Polk's diary, they discussed

... a large body of mormon emigrants who are now on their way from Na[ulvoo] & other parts of the U.S. to California, and to learn the policy of the Government towards them. ... Mr. Little said that they were Americans in all their feelings, & friends of the U.S. I told Mr. Little that we were at War with Mexico, and asked him if 500 or more of the mormons now on their way to California would be willing on their arrival in that country to volunteer and enter the U.S. army in that war, under the command of a U.S. Officer. He said he had no doubt they would willingly do so. ... I did not deem it prudent to tell him of the projected expedition into California under the command of Col. Kearney. ... The mormons, if taken into the service, will constitute not more than ¼ of Col. Kearney's command, and the main object of taking them into service would be to conciliate them, and prevent them from assuming a hostile attitude towards the U.S. after their arrival in California. It was with the view to prevent this singular sect from becoming hostile to the U.S. that I held the conference with Mr. Little, and with the same view I am to see him again to-morrow.¹³

Polk talked with Kendall again on June 5, and told him that "if

¹²David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, *Army of Israel: Mormon Battalion Narratives* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), 20–22, citing Little's letter to Polk of June 1, 1846, and referring to "Little's coercive tactics." Polk, however, was almost never coercible; in the run-up to and conduct of the Mexican War and the negotiations with Britain over Oregon, he was the coercer except in the sole instance when Lord Aberdeen, the British foreign secretary, mentioned sending "thirty sail of the line" if war broke out over Oregon, and Polk about-faced. For details, see Nugent, *Habits of Empire*, chap. 6.

¹³Polk, *Diary*, 1:445–46. Kendall had been Postmaster General under Jackson and Van Buren (1835–40) and remained a force in Democratic politics. Polk usually wrote Mormons in lower case as "mormons."

the mormons reached the country [California] I did not desire to have them the only U.S. forces in the country"—hence the limit of 500 volunteers. "The citizens now settled in California at Sutter's settlement and elsewhere," wrote Polk, "had learned that a large body of mormons were emigrating to that country and were alarmed at it, and that this alarm would be increased if the first organized troops of the U.S. that entered the country were mormons."¹⁴

The rest of the story is well known. As Polk's biographer, Charles G. Sellers, put it, "The impoverished exiles, anxious for the government's favor and military pay, hastened to supply them"—the 500 volunteers.¹⁵ By all reports they proved reliable. They behaved themselves better than the run of troops. They augmented the U.S. forces in California though they arrived after the fighting had ended. Many of them returned eastward to meet the Saints just arriving in Utah. According to Arrington, their cooperation netted the Saints \$50,000. About a year later, an editorial in the *Millennial Star* praised the battalion for its "extraordinary skill, intrepidity, and power of endurance . . . in accomplishing great and rapid marches through deserts and mountains, and unbridged rivers," all of which were "appreciated by the United States." The editorial also revealed that the bond between the Mormons and the United States and its war effort was not only patriotic but theological: "Those who are acquainted with the prophecies and history of the Book of Mormon must be aware that the American continent is to be the scene of great events,—and those events are near at hand."¹⁶

Exiles and refugees the Mormon pioneers may have been, but I find no evidence that they were in any sense opposed to U.S. expansion. They cheered on the American victory over Mexico and the tak-

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 1:449–50.

¹⁵Charles G. Sellers, *James K. Polk: Continentalist* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), 426. Helpful on the Mormon Battalion are Norma Baldwin Ricketts, *The Mormon Battalion: U.S. Army of the West, 1846–1848* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996); Hamilton Gardner, ed., "Report of Lieut. Col. P. St. George Cooke of His March from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to San Diego, Upper California," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (January 1954): 15–40; Daniel Tyler, *A Concise History of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War, 1846–1847* (1881; rpt., Chicago: Rio Grande Press, 1964); Richard O. Cowan, "The Mormon Battalion and the Gadsden Purchase," *BYU Studies* 37, no. 4 (1997–98): 48–64.

¹⁶"Editorial," *Millennial Star* 9 (June 15, 1847): 187.

ing of the Southwest. Prophecy was being fulfilled. Joseph Smith had written early in 1844 that the inclusion of Texas and Oregon, Mexico and Canada, indeed the world, was desirable; American values were universal and good; Washington had been “great” and “illustrious,” Franklin “that golden patriot.”¹⁷ No separatism here; quite the contrary.

THE STATE OF DESERET AND UTAH TERRITORY

Yet—and here ambiguity appears again—the abortive effort to create the State of Deseret can be seen as a political effort to create the kingdom of God on earth, surely part of the United States yet operating independently as far as possible. Brigham Young and his followers of course had to settle for territorial status in 1850 and the cords of control from the outside which that status inevitably entailed. For the next forty years—until Wilford Woodruff’s Manifesto, and forty-six years until statehood—an uneasy tension persisted in U.S.-Mormon relations. Still, the sovereignty of the United States over Utah and the Southwest was never in doubt; the Saints’ citizenship in the American republic was never in doubt; kingdom theology continued as an underpinning of the Saints’ acceptance and support of American expansion. With the creation of the Utah Territory, the first step in the imperial process—the acquisition and official recognition of the political entity—was in place, if not entirely in the way that Brigham Young and the other Saints wanted it to be.

THE INDIANS OF UTAH

The second step in the imperial process, that of dealing with the original inhabitants, was already under way by 1850. As elsewhere in the West, it would continue into the twentieth century. The move to Utah made Indian-Mormon contacts immediate, but on their arrival the Saints did not ask the red men’s permission. The chosen place was fortunate for them, by luck or design, because it placed the pioneers in something approximating a neutral zone, with the home turf of the Utes to their south and of the Shoshonis to their north. This location gave the newcomers breathing space until enough of them were present to outnumber the local Indians. Brigham Young estimated the Indian population of the region at 12,000 in 1847 (others put it higher), while the census estimate of white population in 1850

¹⁷Smith, “Views,” 29.

was 11,000. Then, as usually happened on American settlement frontiers, Indian numbers fell while whites rapidly increased—officially to 40,000 by 1860, but likely more.¹⁸

The Indians were widely dispersed and often at odds with each other, while the Saints were concentrated and united. However many the Utah Indians were, they were divided into four main tribes (Utes, Shoshonis, Paiutes, and Gosiutes), mostly subdivided into small bands. In no way did they match the tight social organization of the whites. The Indian fall-off in numbers had the usual causes: white occupation of grazing lands; plowing up some of the best hunting ground to grow crops; actual violent skirmishes; and above all, contagious diseases which killed, crippled, or sterilized non-immune Indians.¹⁹

Brigham Young was no Andrew Jackson, who scorched the earth and ethnically cleansed as he marauded through the Southeast. No parallel is exact, and once more the Mormon encounter with the local Indians both fit the usual pattern and differed from it. The early years were rough for all sides. Young warned in 1849 against getting chummy with Indians: "If you would have dominion over them, for their good . . . you must not treat them as your equals. . . . If they are your equals, you cannot raise them up to you."²⁰ Matters worsened, and in February 1850 he so feared that the Saints might be wiped out that, briefly, he ordered all-out combat. As Howard Christy summed it up, "The best land was to be taken up as fast as possible without payment, the Indians were to be strictly excluded, and stealing by Indians was often to bring swift

¹⁸This is the figure for Utah Territory in the 1860 U.S. Census. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (2 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), series A195, 1:35.

¹⁹Helpful on Mormons and the Utah Indians are James B. Allen and Ted J. Warner, "The Gosiute Indians in Pioneer Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 39 (Spring 1971): 162–77; Juanita Brooks, "Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 12 (January–April 1944): 1–48; Floyd A. O'Neil, "The Utes, Southern Paiutes, and Gosiutes," in *The Peoples of Utah*, edited by Helen Z. Papanikolas (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1976), 27–49.

²⁰Quoted in Howard A. Christy, "Open Hand and Mailed Fist: Mormon-Indian Relations in Utah, 1847–1852," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46 (Summer 1978): 223 note 27.

punishment.”²¹ But this policy also worked poorly, and in November 1850 the First Presidency asked John Bernhisel, its representative in Washington, to persuade the government to move the Indians outside the newly established territory, “because they are doing no good here to themselves or any body else”²² and to “extinguish Indian title,” in the legalese of the day.

Removal happened, though not until (chiefly) 1856 and again in 1861 when several groups from Utah and Colorado were taken to a new reservation in the high Uintah Valley. By 1856 the situation of the Utes, the Paiutes, and worst of all the Gosiutes had sunk to the point of starvation. Brigham’s announcement in 1851 that it was cheaper to feed them than to fight them again set him apart from Indian killers like Jackson, but it did not mean an easy time for the Indians. Their literal dying-out in southwestern Utah, where they competed unsuccessfully with Mormons and silver miners, is well told by W. Paul Reeve in his recent book. There the complexity, as well as the inexorability, of the Indians’ disappearance becomes clear.²³

In all these respects the Mormons’ encounter with the Indians of Utah closely fit the usual and, in our eyes, disastrous (for the Indians), frontier experience. How the encounter varied from the frontier norm resulted from Mormon scripture and theology. Therein, the Indians were Lamanites, fallen but redeemable. Young declared in September 1850: “Do we wish the Indians any evil? No we would do them good, for they are human beings, though most awfully degraded.”²⁴ The solution, beginning in 1850, was to create Indian farms and missions. Even intermarriage was encouraged, at least in some times and places. The Saints shared the prevailing American belief that land belonged to those who made the best use of it, which meant farming,

²¹Ibid., 227.

²²Brigham Young, quoted in Eugene E. Campbell, *Establishing Zion: The Mormon Church in the American West, 1847–1869* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), chap 6, p. 6; see also chap. 7.

²³W. Paul Reeve, *Making Space on the Western Frontier: Mormons, Miners, and Southern Paiutes* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), esp. chap. 7. See also Allison L. Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question, 1870–1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. chap 3, “Western Expansion and the Politics of Federalism: Indians, Mormons, and Territorial Statehood, 1878–1887.”

²⁴Campbell, *Establishing Zion*, chap 6, p. 7.

certainly not hunting and gathering. The Indians did not agree and were dismissed as shiftless. The farms and missions persisted for some time; but as Howard Christy writes, "The effort largely miscarried. The farms were small, ill equipped, ill maintained, and sparsely attended, and, one by one, most were abandoned only a short time after they were established. . . . Honorable intent notwithstanding, the Mormon Indian farm program was doomed to fail."²⁵

And so stage two of the empire-building process took place in Utah as it did nearly everywhere else, with the Indian population shrinking and consigned to reservations. Those reservations, before long, were subject to severalty when the Dawes Act kicked in after 1887.

THE SETTLEMENT PROCESS

The third stage of creating the continental empire, the settlement or occupation of the land by whites of European stock, of course happened contemporaneously with the subjugation of the Indians. And then it kept on happening in the second and third generation, from about 1860 to 1900.²⁶ Into the Snake River Valley, into Colorado, southwestward to St. George and (early on) to San Bernardino, up into Alberta and down into Mexico, as well as thoroughly covering nearly every part of Utah where settlements could sustain themselves, went the Latter-day Saints. As a settlement process, as part of the creation of the continental empire, the job was irreversibly completed by around 1890.

THE OFFSHORE EMPIRE

But history did not stop in 1890—neither developments within Mormonism, nor in its relations to the U.S. government, nor the continuation of American empire-building. The latter had already begun a new offshore phase that had started almost immediately after the continental empire was in place. The call of Manifest Destiny began to ring across the Pacific and, in a few years, around the Caribbean. It

²⁵Howard Christy, "Indian Farms," in *Historical Atlas of Mormonism*, edited by S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 112–13.

²⁶Lynn A. Rosenvall, "Expansion outside the Wasatch Front," in *ibid.*, 96–97.

crossed party lines, switching from the Democracy of Jefferson, Jackson, and Polk to the new Republican Party of William H. Seward, James G. Blaine, and, soon, William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt. Although the offshore empire seldom involved settlement as the continental empire did, it meant acquiring new territories and dealing with the people living in them.

In 1857, serious discussions began with Czarist Russia about buying Russian America. As we know, that was a dangerous and difficult year for the Saints in Utah. Washington was sending an army, and it was bearing down on them. Brigham Young laid out a defensive policy that included, potentially, leveling Salt Lake City and the other settlements. The Utah War and the Saints' situation has been vividly described most recently in the Walker-Turley-Leonard book, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*.²⁷

The Archive of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs contains two reports from Edouard de Stoeckl, the Russian envoy to Washington, to Prince Aleksandr Mikhailovich Gorchakov, the Foreign Minister, dated November 13, 1857, in the Western calendar. Stoeckl had

²⁷The 1857 "Utah War" has been described often. See, for example, Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, Jr., and Glen M. Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 32–73. Relevant documents for the most crucial period may be found in William P. MacKinnon, *At Sword's Point, Part 1: A Documentary History of the Utah War to 1858* (Norman: Arthur H. Clark Company, an imprint of the University of Oklahoma Press, 2008) (Part 2 forthcoming in 2009–10), in The Arthur H. Clark Company's series KINGDOM IN THE WEST: THE MORMONS AND THE AMERICAN FRONTIER; Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 300; Newell G. Bringham, *Brigham Young and the Expanding American Frontier* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1986), 136–42; Norman F. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict 1850–1859* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1960), 1–6, 168–75, 200–203. Aspects of Mormon relations with the United States in this period are visited in, *inter alia*, J. Keith Melville, *Conflict and Compromise: The Mormons in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Politics* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Printing Service for the Political Science Dept., 1974); Richard D. Poll, "The Mormon Question Enters National Politics, 1850–1856," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (April 1957): 117–31; Wayne K. Hinton, "Millard Fillmore, Utah's Friend in the White House," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 48 (Spring 1980): 112–28; George U. Hubbard, "Abraham Lincoln as Seen by the Mormons," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 31 (Spring 1963): 91–108.

just met with President James Buchanan to discuss Russian America. The first report concerned clashes between American fur traders and the Russians, which had been going on for years. The second concerned rumors of Mormons migrating to Russian America from the United States. Stoeckl asked the president about these rumors. According to Nikolay Bolkhovitinov, the Russian historian who found these reports, "Buchanan remarked 'with a smile': 'How to settle this question is your worry; as for us, we would be very happy to get rid of them.'" Stoeckl observed that, if the rumor were true, Russia would either have to fight them off or give them some territory. The report mentioned "a very improbable number of them."²⁸ The total LDS membership approached 80,000 by then,²⁹ and the logistics of moving them—how? marching everybody to the Pacific Coast, filling a mighty (and nonexistent) fleet with them, and offloading them in Alaska?—would have been utterly impossible. But the fear of any such invasion helped persuade Czar Alexander II to consider selling. In this backhanded way, the Saints may have been instruments of American expansion.

The Civil War put the Alaska sale on hold. But Secretary of State Seward revived it with famous success as soon as peace broke out. The result was the cleanest deal, in my view, of any U.S. territorial acquisition: clear title (unlike Louisiana), no double-crossing your allies (as in 1782 of France and Spain), no filibusters (as in Spanish Florida), only cash for land. The United States wanted to buy, the Czar for his own reasons wanted to sell, and the only problem was to jockey around for an agreed-upon price, a goal achieved in the spring of 1867. No more was heard of making it a new home for the Mormons, although the low

²⁸Nikolay N. Bolkovitinov, "The Crimean War and the Emergence of Proposals for the Sale of Russian America, 1853–1861," *Pacific Historical Review* 59 (February 1990): 36–37. The complete text of Stoeckl's report is in *Arkhiv vneshney politiki Rossi* (Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia), f. Glavnyy arkhiv 1–9, 1857–1868, d. 4, fos. 21–26 (36n52). See also Gene A. Sessions and Stephen W. Stathis, "The Mormon Invasion of Russian America: Dynamics of a Potent Myth," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 45 (Winter 1977): 22–35.

²⁹Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 164, states that in 1860 "total LDS Church membership was reported at 80,000." This figure includes Mormons everywhere, not only in Utah.

esteem in which Alaska was held in some quarters surfaced in the early 1870s in the form of proposals to make it a prison colony, an "American Botany Bay."³⁰ This did not happen either; nor did much else happen in Alaska until the gold rushes of the late 1890s.

From this point to the turn of the century, there was a surprising congruence of Mormon attitudes toward the succession of offshore acquisitions. The *Deseret News* approvingly announced on April 3, 1867, the signing of the U.S.-Russian Alaska purchase treaty and, two weeks later, rejoiced in the Senate's ratification.³¹

The United States made no significant expansionist moves during the depression-ridden 1870s, but it did begin dallying with Samoa and Hawaii. (Mormon missionaries had been laboring in both places for twenty years.)³² In 1899, when American Samoa was definitively carved out, the *Deseret News* raised no objection to the United States's permanent presence; and a missionary to Samoa, William O. Lee, reported favorably in the *Improvement Era* on how things were going there.³³ In the same issue, the *Improvement Era* ran a carefully argued essay by J. M. Tanner, president of the "Agricultural College" in Logan, considering the question of Philippine annexation and whether

³⁰Ted C. Hinckley, "Alaska as an American Botany Bay," *Pacific Historical Review* 42 (February 1973): 1-19.

³¹Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830-present), April 3, 1867, LDS Church History Library, 15 E. North Temple Street, Salt Lake City. I also cite other references from the *Deseret News* and the *Deseret Evening News* as they appear in the Journal History. Regarding the *Deseret News* and its role in the Church in this period, see Monte Burr McLaws, *Spokesman for the Kingdom: Early Mormon Journalism and the Deseret News, 1830-1898* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1977).

³²"Journal of John Stillman Woodbury, 1825-1877," holograph in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, typescript "copied by the Brigham Young University Library, 1945-1946." Great-grandson Max Woodbury graciously provided me with a copy of the typescript. See also Paul Bailey, *Hawaii's Royal Prime Minister: The Life & Times of Walter Murray Gibson* (New York: Hastings House, 1980); Gwynn Barrett, "Walter Murray Gibson: The Shepherd Saint of Lanai Revisited," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 40 (Spring 1972): 142-62.

³³Wm. O. Lee, "Political Samoa," *Improvement Era* 2 (April 1899): 435ff.

the Constitution applied to such "territories." He left the impression that, while the occupations of Cuba and the Philippines raised many questions and were not unmixed blessings, the United States had little alternative but to annex them. It should also, however, reform its colonial civil service to govern "these unfortunate races" well, using Germany and England as administrative models. "Wise administration and just government will do much to transform them from the ignorant and barbarous condition in which they now exist into more enlightened and progressive peoples," Tanner wrote.³⁴

On Hawaii, the *Deseret News* was decidedly expansionist. It was entirely supportive of the 1893 *coup d'état* by the white planter and financial elite, the *haoles*, who overthrew the native monarchy of Queen Liliuokalani. A year later, the paper came out for U.S. annexation; and in the summer of 1898, when annexation was achieved, it reported that the announcement made the Hawaiian people "simply wild with enthusiasm"—although, in fact, more than 90 percent of Hawaiians signed petitions of protest.³⁵ An article in the *Improvement Era* at about that time, by Benjamin Cluff Jr., the president of BYU, while outlining both sides, favored the *haole* side, and the editor reiterated Joseph Smith's 1844 words in favor of territorial annexation.³⁶

Thus, the Mormon community probably, and the *Deseret News* consistently, supported each territorial acquisition to 1898. The run-up to the war with Spain over Cuba in 1898 was couched in terms of liberating the Cubans from Spanish oppression and atrocities, not territorial acquisition. Yet it's worth noting that the Church leadership, the newspaper, and Utah's two U.S. Senators favored going to war. Apostle Brigham Young Jr. publicly opposed it as did a few other leaders in the weeks before Congress declared war. But President Wilford Woodruff and First Counselor George Q. Cannon summoned Young and "chastised" (D. Michael Quinn's word) him for his position. He said no more about it and that, Quinn argues, was the end of "selective pacifism" which dated to Brigham Sr.'s day. Indeed, Quinn sees this episode as the end of the conflation in Mormon

³⁴J. M. Tanner, "Territorial Expansion," *Improvement Era* 2 (April 1899): 432.

³⁵Nugent, *Habits of Empire*, 263; Journal History, February 3, 1893; March 31, 1894; July 11, 27, 1898.

³⁶Benjamin Cluff Jr., "The Hawaiian Islands and Annexation," *Improvement Era* 1 (April 1898): 435-46, 455.

scripture of “the warlike Jehovah and the pacifistic Christ” and the resulting historic ambivalence about war and peace. Henceforth, he concludes, Mormons followed the secular authority.³⁷

Very soon the Spanish-American War had begun and ended in Cuba and Puerto Rico. (It would rage on for four more years in the Philippines.) The *Deseret News*, from 1899 on, condemned the Filipino “insurrectionists,” favored U.S. annexation of the Philippines and of Puerto Rico, and supported the Platt Amendment, which made Cuba a protectorate of the United States through control of its finance, public order, and foreign affairs. It grandly stated that Cuba “owes its very existence to the magnanimity of the United States.” In 1906 the *News* averred that the Platt Amendment “will prove the salvation of the country.”³⁸

A theory and philosophy of empire, specifically an American empire, is embedded in a *Deseret Evening News* editorial of March 26, 1900. The United States

should bring those people [the Filipinos] to see and recognize the superiority of civilization, and to give them an opportunity to adopt it. . . . The light is not to be hidden under the table. Superior gifts and graces bring with them responsibilities toward others who are less favored. This is the principle of expansion. It does not mean that a stronger nation has the right to oppress the weaker states, as European mother countries too often have done by their colonial policy of robbery. It is a duty first of all—the duty of extending light, knowledge, freedom and happiness wherever their influence goes. And this is clearly the duty of this country to all the late Spanish colonies. Providence itself has entrusted them to the care of the American Republic.³⁹

Henry Cabot Lodge, Theodore Roosevelt, or Albert Beveridge could not have said it better.

The newspaper, at the conclusion of the war against the Filipinos, did recognize and condemn the American atrocities involved, but made it clear that it was in no way attacking the U.S. Army or government. However, as late as 1911, touting American contributions to

³⁷D. Michael Quinn, “The Mormon Church and the Spanish-American War: An End to Selective Pacifism,” *Pacific Historical Review* 43 (August 1974): 343, 362.

³⁸Journal History, October 1, 1906.

³⁹Ibid., March 26, 1900.

the Philippines—sewerage, schools, reduction of smallpox, etc.—it denounced foolish Filipinos and American anti-imperialists who were calling for self rule. The Filipinos, said the *News*, would not be ready for that step for “perhaps two generations . . . anarchy would surely come were independence granted.”⁴⁰

Similarly, the *Deseret Evening News* supported further U.S. empire-building in the Caribbean. Announcing the American-supported coup of Panamanians against Colombia in November 1903 and the subsequent treaty presenting the Canal Zone to the United States, the newspaper foresaw a “glorious era” coming in Panama, wherein the United States, its “big brother,” would ensure its prosperity.⁴¹ When the United States made Nicaragua a protectorate in 1909 under the Roosevelt “police power” corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, the *News* hoped that we Americans would use the occasion to help the Nicaraguans to elect “a good, humane government, as has been done in Cuba.”⁴² In 1917, when the United States bought the Danish West Indies, which then became the U.S. Virgin Islands, the *Deseret News* not only approved the purchase because it protected the newly opened Panama Canal—the Wilson Administration’s main justification—it also exulted that with the acquisition of St. Croix, American possessions extended across more than 180 degrees of the earth’s surface. Like Britain, the sun would never set on U.S. “territory.” Thus, an American standing on St. Croix “and looking toward the east, may proudly feel that the rays of the same sun that kiss at its rising the folds of Old Glory at the reveille drumbeat, are also saluting at the same moment in Balabac [the westernmost island in the Philippines] the lowering of the ensign at the retreat parade.”⁴³

In all of its unremitting praise of imperial expansion, the newspaper made almost no mention of the violence and repression that marked the Philippine-American war of 1898–1902, or the landings of the Marines and civil authorities in Cuba, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Panama, and Haiti. Rather, the picture presented was utterly antiseptic. It was as if no downside accompanied what the paper saw as the ongoing triumph of civilization over barbarism and ignorance.

Only once did it even hint at the embryo of a later non-violent,

⁴⁰Ibid., November 7, 1911.

⁴¹Ibid., November 13, 28, 1903.

⁴²Ibid., November 19, 1909.

⁴³Ibid., January 23, 1917.

proto-pacifist position, and did so only by a remarkable rewriting of nineteenth-century history. An editorial in late 1916 described James K. Polk as “a thorough pacifist”—the Polk who nearly blustered his way into a war with Britain over Oregon, and who engineered the outbreak of the war with Mexico for the purpose of conquering New Mexico and California. The editorial also found James Madison to be pacifistic, despite his declaration of war on Britain in 1812 and further praised Andrew Jackson for avoiding foreign war—which he did while he was president while simultaneously ignoring the vicious campaigns he had earlier led against the Creeks and the Seminoles, against Britain (recall the executions of Ambrister and Arbuthnot) and against Spain (which he explicitly and vehemently hated).⁴⁴ I can only explain this version of history as an extreme expression of American exceptionalism and self-exculpation. In short, by the time the United States entered World War I, the *Deseret News* and, one suspects, the wider Mormon community, was thoroughly in synch with the “large policy” of Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge, and other Republican imperialists and that it would favor the equally aggressive, if less belligerently phrased, “idealism” of Woodrow Wilson.

I am persuaded by the scholarship of Jan Shipps, Kathleen Flake, Klaus Hansen, and others that, between 1890 and 1908 or so, Mormonism in the Great Basin changed enormously—as a reaction to the appalling Edmunds-Tucker Act, the Manifesto of Wilford Woodruff, the exigencies attendant upon statehood, and the battle over the seating of Reed Smoot in the U.S. Senate. The strong tensions of the nineteenth century between Mormon millennialism and American ways greatly eased, with acceptance of the idea that the millennial emergence of the kingdom of God on earth was to come later rather than sooner.⁴⁵ As Hansen wrote, the years from 1890 to 1920 saw a “cumulative and irreversible change in the character of Mormon Life.”⁴⁶ There is now a substantial literature on this shift during the twenty years from the late 1880s to 1908. On the matter of Mormon agreement with the expansionism of the United States and the acqui-

⁴⁴Ibid., October 10, 1916.

⁴⁵In addition to the books cited in the next footnote, for nineteenth-century tensions, see David L. Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847–1896* (Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1998), esp. 15–18, 35–36, 45–48, 363–68.

⁴⁶Shipps, *Mormonism*; Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Reli-*

sition of the offshore empire in the Pacific and the Caribbean, I have to say that I do not see a gap wide enough to slide a piece of paper through, between the Republican "large policy" and, at a minimum, the editorials of the *Deseret News* and statements by Church leaders that I have come across. Nor am I aware of any significant Mormon anti-imperialist thought or action at that time. Perhaps I've missed it, but if so, others have too; I do not find that anti-imperialism—in the period of the "new manifest destiny" between 1898 and World War I—has surfaced in the secondary literature.

If I'm correct in this observation—that pro-imperialism was the majority view—then Mormons paralleled other Americans in yet another way: on the continuity of the imperialist habit. It was long thought that U.S. imperialism exploded out of nowhere in 1898, set off by the sinking of the *U.S.S. Maine* and that it soon gave way to Wilsonian idealism. Not so. There was no clean break in American empire-building from Benjamin Franklin's adamancy in 1782 about the Mississippi River as the western boundary all the way through to the Platt Amendment and the protectorate policy of the early twentieth century. Building the offshore empire followed seamlessly from building the continental empire. And Mormons, like other Americans, supported both.

AGREEING TO DISAGREE, FROM 1919 ONWARD

For the first time, however, Mormons very soon started argu-

gious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Klaus J. Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 206; Ethan R. Yorgason, *Transformation of the Mormon Culture Region* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003). On the run-up to statehood, see Howard R. Lamar, "Statehood for Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 39 (Fall 1971): 307–2; Gustive O. Larson, *The 'Americanization' of Utah for Statehood* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1971), esp. chap. 1, "The Political Kingdom of God," and 256–57 on "The Manifesto"; E. Leo Lyman, *Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Lyman, "Statehood, Political Allegiance, and Utah's First U.S. Senate Seats: Prizes for the National Parties and Local Factions," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 63 (Fall 1995): 341–56; Jan Shipps, "Utah Comes of Age Politically: A Study of the State's Politics in the Early Years of the Twentieth Century," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 35 (Spring 1967): 91–111.

ing with each other about foreign policy and empire-building. It is as if the internal changes of 1890–1908, having been made and got through, permitted disagreement where, earlier, a solid front was essential. True enough, each U.S. war from the Mexican onward produced “ambiguities” in Mormon thought regarding the justice of war-making versus pacifism.⁴⁷ But not until the end of World War I did disagreements at the highest levels of the Church become public. The specific issue was whether the United States should join the League of Nations. During the war, Mormons rich and poor became avid buyers of Liberty Bonds and strong supporters of the American cause against German “aggression”; there were no “slackers” in Utah, Mormon or Gentile.⁴⁸ As for the league, the majority of Utahns, along with Americans elsewhere, supported it.

But the Church leadership splintered, as James B. Allen and others have pointed out. Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith, son of Joseph F. Smith who was Church president from 1901 to 1918 and who would himself become president in 1970, opposed the league, as did David O. McKay, who became president in 1951, and longtime Republican Senator Reed Smoot. But George F. Richards, who was also, like these three men, an apostle, believed that President Wilson had been “raised up” and that the league idea was “inspired of God.” (Reed Smoot could not have agreed less.) Finally, Heber J. Grant, who succeeded Joseph F. Smith as Church president in 1918, “fully and openly” backed Woodrow Wilson and the league, as did George H. Brimhall, president of BYU. All of them, however, as Allen pointed out, shared theological common ground: “The belief that God had inspired the founding fathers and was guiding the destiny of the country was a basic assumption on both sides,” as was the traditional idea that the U.S. Constitution was divinely inspired.⁴⁹

During the interwar years, three Latter-day Saints held very prominent positions in the federal government. Through the 1920s,

⁴⁷A useful, well-documented survey of anti-war sentiment (which is not, however, the same as anti-imperialism) is Robert Jeffrey Stott, “Mormonism and War: An Interpretative Analysis of Selected Mormon Thought regarding Seven American Wars” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974).

⁴⁸Marcia Black and Robert S. McPherson, “Soldiers, Savers, Slackers, and Spies: Southeastern Utah’s Response to World War I,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 63 (Winter 1995): 8, 14, 17.

⁴⁹James B. Allen, “Personal Faith and Public Policy: Some Timely Ob-

Senator Smoot and J. Reuben Clark Jr. at the State Department figured prominently in foreign affairs, though as ardent isolationists they should perhaps be called empire-reducers, not empire-builders. (The third, Marriner Eccles, came along in the 1930s and was arguably the most powerful of all, but his activities were in banking and finance, not foreign policy.⁵⁰) As a newly elected senator, Smoot had fought for four years (1903–07) to keep his Senate seat, but with the help of Theodore Roosevelt and others, he survived and became a hyper-orthodox Republican. Clark, an international lawyer, became Undersecretary of State in the late months of the Coolidge Administration and etched his name indelibly in American diplomatic history as author of the “Clark Memorandum” revoking the Roosevelt Corollary of 1904, a self-awarded license to take over errant Caribbean republics.⁵¹

The memorandum has almost universally been seen as an essential step toward Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “Good Neighbor” policy to

servations on the League of Nations Controversy in Utah,” *BYU Studies* 14 (Autumn 1973): 82, 90. Also helpful on Smoot is Milton R. Merrill, *Reed Smoot: Apostle in Politics* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1990): 240–41: “For Smoot, America was a religious concept. The Constitution was an inspired document.” But he opposed the league. For Smoot’s voting record, see Thomas G. Alexander, “Reed Smoot, the L.D.S. Church and Progressive Legislation, 1903–1933,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1972): 47–56. See also A. F. Cardon, “Senator Reed Smoot and the Mexican Revolutions,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 31 (Spring 1963): 151–61. On the Mormon concept of the U.S. Constitution as divinely inspired, see R. Collin Mangrum, “Mormonism, Philosophical Liberalism, and the Constitution,” *BYU Studies* 27 (Summer 1987): 119–37; Noel B. Reynolds, “The Doctrine of an Inspired Constitution,” *BYU Studies* 16 (Spring 1976): 315–40.

⁵⁰See Leonard J. Arrington, “Marriner Stoddard Eccles,” *Utah History Encyclopedia*, media.utah.edu/UHE/e/Eccles,Mariner.html (accessed April 6, 2009); Dean L. May, *From New Deal to New Economics: The Liberal Response to the Recession of 1937* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1981).

⁵¹See Frank W. Fox, *J. Reuben Clark: The Public Years* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press/Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1980), esp. chap. 26, “Undersecretary,” 503–21. Wide coverage of Clark’s life and thought appears in *BYU Studies* 13 (Spring 1973): whole issue, entitled “J. Reuben Clark, Jr., Diplomat and Statesman.” This issue was published as a book, edited by Ray C. Hillam, Charles D. Tate Jr., and Laura

ward Latin America, which in intention, if not always in action, temporarily though not forever, withdrew the United States from its previous imperialism in Latin America. Gene Sessions has argued that President Hoover would probably have renounced intervention anyway and that the memorandum served chiefly to help pass the Kellogg-Briand Treaty of 1928 renouncing war as an instrument of national policy.⁵² But throughout the hemisphere it signaled a new day, even though that day was yet to come. (The Marines stayed in Nicaragua until 1933 and Haiti until 1934.)

Clark was no Wilsonian nor a Rooseveltian liberal. He was, rather, a deep-dyed isolationist, and he remained so as the United States entered World War II, ultimately used the atomic bomb, and created the United Nations afterward. Clark opposed all three measures. He had left public office in 1931 for a position in Heber J. Grant's First Presidency, and Smoot was defeated for reelection in 1932 after serving thirty years in the U.S. Senate as one of its most powerful members. Both were patriots, and both were high-ranking Mormons, beyond any question. Both may be called right-wing Republicans, in the context of the interwar period and beyond. As such, during the 1930s, the leadership was to the right of the rank and file, as the 1936 election showed when the First Presidency openly supported Alf Landon but the state, 69 percent Mormon, voted 69 percent for Roosevelt.⁵³

After 1945 the empire-building of the United States took a new turn: nonterritorial, but militarily and economically imperial, in the role of chief opponent of Soviet and Chinese Communism, chief rebuilder of Europe, and ultimately, after 1991, the world's sole superpower. In the process it launched wars of "containment" in Korea and Vietnam. Mormons reacted to this new imperialism not monolithically, but in a range of ways.

Wadley, under the same title (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1973). Also useful is D. Michael Quinn, *Elder Statesman: A Biography of J. Reuben Clark* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002).

⁵²Gene A. Sessions, "The Clark Memorandum Myth," *The Americas* 34 (July 1977): 40-58.

⁵³Brian Q. Cannon, "Mormons and the New Deal: The 1936 Presidential Election in Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 67 (Winter 1999): 4-22; Frank H. Jonas and Garth N. Jones, "Utah Presidential Elections, 1896-1952," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (October 1956): 289-307.

As Claudia Bushman wrote, citing Armand Mauss, "By 1950 or so, Mormons had entered mainstream America with an unrivaled patriotism, living the American Dream."⁵⁴ By the 1960s, however, when the so-called "counter-culture" emerged, when the two Kennedys and Martin Luther King were assassinated, and when campus protests erupted, Mormons by contrast looked to the Right. As Jan Shippo observed in *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, "They became 'more American than the Americans.'"⁵⁵ The response of Mormons to the U.S.'s post-1945 wars revealed divisions reminiscent of the 1919–20 fight over the League of Nations. David O. McKay, who became Church president in 1951, saw the Korean conflict as part of the good fight against the spread of communism; but Reuben Clark, whom McKay retained as counselor in the First Presidency, found it unconstitutional.⁵⁶

The reaction to the Vietnam War was divided and deep. It occasioned a real soul-searching into Mormon theology regarding war. Was the Vietnam conflict, as one author put it, a "just war" or "just a war"? Controversy on this question appeared in a number of places; to me, the best elaboration was in *Dialogue* in 1967, when Eugene England, a former Air Force officer who had become an English professor, based his opposition to the war on Mormon scriptures and theology while, in the same issue, also using sacred documents and ideas, anthropologist John L. Sorenson argued that it was indeed a "just war."⁵⁷ Again, as they had done in 1919, committed Mormons could take opposing positions on foreign policy issues, including empire-building, grounding those positions in citations from the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants. As Ray Hiram wrote in 1985,

⁵⁴Claudia L. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism: Latter-day Saints in Modern America* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006), 183.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 185; Jan Shippo, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 100.

⁵⁶Ray C. Hiram and David M. Andrews, "Mormons and Foreign Policy," *BYU Studies* 25 (Winter 1985): 63.

⁵⁷Eugene England, "The Tragedy of Vietnam and the Responsibility of Mormons," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2 (Winter 1967): 71–91; John L. Sorenson, "Vietnam: Just a War, or a Just War?," *ibid.*, 91–100. See also Ronald W. Walker, "Sheaves, Bucklers and the State: Mormon Leaders Respond to the Dilemmas of War," *Sunstone* 7 (July–August 1982): 43–56.

"Generally, the only position they [leaders and members] consistently assume is opposition to war and coercion as means of resolving international disputes."⁵⁸

In May of 1981 the First Presidency issued one of its very rare (at least in recent times) statements on a policy issue when it denounced the proposed MX system and the whole idea of nuclear proliferation. The statement may have been colored by NIMBY ("not in my backyard") concerns, but quite independently of that, it proclaimed that "it would be 'ironic' to base these weapons of mass destruction in the same general area where the Church carries forth 'the gospel of peace to the peoples of the earth.'"⁵⁹ I leave for another day the very recent military incursions into Iraq and Afghanistan, and the existence today of over 700 military bases around the world—evidence of the global empire. Here I note only that the internationalization of the Church in recent decades has made a simple spread-eagle American patriotism quite problematic, as if it weren't already. As I've tried to show, the LDS posture on territorial acquisitions and wars was never "my country right or wrong," but rather more nuanced, especially after World War I. As Canadian Marc Schindler wrote in *Dialogue* in 2004: "The traditional nationalism, or ardent patriotism shown by U.S. Latter-day Saints, will continue unabated. But they are also free to form stances which oppose wars undertaken by the United States on the grounds that they are not necessarily 'virtuous' wars. Members must make those decisions as individuals, but both sides will have sufficient religious iconography and texts upon which to build their cases."⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

To conclude very briefly: My original hypothesis was that, at the time of the migration to Utah, the Saints were fleeing the United States, not extending it, and that only at some later time did Mormons adopt and assimilate to the general culture as regards empire-building, whether continental or offshore. The question was where and when that shift took place. I was wrong; from the time of the Mormon Battalion, or even earlier in Joseph Smith's "Views" on Oregon and

⁵⁸Hillam and Andrews, "Mormons and Foreign Policy," 67.

⁵⁹Steven A. Hildreth, "The First Presidency Statement on MX in Perspective," *BYU Studies* 22 (Spring 1982): 223.

⁶⁰Marc A. Schindler, "The Ideology of Empire: A View from America's Attic," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 37 (Spring 2004): 72.

Texas, there never was a wide separation between Mormon and general American ideas of empire. I find that, as far as I can trace Mormons' positions on the matter, they were strongly patriotic, expansionist, pro-imperial, Manifest-Destinarian, from the start, and—as a group, not unanimously—have not stopped. They have espoused a politically conservative kind of Americanism—which in external relations means expansionist and assertive—since Joseph Smith wrote his “Views.” The majority still do, though dissenters in substantial numbers and even in high places have surfaced since 1919 and especially over Vietnam and the more aggressive assertions of global imperialism since then. What is relatively new, since 1919 or perhaps the 1960s, is that there is now expressed a critical Americanism, a “left” point of view, a pacifism that is theologically and scripturally grounded. It appears to me that the transformations of 1890–1920 permitted this development.

However, it should also be recognized that, in its apostolic era, roughly before 1890, it was not the American empire but the Mormons' kingdom of God on earth that they were creating and fostering. The practical result may have been roughly the same, but the theology was unique. Perhaps it is fair to say that the United States has always been, in some sense, a millennial project itself and that the existence of a specific kind of millennialism within it or beside it meant natural congruence, even if not immediately. By 1919 it was possible for Mormons, high and low, from General Authorities to the rank-and-file, to espouse varying or opposing positions on U.S. foreign policy yet to do so all within the Mormon framework. It just took a little time to find the flexibility within that framework.



Richard Carwardine

RELIGION AND NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION IN THE AGE OF LINCOLN

Richard Carwardine

I

IN 1815, IN THE GLOW of the good feelings prompted by the return of peace, American citizens looked with unprecedented confidence to their republic's future. For communities of the pious, the young new nation presented an arena of seemingly boundless opportunity. Here was a mobile people, free from the reins of a confessional state, universally familiar with the claims of Christianity, and open to the ministry of the ambitious and enterprising. Yet that very mobility, the communications and commercial revolution of which it was a part, the distinctive demography of the United States, and the unique experiment in separating church and state, presented an enormous challenge, too. The trans-Appalachian West cried out for civilizing institutions; migration from the countryside and from Europe swelled the numbers in booming towns and cities; public education fell short of the needs of a youthful population.

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Over the next fifty years—from Abraham Lincoln’s boyhood to his death in 1865—devout Americans in general and evangelical Protestants in particular threw themselves with astonishing energy into the project of sustaining and advancing a Christian republic. This goal they would pursue by aggressive evangelism, the moral improvement programmes of the churches and benevolent reform societies, and the processes of republican politics. If an anxious concern for social order prompted some, the prevailing mood was set by an enterprising majority who offered an optimistic faith which celebrated spiritual liberty, personal autonomy, and self-improvement, through *self-discipline* and *self-control*. The scale and enterprise of evangelical operations during these years bespeaks far less a defensive mood than a largely sanguine, even millennialist, temper.

These were years, too, in which the future of the political nation was bitterly contested by sectional constituencies whose conflicting interests would prove irreconcilable within the framework of peaceable politics. It would take a civil war to determine not only that the nation would survive but that it would do so freed from human bondage, if not its scars. This political narrative and the story of American religion in these years are not one and the same, but neither are they disconnected. A single lecture cannot do adequate justice to this relationship, but let me use the occasion to address three lines of inquiry. To what extent did religious forces fracture the nation during the antebellum years? In what ways did they sustain cohesion? And what role did they play in wartime as Lincoln and his administration struggled to save the American Union? My main focus will be on the era’s dominant Protestantism and—within that—on its most influential, evangelical strain.

Broadly speaking, there are two perspectives on the religion of this era and what it meant for national integration. Both recognize the republic’s religious diversity and the denominational rivalries to which the free market in religion gave rise, but they draw very different conclusions about what that pluralism signified.

One reading stresses the fundamentally tolerant accommodation operating amongst the mainstream churches. Especially influential here was Robert Baird’s study, *Religion in America*, first published in 1844. A Presbyterian, Baird drew the key dividing line between Evangelicals (notably Congregationalists, Regular Baptists, Methodists, low-church Episcopalians, and Presbyterians), and non-Evangelicals. Although the latter included swelling numbers of Catholics and

Mormons, Baird was sure that the future lay with the Evangelicals, who should be seen "as branches of one great body." After all, they exhibited what he called "a most remarkable coincidence of view on all important points": a Trinitarian God; the depravity of humankind; Christ's atonement; regeneration by the Holy Ghost; and a final judgment.¹ All agreed that, to qualify for full church communion, men and women had to profess a personal experience of salvation and give evidence of a moral life.

This emphasis on unity and convergence dominated scholarly church history for much of the twentieth century. William Warren Sweet put at the heart of the national story the cooperation of what he termed "the great Protestant churches" in civilizing the moving line of westward settlement. Winthrop Hudson, Sidney Mead, and the sociologist Will Herberg, likewise saw consensus as the key to the workings of American religious pluralism.²

More recently, however, historians have highlighted the chronic sectarianism and divisions of the American religious universe; they note the ease with which new sects and movements have sprung up in each generation; and judge that sectarianism has not become less intense, or divisions less profound, with the passing of time. There is no livelier a challenge to the notion of Protestant hegemony and consensus than the work of Laurence Moore, who has sought to treat Mormons, Catholics, Jews, Christian Scientists, and other so-called "outsiders" less as aberrations in the larger story than as dynamic forces to be fully incorporated into the history of American religion, not least for the way they nurtured their sense of American identity by defining themselves against the dominant culture.

¹Robert Baird, *Religion in America; or, An Account of the Origin, Relation to the State, and Present Condition of the Evangelical Churches in the United States, with Notices of the Unevangelical Denominations* (1844; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856 printing), 370.

²R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), vii–xv, 3–21; William Warren Sweet, *The Story of Religions in America* (1930; rev. ed., New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950); Winthrop S. Hudson, *The Great Tradition of the American Churches* (New York: Harper, 1953); Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1955).

To argue, as I shall do here, that the dominant Protestantism of this era inspired both consensus and conflict within the new nation might seem *prima facie* evidence of feeble-mindedness. However, my argument does not deny, but rather builds upon, the insights of the post-consensus school. First, I want to suggest that the lines of division between denominations cannot be simply dismissed as superficial, for even within evangelical Protestantism competition could be fierce and profoundly meaningful. Then, second, I shall show that Protestantism nevertheless continued in important ways to function as an integrating, cohesive, and unifying force, even into the late antebellum period, when many, with justice, were afraid of church splits and what they might lead to. For whatever the centrifugal forces at work, the religious market, in many respects, worked towards convergence, evangelicals continued to hold much in common, and in some ways the work of national integration occurred, not *despite* the diversity of American religion, but *because* of it. Finally, I shall show how the existential crisis of the nation rallied northern Protestants and, in nurturing the elements they held in common, created a uniting force essential to Lincoln's success.

II

Religious groups, already abundant in the era of the Revolution, continued to proliferate during the early decades of the nineteenth century. The most profound theological-cultural antagonisms remained those which set orthodox Christians against freethinkers and Deists, and Protestant against Catholic, while the emergence of Mormonism as a religious force provided an additional target for mainstream believers. The bloody landmarks of these hostilities included anti-Catholic riots, arson and murder in Boston, Philadelphia, and Louisville, and the assassination of Joseph Smith.

However, in a still overwhelmingly Protestant country, it was the multiplying divisions *within* that tradition which proved just as likely to engender abrasiveness and strife. Unitarian-Trinitarian controversies were largely confined to the Northeast and, more particularly, to Massachusetts (you may recall the jibe that Unitarians believed in the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the neighborhood of Boston); but the asperities amongst Protestant Trinitarians themselves had a more widespread capacity to poison interchurch relations. In many regions, Calvinist preachers and theologians tried to stay the advance of Methodist Arminianism. Conservative Old

School Presbyterians and Primitive Baptists sought to armor themselves against the “modern” or moderate Calvinism of New School theologians.

Let me offer a primary-colored case study. There is no better example of ferocious cultural warfare between different traditions, even *within* evangelical Protestantism, than the battles between the two giant denominational families of the era, the Baptists and Methodists, especially in the West and the South. These two churches grew astonishingly during the early Republic. By 1855 they accounted for two and three-quarters million of the four million Protestant Church members. During the early years of the Second Great Awakening, relations between the two churches were marked by unaccommodating competition for souls. The preachers’ metaphors were those of violent battle, and their allusions to explosives, firearms, and blowing adversaries “sky-high” give credibility to Nathan Bangs’s description of the western conflict between the two churches as a “sort of warfare.”³

Peter Cartwright’s celebrated account of his early career as a Methodist itinerant at times seems little more than a string of battles with evangelical rivals, in which Baptists constitute the principal foe. The opponents of infant baptism appear as predators, who would “rush in, and try to take our converts off into the water” and who “made so much ado about baptism by immersion, that the uninformed would suppose that heaven was an island, and there was no way to get there but by *diving* or *swimming*.”⁴

One way of looking at this contention is to see it as a passing phase and to stress the likenesses between the two movements. Both were churches of the plain folk. Both were especially strong in the West and South. Both were concerned principally with the individual’s direct experience of Christ. Heart-warming revivals were a feature of each church’s economy. Each prized lay activity. Each knew

³George Peck, *Early Methodism within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1860), 402; Alfred Brunson, *A Western Pioneer: or, Incidents in the Life and Times of Rev. Alfred Brunson, A.M., D.D., Embracing a Period of over Seventy Years*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati, Ohio: Carlton and Lanahan, 1972), 1:354; Nathan Bangs, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 4 vols. (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1838–41), 2:351.

⁴Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright: The Backwoods Preacher*, edited by W. P. Strickland (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1857), 64–72, 133–34.

the value of religious liberty and the cost of its defense. Each had reason to distrust what they perceived as Presbyterian and Congregationalist ambition. In this context, the differences over baptismal mode seem largely inconsequential.

This interpretation seriously understates the chronic antagonism between the two churches that stretched through to the Civil War, especially outside New England and the wider Northeast. Cartwright, even in his later years, refused to succumb to a more sentimental view of Baptists: "Although I have studied long and hard," he wrote acidly in 1856, "I have never to this day found out what a Baptist means by a union meeting."⁵ At the same time William D. Valentine, a North Carolinian, reflected: "The baptists are even now contemned, and hated, indeed they begin to be dreaded." The great armies of Baptists and Methodists faced one another "in threatening mien."⁶ He alluded to an extraordinarily rancid warfare afflicting the South and West throughout the 1850s, hostilities which call into question the assumption that this was a decade of growing evangelical harmony. This decade saw the conflict between the battalions of two of Tennessee's finest polemicists: the editor of the Nashville *Tennessee Baptist*, the Reverend James Robinson Graves, and the "fighting parson" of Knoxville, William Gannaway Brownlow.

Graves's attacks on Methodism for its crypto-Romanist theology, autocratic church government, and debauchery of women appeared as *The Great Iron Wheel; or, Republicanism Backwards and Christianity Reversed*, a 570-page book which ran through thirty editions. He portrayed the Methodist Church as a monstrous machine. Brainwashed Methodists were "deprived of every . . . right . . . for which blood was shed on the battle fields of the Revolution, or the hill of Calvary!" Methodism was un-American, un-republican, and anti-Christ—a disguised form of popery. It exerted its power through class meetings, characterized as a Romish confessional where lascivious priests encouraged members, especially women and girls, to parade their sins.⁷

Brownlow's even more bellicose riposte was *The Great Iron Wheel Examined; or, Its False Spokes Extracted, and an Exhibition of Elder Graves*,

⁵Ibid., 66.

⁶William D. Valentine, Diary, June 27, 1853, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

⁷J. R. Graves, *The Great Iron Wheel: or, Republicanism Backwards and*

Its Builder. Graves, whom Brownlow had earlier called “a loathsome blackguard” in the columns of his *Knoxville Whig* was now “the dirty ear-wig of Baptist exclusiveness,” “an offensive smell,” and “an inflated gasometer.” Brownlow spent little time on the issue of church government, though he made clear his contempt for Baptists’ congregational autonomy. (The denomination, he noted sarcastically, was “held together by the cohesive power and attraction of *water*.”) He chiefly addressed the persisting high Calvinism of Baptists and their baptismal practices. Restricting baptism to believing adults was not only an abominable heresy but, Brownlow added slyly, the product of a Popish cast of mind. Complete immersion, he insisted, found no support in scripture. By an imaginative historical method, he concluded that John the Baptist had baptized some three million people during a ministry of nine months. How could he have been a complete immersionist? He had no more than 1,300 hours for the act of baptizing, giving him “a fraction over *two thousand* [people] to the hour, *thirty* to each minute, or *one* to every two seconds! This, then, is baptizing with too great speed. . . . No man on earth could pass along a row of mortals, and pat one on the shoulders for every two seconds, much less plunge him under water and raise him up again.”⁸

The controversy over *The Great Iron Wheel* amounted to much more than personal pugilism. It related to two fundamentally antagonistic outlooks on the world, not to nuanced differences between two essentially similar denominations. First, Baptists have to be seen as intense individualists whose rejection of “organic Christianity” indicated a deep attachment to protecting individual autonomy through local independence. Most southern and western Baptists represented the poorer elements of a rural society that had long feared the centralization of power. They were likely to be anti-Federalist, Jeffersonian, or Jacksonian defenders of republican liberty against concentrations of power. Methodists, by contrast, blended the Protestant celebration of individual conscience and personal salvation with growing involvement in a world beyond the locality. Methodist congregations

Christianity Reversed (Nashville, Tenn.: Graves, Marks and Rutland, 1856), 153–67, 396–97.

⁸William G. Brownlow, *The Great Iron Wheel Examined; or, Its False Spokes Extracted, and an Exhibition of Elder Graves, Its Builder* (Nashville, Tenn.: For the author, 1856), 71–72, 88, 193–211, 219–23, 227, 242, 284, 303–4.

were tied, through their changing itinerant ministers, into an ecclesiastical structure that encouraged members to see themselves as part of a wider universe. The denomination's expanding empire connected ordinary members to a more sophisticated, even cosmopolitan, world. Whereas Baptists' church polity encouraged centrifugal provincialism and intense localism, Methodism tended to integrate its members into the region and even the nation.

Second, Methodists seem to have been more consistently supportive of energetic schemes of social and material improvement than their religious rivals. Methodists' enterprise in spiritual affairs was entirely consonant with the entrepreneurialism of the advancing market economy. Brownlow himself was one of southern Appalachia's most outspoken economic improvers. Amongst Baptists, on the other hand, were primitivists who feared commercial advance and the "steam religion" of a "money-hunting" priesthood. Unlike Christ and his disciples, who did not "make gain by godliness," modern improvers—temperance men, missionaries, tract publishers, Sunday-school promoters—based their projects on "beggars and money."⁹

Third, Methodists' concern for self-improvement seems to have made them more sensitive to notions of refinement and propriety. Methodists were convinced of their social superiority. Brownlow portrayed Baptists as hicks whose speech confirmed their public boast that "they have no 'edecation' or '*human larnin*'." The practice of total immersion allowed Brownlow not only to ridicule his rivals but to point to the "indecent personal exhibition[s]" involved in total immersion, where male preachers were known to change their clothes in the presence of females. Christ had

never intended *females* should submit . . . after that notoriously vulgar fashion of the Baptist denomination. . . . The usual custom throughout the South and West is to bandage the forehead of a delicate and beautiful female, and tie a handkerchief round her waist, as a sort of *handle* for an awkward Baptist preacher to fasten upon; and thus she is led into the water, step by step, in the presence of a mixed multitude, who are making their vulgar remarks and criticising her steps as she *fights down her clothes*, which rise to the top of the water, and float round her delicate and exposed limbs! She is taken by the preacher,

⁹*Primitive Baptist* (Tarborough, N.C.), 5 (1840): 70–71, 77–78, 120–21.

who fastens one hand in her *belt*, and the other on the back of her head; and after planting his big feet firm upon the bottom of the stream, and *squaring himself* as though he were about to knock a beef in the head, he plunges her into the water! . . . Respectable females com[e] out of the water with their thin garments sticking close to their skin, and exhibiting their *muscles* and *make* in so revolting a manner, that ladies present have felt constrained to surround them, so as to hide their persons from the gaze of the vulgar throng. I witnessed this disgusting sight several times in the spring of 1842, at the edge of Green's Mill-pond, in Jonesborough.¹⁰

Thus, during the 1850s, the West and South was "one great battlefield"; and in some areas, the conflict between Baptists and Methodists had repercussions for all areas of life. A Methodist preacher recalled that in eastern Tennessee the animus between the two churches then constituted "the bitterest denominational prejudice I ha[d] ever known anywhere"; in Clinton, "they had Methodist and Baptist Churches, schools, taverns, stores, blacksmith shops, and ferries across the river. Like the Jews and Samaritans, they had no dealings with each other whatever." He found that "most of the Methodists were Whigs, and most of the Baptists were Democrats," and their preachers were also political leaders.¹¹

Interdenominational conflict of this kind was just one aspect of ecclesiastical contention over the means by which God's kingdom would be realized in the United States. Equally divisive in the antebellum years were, of course, religious antagonisms over slavery. Here the conflict was less *between* denominations than *within* them. Moreover, the contention that fractured Methodists, Baptists Presbyterians, and other institutions into southern and northern branches yielded a bitter legacy of litigation, violence, and bloodshed within the communities of the pious. The individuals who peopled these institutions were not passive victims but active agents in the sundering of the nation.¹²

There was no single pathway or agency in the North's route

¹⁰Brownlow, *Great Iron Wheel Examined*, 99–100, 191, 202–03, 214–15.

¹¹Frank Richardson, *From Sunrise to Sunset: Reminiscence* (Bristol, Tenn.: King Printing, 1910), 107–8.

¹²Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 158–74, 245–48,

from unthinking tolerance of slavery to resigned acceptance, dislike, and distaste, and thence to outright opposition. But it is hard to overestimate the role of pious Christians, notably the converts of evangelical revivals, in the drive for a cleansed nation. It was evangelicals' ideological energy in particular that infused the era's assault on slavery as an archaic evil, and championed free wage labor as the embodiment of good. Most northern evangelicals kept their distance from the abolitionist minority, but they drew on an amalgam of enlightenment philosophy and biblical exegesis to deem it a cruel national sin that violated the slave's natural rights and the spirit of the Gospels.

Meanwhile southern evangelicals who, in the late eighteenth century, had included some of the boldest antislavery temperaments gradually succumbed to powerful elements in southern culture to fashion a usable defence of slavery. The South's deepening economic stake in slave-produced staples, the threat of slave revolts, the abolitionists' assault on the South, and a concern for social cohesion all encouraged a reappraisal in which Christians there looked less on slavery as a transient blight than as the laudable instrument of "mutual good feeling" between master and servant and as a potential agent of the millennium. Although debates continued over whether slavery was an absolute good, a relative benefit, or a tolerable evil, these Christians were almost universally agreed that southern institutions were scriptural and that slave-owning was no bar to church membership.

The collapse of the early republic's broad consensus over Christian slaveholding took institutional form in the schisms that shook the national churches. Some mistakenly believed that these divisions would strengthen the political union by closing down forums where sectional champions collided. But shrewder heads saw that church separatists invited the horrors of civil war by weakening the moral leverage of centrists and that unity provided the best guarantee that northern moderates would stand up for southern interests. In practice, separation introduced sources of bitter recrimination which further corroded churchgoers' sense of belonging to a

285–92; C. C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the American Civil War* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, ca. 1985); Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

union of shared values. No breach was more damaging to the union than that experienced by the nation's biggest denominational family, the Methodists.

The split within Methodism came over the acquisition of slaves by one of the Church's bishops, through marriage. The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) agreed to a "plan of separation" under which resources would be divided between a continuing MEC and a new southern Methodist Church. The plan, however, far from providing a basis for harmonious coexistence, gave rise to an ugly conflict that persisted until—and into—the Civil War. The plan's authors were looking to run a twelve-hundred-mile line through border conferences straddling non-slaveholding areas and parts of the upper tier of slave states. After the societies along the line had taken a binding vote on their allegiance, the authorities north and south would respect the outcome.

But, as implemented, the plan gave rise to split congregations, irregularities, manipulation, and disregard for agreed procedures. Northern Methodist newspapers were seized and burnt by magistrates, their actions sustained by statute, grand jury endorsement, and the demands of vigilance committees. Fear and fury exploded into physical violence. MEC preachers in Missouri were seized and told to leave. Violence scarred communities in Maryland and Virginia, especially in the Kanawha Valley and on the eastern shore. Social prestige, judicial power, and hostile mobs united to drive out preachers of the northern church.

Property was at stake, notably the denomination's chief glory, the book concerns in New York and Cincinnati, centers of an unrivalled, million-dollar publishing empire. Southern Methodists pressed ahead with legal action, resolved only when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the South. Southerners celebrated, but northern Methodists found the decision "astonishing, unparalleled and unjust."¹³

The aftermath of the schisms led Christians in each section to engage in mutual stereotyping with profound consequences. Southerners increasingly identified *all* northern churchgoers, not just a

¹³Richard Carwardine, "Trauma in Methodism: Property, Church Schism, and Sectional Polarization in Antebellum America" in *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790–1860*, edited by Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 195–216.

small minority, with irreligious fanaticism. They defended separation as the only option for orthodox believers. "We are compelled to repel invasion," a southern bishop insisted, "or be overthrown and trodden upon by the assailants."¹⁴ The battle was not local but cosmic, between true Christianity and social stability on the one side and false religion and lawlessness on the other.

Northern Protestants, too, attached political significance to the trauma of schism. Southerners had seceded, not to defend doctrine or polity, but to continue and protect slavery. They had nailed their colors to the mast of the slave power by denying free speech in the border wars, and preaching a gospel of ecclesiastical secession which had implications for the political union. The courts' rulings in the Methodist property cases—heralding the Dred Scott decision a few years later—prompted cries of "King Cotton's" influence in church as well as judicial affairs.

During the 1850s sectionalism continued to seep along ecclesiastical channels, a toxic potion that would consign the old union to death. Some of the worst church conflicts occurred in newly opened Kansas. Here, northern missionaries, determined to win the territory for liberty and Christ, faced a proslavery party just as committed to expel them. In Andrew County, proslavery men set upon William Sellers, filled his mouth and smothered his head with tar, and left him to fry in the sun. After John Brown's attempted slave insurrection at Harper's Ferry, vigilant southern Christians took guard against northern "sedition" throughout the slave states. No case was more explosive than that of Anthony Bewley, a native southern preacher of the northern Methodist Church, seized in the summer of 1860 in Texas and hanged by "a jury of three hundred men" determined to send him on "'a short cut' to the Kingdom of God."¹⁵

These cruel events remind us not only that, on the eve of the Civil War, two irreconcilable understandings existed of how to be a citizen of the American republic, but also that those understandings

¹⁴Henry Bascom et al., *Brief Appeal to Public Opinion, in a Series of Exceptions to the Course and Action of the Methodist Episcopal Church, from 1844 to 1848* (Louisville, Ky.: J. Early, 1848), 10, 60, 165–69.

¹⁵Richard Carwardine, "Methodists, Politics, and the Coming of the Civil War" in *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, edited by Mark A. Noll and Luke E. Harlow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 189–92.

had been shaped by contending ideas about what God expected of a nation that aspired to righteousness.

III

Potent as these divisive forces were, the American spiritual marketplace in certain ways helped promote convergence amongst evangelicals; and indeed, in some respects, the very diversity of American religion actually worked to advance the cause of national integration.

Baird was right to emphasize the common, salvationist elements of evangelicals' beliefs. Most Protestants were convinced that the Almighty's special plan for the new republic would spread the blessings of grace throughout the whole people. They shared a profound hope for their nation, signally blessed with natural resources, human enterprise, and political advantages. Convinced that it was their duty, thousands of evangelicals threw themselves untiringly into benevolent and missionary projects, many of them interdenominational, through which they would introduce the millennium which would form the prelude to Christ's return.

Millennial aspiration and heightened spiritual intensity often prompted cooperation. Alfred Brunson, a young Methodist missionary in Detroit in the 1820s, reflected on his relations with local Presbyterians. "In the missionary field," he wrote, "we met as brethren, laborers with God in one common cause. No controversy between ourselves on non-essential doctrines, and no seeking of the supremacy one over the other [was] . . . apparently thought of. . . . In this is plainly seen the spirit that will prevail in the millennium, when the watchmen of Zion will see eye to eye." At the height of revivals, Protestant union could become a reality.¹⁶

The religious market worked to disseminate ideas and practices across denominations. Churches needed members to survive. They depended on voluntary contributions to pay their pastors, maintain their buildings, and fund their evangelistic enterprises. As the most effective denomination, Methodists attracted particular attention. Tobias Spicer knew from experience that "such had been the success of Methodism that [Calvinist] ministers . . . were obliged to bestir

¹⁶Brunson, *A Western Pioneer*, 1:275.

themselves or lose their hold upon their people.”¹⁷ Charles Finney made his reputation by introducing so-called “new measures” amongst fellow Presbyterians, but he was profoundly indebted to the Methodists’ style of preaching and their tools of revival.¹⁸ Market diffusion even worked to encourage a form of evangelical revivalism amongst Unitarians and Catholics. This spread of practice was accompanied by a general “Arminianizing” or “Methodising” of Calvinist doctrine.

By the 1840s and 1850s, much of the earlier interdenominational antagonism was thus yielding to recognition of what evangelicals held in common. A New York Methodist editor declared in 1852, “One thing is certain, the *evangelical* sects are more harmonious in their feelings towards each other than they were formerly. The Dutch Reformed, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Episcopal Methodists, are now on a very friendly footing with each other.”¹⁹

What further prompted cooperation was a sense that only concerted action could cope with the common challenge presented by the burgeoning forces of non-evangelical religion. This period saw Protestantism’s greatest relative decline in the whole of American history. Its churches dwindled from almost total command at the end of the colonial period to embracing only 60 percent of churchgoers in 1860. That decline reflected the growth of unique American churches, particularly the Mormons and Adventists, and the massive influx of Catholics in the 1840s and 1850s.

In consequence, several new organizations sprang up to secure Protestant unity against the Pope: the Protestant Reformation Society, and its successors, the American Protestant Society and the American and Foreign Christian Union, whose agents found allies in all Protestant denominations. Events confirmed the judgment of the Protestant journal which in 1843 declared that anti-Catholicism “be-

¹⁷Tobias Spicer, *Autobiography of Rev. Tobias Spicer: Containing Incidents and Observations* . . . (New York: Lane & Scott, 1852), 101–2.

¹⁸Richard Carwardine, “The Second Great Awakening in the Urban Centers: Methodism and the ‘New Measures’ Examined,” *Journal of American History* 59, no. 22 (September 1972): 327–40.

¹⁹George Coles, *My First Seven Years in America*, edited by D. P. Kidder (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1852).

comes the very centre of Christian unity.”²⁰ The final great revival of the antebellum period, the most dramatic since the great influx of Catholic immigrants, the so-called “awakening” of 1857–58, was insistently interdenominational and in many of its aspects marked the high point of Protestant harmony before the Civil War.

Reflecting on the unique proliferation of religious identifications in the United States, Lawrence Moore remarks that America had had the potential to be “as great a religious battleground as had existed in the course of Western Civilization.”²¹ Yet, as James Dixon, the Victorian English Methodist, took pleasure in reporting, American society was “not convulsed, nor the state put in jeopardy, by religious contentions, claims and projects.”²² That it was not may have had something to do with the homogenizing effects of the market and with instances of determined religious cooperation, as I have just described. But I suggest that had also to do with the sheer number and diversity of the nation’s religious groups.

In the tenth Federalist paper, James Madison argued that republics were best protected against the selfishness of their various factional interests by their being so numerous that no single faction could dominate the polity. He saw clearly how a political society might harness selfish interests, through forced compromise, for the benefit of the common good. The Founders equally understood that if there were many competing sects, no single one of them could persecute the others into conformity.

This was indeed how things developed. The sects and denominations of the early republic tolerated pluralism, not because they were driven by a generous spirit of ecumenism or because they believed diversity was in itself a good thing, but because there was no realistic alternative. The new republic opened up lush acres of cultural space to the proliferating churches, their varied religious schemes and ambitions, and the corresponding social identities and understandings of America they carried with them. Churches gave their members a religious explanation of the world they inhabited but, in addition, pro-

²⁰Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade 1800–1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: Rinehart, 1938), 185.

²¹Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*, 210.

²²James Dixon, *Methodism in America: With the Personal Narrative of the Author, during a Tour through a Part of the United States and Canada* (London: Printed for the author, sold by J. Mason, 1849), 148–49.

vided a structured and meaningful social milieu. The dominant evangelical denominations offered their own, though related, American identities and types of shelter to orthodox Protestant believers. At the same time, “outsider” groups like the Adventists, Catholics, and Mormons, as Lawrence Moore has argued, employed a strategy of “deliberate differentiation,” feeding on their status as victims and martyrs, to assert a patriotism and a love of American ideals that they could not see in their persecutors.²³ Any denomination which had ambitions to scatter what Brownlow called “unregenerate adversaries” found in practice that the best any group could hope for was to become an informal establishment in one sub-region or another.²⁴

What also stymied all-out religious warfare was the fact that the pattern of sectarian conflict was shaped by local conditions. It was not consistent, uniform, and national. The country presented not a single template of inter-church relationships but many different intersections which reflected the varied patterns of settlement, ethnicity, differentiated social status, and relative denominational strength. Although American religious antagonisms could be strong and meaningful, they were also multiple and evolving. America broadly lacked the fixed, long-standing religious divisions which developed in post-Reformation Europe. Instead, its history of geographical and social fluidity, of settlement and resettlement, of evolving inter-ethnic chemistry, has worked to prevent the freezing of religious traditions into a fixed pattern.

Thus, although the mutual hostility of Methodists and Baptists ran deep in Appalachia and other parts of the South and West, in other contexts they could find themselves in tolerant coexistence, or even pulling together in harness within one or more of the agencies of the “benevolent empire.” Middle-class, aspiring Baptists and Methodists drew closer together in the urban Northeast, for instance, where they shared a concern over Catholic intrusions.

If we can note then, that the sheer *diversity* of religious groups worked to prevent the domination of any single denomination, or its capturing the high command of any political party; and if we can see that the *shifting relationships* between churches prevented the permanent fixing of ecclesiastical poles of hostility, then we should also note

²³Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*, 31–32 and passim.

²⁴Brownlow, *Great Iron Wheel Examined*, xiii, 164, 192.

that the sheer *numbers* of believers ensured that America's republican freedom continued to provide a tolerant political forum for all. There were simply too many believers, and too much of a determination on the part of the nation's founders not to align themselves with radical secularism, to allow an antireligious political party to develop. Each of the major parties embraced a substantial constituency of churchgoers, and whatever the readiness of Jeffersonian and then Jacksonian Democrats to harbor outspoken freethinkers and "infidels," neither party offered anticlericalism of the kind found in revolutionary France. "In the United States," observed Tocqueville, "if a politician attacks a sect, that is no reason why the supporters of that very sect should not support him; but if he attacks all sects together, every one shuns him, and he remains alone."²⁵ Thus, the American political system offered something to every religious group, each of whom had to learn to work in political harness with others to move towards realizing their national visions.

IV

Let me now turn to the years of the Civil War itself and specifically to the experience of the loyal Union. Here the prewar elements of convergence within and between the largest denominational families played an essential role in the North's victory. Lincoln's call to arms in April 1861 drew northern Protestants onto a common platform. Pre-war conservative conciliators and radical higher-law evangelicals now united in "a great people's war for Christian democracy."²⁶ This unity was qualified by a few principled pacifists—Quakers and Mennonites—and by guarded dissenters, but the vast majority of northern Protestant clergy trumpeted their support for a war to prevent national annihilation. One editor doubted if in the history of the world so many pulpits had thundered against rebellion as on the

²⁵Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, edited by J. P. Mayer, translated by George Lawrence (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company/Anchor Books, 1969), 293.

²⁶Archbishop John J. Hughes, letter read to a mass Union meeting in Union Square, *Metropolitan Record* (New York), April 27, 1861; Chester Forrester Dunham, *The Attitude of the Northern Clergy toward the South, 1860–1865* (Toledo, Ohio: Gray Company, 1942), 110–11, 134–35.

last Sunday of the first month of the war.²⁷

Those pulpits then, and for the duration of the war, helped crystallize ideas about the nature and meaning of the American nation which Protestants had long addressed in routine Fourth of July sermons and at other moments of patriotic stocktaking, but never before so urgently, consistently, or energetically. Nations, Protestant leaders knew, had a primary and essential place in God's moral economy. He worked through them to achieve His purposes. He was the supreme arbiter of their affairs. Every nation's days were numbered, but no nation would die until its purposes were achieved.

Few, though, conceded that the American Union faced imminent destruction; indeed, none doubted that God had chosen the nation for special favor and a particular role. In "the finest territory on the face of the globe," America had reached "a state of advanced civilization" separated from "the discordant . . . elements of the old world." Americans enjoyed "the richest inheritance of civil and religious freedom ever bequeathed to any nation in ancient or modern times." They were guided by "the best government that was ever constituted since the world began." America had a mission that would see it "conquer the world." This was no conventional lust for conquest. As a latter-day Israel, America's role was to serve, by example, the welfare of the whole human race. This divine mission made the rebellion of the South not only political treason against the secular nation, but blasphemy, or treason against God.²⁸

Protestants used the Pauline doctrine of obedience to civil rulers—"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers"—to show that there could, ordinarily, "be no such thing as a *Christian rebel*." Secondly, they celebrated "the grand providential purposes" for which God had raised up their Christian republic. They were fighting, one said, "for free government . . . in all lands for all ages to come. Ancient republics stand on the page of history as discouraging failures . . . and the modern republics . . . in the old world, have gone down in blood. Our government was organized . . . with the conservative element of

²⁷*The Congregationalist* (Boston), 12, no. 62, 3, quoted in Dunham, *The Attitude of Northern Clergy*, 134.

²⁸*Northwestern Christian Advocate* (Evanston, Ill.), August 13, September 25, October 9, 16, 1861; George Peck, *Our Country: Its Trial and Its Triumph. A Series of Discourses Suggested by the Varying Events of the War for the Union* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1865), 11, 15, 31, 47–53.

Christian faith to give stability to [the] work. If [it] . . . is cast down . . . , when may mankind be expected to repeat the experiment?"²⁹

If the Confederacy represented "the vilest treason ever known since the great secession from heaven"—dispatching Jefferson Davis to the same quarters as Lucifer—then the question arose: Why was God putting the whole nation through this time of trial? For many the war was part of a testing process of discipline characteristic of America's history. As Israel had been chastised to purge corruption, so too the rigors of the early colonial settlements and the Revolution itself had helped "purify" the American nation. And what, above all, explained the nation's paroxysm was its complicity in the "peculiar institution" of slavery. As a visiting group of Chicago clergy told Lincoln in September 1862, the Almighty had "bared his arm in behalf of the American slave" and now commanded the nation's rulers as He once had ordered Pharaoh: "Let my people go!"³⁰

Yet whatever punishment God might mete out, there were no grounds for despair. Out of the severity of war would come a more homogeneous nation and—above all—a transfigured one. Minister Homer Dunning fused Christ and the Union: "I rejoice to be with the nation, when . . . on its Calvary it is crucified by its own children. . . . Our children and children's children will speak of 1861, as we speak of 1776. . . . And when the nation shall have . . . covered the continent; when it shall have overmastered the monster of slavery, and . . . when it shall stand up . . . transfigured with Divine beauty for the doing of God's will, men will give thanks to God for this great and sore trial."³¹

Dunning's words remind us that many antislavery Protestants who would not have considered themselves abolitionists before the war soon saw that the logic of events would turn the conflict into an assault on slavery. By the summer of 1864, even Old School Presbyterians had come to the view that for the preservation of "our na-

²⁹Peck, *Our Country*, 15, 27; William G. T. Shedd, *The Union and the War: A Sermon, Preached November 27, 1862* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1863), 26–30; *Christian Advocate and Journal* (New York) August 13, 1862.

³⁰*Northwestern Christian Advocate*, October 2, 1861; *Chicago Tribune*, September 9, 1862.

³¹Homer N. Dunning, *Our National Trial: A Thanksgiving Sermon, Preached at the Union Meeting of the Churches of Gloversville, on Thanksgiving Day, November 28th, 1861* (Gloversville [N.Y.]: Geo. W. Heaton, 1861), 18.

tional life . . . slavery should be at once and for ever abolished.”³²

The logic of evangelicals’ understanding of events culminated in the certainty that, as one Episcopalian straightforwardly put it, “God is with us; . . . the Lord of Hosts is on our side.” Without question, God was against the rebels: How could He possibly “smile upon rebellion, treason, and a nationality with slavery as its cornerstone[?],” a Methodist editor asked. A few preachers warned against hubris and self-righteousness. As Charles Fowler insisted, “The only way to get God on *our side* is to get on *his side*.” But usually this appetite for self-criticism co-existed with a belief in the North’s moral superiority. The North’s sins were stains that could be washed away, but the Confederacy’s were systemic evils removable only by destroying the body itself. “It is not merely war between sections, between North and South, between Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis,” explained one Methodist minister. “It is war between God on one side, a gigantic wrong on the other.”³³

Lincoln was wholly alert to the power of this religiously inspired patriotism. Much of his time as president was spent seeking to sustain, harness, and steer the larger nationalism of which it was a part. But even before he took the oath of office, he tapped into the deep wellsprings of a specifically American patriotism. On the morning of February 21, 1861, the eleventh day of his journey from Springfield to Washington, he spoke in the state house at Trenton, New Jersey, just two weeks after representatives of the seceded states of the Deep South had met to form a southern Confederacy. As the gathering settled, Lincoln turned to his prepared text:

Away back in my childhood . . . I got hold of a small book, . . . “Weem’s Life of Washington.” I remember all the accounts there given of the battle fields and struggles for the liberties of the country. . . . I am exceedingly anxious that that thing which they struggled for . . . this Union, the Constitution, and the liberties of the people shall be perpetuated in accordance with the original idea for which that struggle was

³²Charles Hodge, “The General Assembly,” *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 36 (July 1864): 538–51.

³³Dunham, *The Attitude of the Northern Clergy*, 112; *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, May 6, 1863. See also Shedd, *The Union and the War*, 15–22; W. S. Leavitt, *God the Protector and Hope of the Nation: A Sermon, Preached on Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 1862* (Hudson, N.Y.: Bryan and Webb, 1862), 4–5; Peck, *Our Country*, 32.

made, and I shall be most happy indeed if I shall be an humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty, and of this, his almost chosen people, for perpetuating the object of that great struggle.

Lincoln's recourse to sacred language here and in his other speeches as he traveled east would find further expression in his inaugural address, in which the new president appealed for patience to allow for the workings of "intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him, who has never yet forsaken this favored land."³⁴

Such language was in part a measure of Lincoln's need to appeal above and beyond party. It reflected, too, the burden he felt as he left home to face the Union's most profound crisis. There is no time here to explore the evidence relating to Lincoln's faith, or his lack of it, in his early and middle years. My judgment is that the young Lincoln was attracted by the ideas of Tom Paine and other deists; he certainly had no tolerance for the emotionalism and sectarianism of Peter Cartwright and other western revivalists. As a husband, father, and established lawyer during the 1840s and 1850s, however, he drew a little closer to the orbit of conventional Protestant Christianity, evincing an approach to faith which owed something to Universalism and Unitarianism, but which did not shake off the Calvinistic fatalism under whose influence he had been raised.

Lincoln's wartime experience encouraged an increasing profundity of faith. Not only did he feel a sense of personal responsibility for a war of unimagined savagery, but the conflict brought trials closer to home: the death of friends and close colleagues, and above all the loss through typhoid of his son, Willie. He attended public worship more habitually than ever before. He found in his darkest nights increasing solace in the scriptures; on one occasion Elizabeth Keckley, Mary Lincoln's seamstress, curious to see what particular Bible passages he was reading, crept behind him and found him deep in the book of Job. Before the war, Lincoln regarded superintending providence as a remote and mechanistic power; but under the pressure of events, he exchanged that providence for an active and more personal God, an intrusively judgmental figure, one more mysterious

³⁴Roy P. Basler et al., eds., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953–55), 4:271.

and less predictable than the ruling force it superseded.³⁵

As president, Lincoln issued nine separate proclamations appointing days of national fasting, humiliation, and prayer, and also of thanksgiving. In addition, several of his public letters and responses to visiting clergy and his remarkable second inaugural address gave the public a sense of the president's understanding of the workings of the Almighty. Collectively, they present three major lines of thought: every nation was a moral being with duties; God's purposes were wise and mysterious; and the American Union, under God, promised to be an agent of moral and political transfiguration.

Lincoln's Calvinistic frame of thought prompted him to conceive of the Almighty as the ruler of nations as well as of men; to identify nations as moral entities equally as capable of transgressions against the divine law as the individuals who composed them. He attributed the nation's continuing trials specifically to the perpetuation of slavery. God's punishment of the nation for that evil, Lincoln frequently reflected, was part of the Almighty's purposes, which were, he declared, "mysterious and unknown to us." But, as he told Eliza P. Gurney of the Society of Friends, "surely He intends some great good to follow this mighty convulsion, which no mortal could make, and no mortal could stay."³⁶ However disobedient the nation, there was reason to believe that a purified Union would emerge from the fiery trial of war. At the dedication of the Gettysburg cemetery, he memorably reformulated this idea in a non-scriptural rhetoric of salvation and renewal.

Lincoln's theology—with its remarkable lack of self-righteousness—stands in some contrast to that of the mainstream Union pulpits, mostly confident that God was on their side. Yet Lincoln and the loyal northern Protestant clergy largely spoke a common theological language. Both knew that nations had a place in the Almighty's moral economy; both conceived of an interventionist God; both understood the Union, under divine providence, to amount to more than a glorious experiment in liberty and republicanism; both understood slavery to compromise that design.

This broad congruence had rich meaning for the Union's war-

³⁵Richard Carwardine, "Lincoln's Religion" in *Our Lincoln: New Perspectives on Lincoln and His World*, edited by Eric Foner (New York: Norton, 2008), 223–48.

³⁶Basler, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 5:478, 7:535.

time politics. Mainstream Protestants embraced Lincoln as one of them; Lincoln worked energetically to mobilize the churches behind the war effort. Lincoln met a full gamut of religious visitors: nationally renowned preachers, editors of mass-circulation papers, and distinguished abolitionists. There were Sabbatarians, temperance men, Covenanters seeking a Christian amendment to the federal Constitution, and representatives of the agencies devoted to the well-being of soldiers.

For their part, thousands of Union clergy saw in Lincoln a president who warranted respect, even admiration. Placing Lincoln within the divine economy, loyal clergy told of the president's admirable honesty, determination, integrity, and unflinching patriotism. Although Lincoln disappointed those hoping he would confess Christ as his personal Savior, many recognized in Lincoln a capacity for "deep religious feeling." Jonathan Turner, professor at Illinois College, remarked that both president and people "seem . . . to imagine that he is a sort of half way clergyman." Many saw him as an instrument of the divine will, operating under Providence to become, after George Washington, "the *second saviour of our country*."³⁷

Together, Lincoln's cultivation of loyalist religious constituencies and their reciprocal confidence in him, contributed signally to the larger mobilization of nationalist sentiment. Cadres of Protestants recruited volunteer soldiers for the Union and Christ, energized the aid societies that served the Union's fighting men, ministered as field chaplains to inspire the troops with the nation's millennial purposes, and participated as organizers in the home-front politics of national defense. Protestant spokesmen lined up to defend the administration's conscription measures, its tolerance of arbitrary arrests, and its strong-arm action against draft resisters and dissenters. The president's re-election in 1864 was due in large part to the extraordinary mobilization of nationalist support by those who saw themselves as agents of God and of Lincoln: the leaders of the Protestant churches.

CONCLUSION

During the century after 1776, elements of Protestants' ideas and agencies contributed to the era's plural and competing understandings of national identity. They offered the United States an his-

³⁷Carwardine, "Lincoln's Religion," 244-48; emphasis mine; *North-western Christian Advocate*, September 10, 1862.

torical narrative that reached back to the time of Christ and beyond; they sanctified republicanism and yoked it to Protestantism; they set a millennialist agenda for the nation. In constructing American civil society no voluntary agencies did more than the churches and their cognate moral reform societies. Protestant institutions, national in aspiration and scope, connected the local to the regional and the regional to the world beyond, giving their members a sense of participation in imagined communities of the pious. If the outbreak of the Civil War indicated the limits to the nationalizing project of American evangelicals, the course of that war showed the indomitable national vigor and ambitions of Yankee Protestants—an indispensable element in the Union's victory, which secured the permanence of the American state and nation.

Religion worked in the American conflict to refine and intensify national identity, or at least the northern Calvinistic versions of it. Fusing religion and the force of arms, discovering millennial progress in the advance of the Union soldiers, and equating godliness with the administration's advance towards emancipation, Union Protestants would read into martial victory God's confirmation of America's role as the redeemer nation. The country's sacrifices in blood—whether of its battlefield heroes or its martyred president—trumpeted no ordinary nationhood, but a purified patria now free to pursue its higher mission. This enhanced nationalism—rooted in idealism, wartime discipline, and battlefield sacrifice—had the capacity to inspire the better angels of human nature. But it had other potential, too. As the historian James Moorhead has mordantly observed, “In the 1860s, Northern Protestants went forth glorying in military feats, powerful armies, and obedient citizens to inaugurate the reign of the Prince of Peace. It was not altogether a fortuitous combination of symbols.”³⁸

Later generations of the religiously devout, inhabiting a moral and social landscape barely imagined by their antebellum predecessors, had to contend with the complex legacies of the Civil War era as well as the often intractable new issues of the Gilded Age and beyond: a ravaged South and a post-emancipation racial order, the intellectual and cultural challenges of Darwinian science and biblical criticism, multi-faith immigration, the end of Protestant hegemony,

³⁸James H. Moorhead, *American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War, 1860–1869* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1978), 172.

exponential industrial and urban growth, and expanding global ambitions and the lure of an American empire. How the pluralistic forces of American religion addressed, modified, or aggravated these contentious elements during the years of post-Civil War national consolidation calls for quite another lecture—and quite another lecturer!

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST (TEMPLE LOT) AND THE REORGANIZED CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS: 130 YEARS OF CROSSROADS AND CONTROVERSIES

R. Jean Addams

INTRODUCTION

TWO CHURCHES SHARING GEOGRAPHICAL PROXIMITY, a common origin as expressions of Joseph Smith's religious thought, and numer-

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ous doctrinal overlaps have produced a fascinating story. The intertwined but separate histories of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS Church) reveals a stimulating but ultimately failed effort over the course of approximately 130 years (1856–1984) to accommodate each others’ beliefs and doctrines. At their closest moments, they even explored the possibility of union.

Before examining the crossroads and controversies of these two churches, this article briefly reviews their formative period. Thereafter, the story of their ongoing relationship can be best understood as they contested control of that sacred space known as the lot designated for the never-built Jackson County Temple, and the legitimacy of their individual claims as the true successor to the church that the Prophet Joseph Smith founded in 1830.

In the years that followed the murders of Joseph Jr. and Hyrum Smith in Carthage, Illinois, on June 27, 1844, several men claimed his prophetic “mantle” and attracted numerous followers. But as the claims of Sidney Rigdon, James Strang, William Smith, Lyman Wight, Gladden Bishop, and others faded in the late 1840s and early 1850s, two significant “new” groups of faithful Saints developed in the Midwest.

GRANVILLE HEDRICK AND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST (TEMPLE LOT)

One group of these scattered Saints consisted of three Illinois branches of the original church at Half Moon Prairie (Woodford County), Bloomington (McLean County), Eagle Creek (Livingston County), and a fourth across the state line in Vermillion, Indiana.¹ Thanks to their distance from Nauvoo, these Saints escaped the violence that exploded nearer the Mormon center approximately 135

¹*Crow Creek Record: From Winter of 1852 to April 24, 1864* (Independence: Church of Christ [Temple Lot], n.d.), preface. This is the title as it appears in its Church’s current edition, but the original document does not have a preface and is titled *The Record and History of the Crow Creek Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ (of Latter day Saints) Which Was Organized on the 6th Day of April A.D. 1830* (hereafter cited as the *Crow Creek Record*). From 1852 to April 1864, minutes were taken by unnamed person(s) at meetings held at various places and at different times. Then, at an unknown date, they were compiled into a single volume, again by an unnamed person. I make this deduction from the verb tenses in the minutes. The compiler, when

miles to the west.

Beginning in the winter of 1852,² members from these various branches began to meet together periodically in central Illinois. Their first recorded meeting was held at the home of Granville Hedrick near Washburn, Woodford County, originally known as Half Moon Prairie.³ Hedrick, a farmer and teacher, was an elder in the original church.⁴ The second meeting was held in the spring of 1853 at the home of Adna C. Haldeman in Bloomington, McLean County; the Bloomington branch dated to the early 1830s.⁵ Haldeman, a local stone and monument mason, had been a member of the original

quoting the original record, generally used the past tense (“a meeting of the saints *was* held”). The original document is presumably in the possession of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), which allowed the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to microfilm it on October 4, 1977, in Independence. Microfilm copies are available at LDS Church History Library, LDS Family History Library, and the Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence (MO 1-48A, Reel 294).

²*Crow Creek Record*, 1.

³Woodford County, Ill., Property Records, John H. and Elizabeth Ann Hedrick to Granville Hedrick, November 29, 1849, E:279; James B. and Minerva Martin, John H. Hedrick and Elizabeth Anne, and America and Mary Jane Hedrick to Granville Hedrick, February 25, 1850, E:280-81; and Jane Hedrick to Granville Hedrick, January 14, 1851, E:278-79, Eureka, Illinois. Granville Hedrick's farm was located approximately a mile and a half directly west of Washburn in Cazenovia Township, Woodford County. *Woodford County History* (Woodford County, Ill: Woodford County Sesquicentennial History Committee, 1968), 20. Washburn was originally named Half Moon Prairie by early settlers who thought the prairie had that shape.

⁴Granville Hedrick was born in Clark City, Indiana, in 1814 and was converted to Mormonism between 1839 and 1843. According to one Church of Christ record, he was baptized by Hervey Green in 1843, probably in Washburn, where Hedrick owned a large farm that his father had purchased in 1834 and which Hedrick had acquired from his widowed mother. Hedrick was also ordained an elder between 1841 and 1843. “More Testimony If Called For,” *Truth Teller* 1, no. 2 (August 1864): 31. Hedrick purchased property in Johnson County, about thirty-five miles southwest of Independence in 1874 when he was sixty and made his home there until his death in 1881.

⁵*Crow Creek Record*, preface and 1. McLean County adjoins Woodford



James A. Hedrick (left), George D. Cole, and George P. Frisbey of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot). Photo courtesy of Bill Curtis.

church since the early 1830s.⁶

The Preface to the *Crow Creek Record* of these early meetings states: “Several meetings were held . . . between the Spring and Fall” of 1853 but gives no specific dates or places. In October 1853, another meeting was held at the David Judy home in nearby Tazewell County.⁷ Most recorded meetings (but not all) were held at the homes of either Granville Hedrick or his brother, John H., who lived

County on the southeast.

⁶A *Brief History of the Church of Christ, It's [sic] Mission* (Independence: Church of Christ [Temple Lot] Board of Publication, ca. 1896), 2, BX 8608.A1 no. 3257, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections). Adna C. Haldeman and family traveled to Independence in 1867, where he reestablished his trade as a monument maker, and died in 1881. His son, John R. Haldeman, became a prominent leader in the Church of Christ, editing the Church's newspapers and later becoming its presiding elder.

⁷*Crow Creek Record*, 2. See also “Lineal Priesthood,”

about five miles distant in neighboring Marshall County.⁸

By 1857, this new assemblage came to be known as the Crow Creek branch of the Church of Jesus Christ (of Latter day Saints)⁹ but was no longer affiliated with the LDS group that followed Brigham Young. On March 5, 1857, the branch issued "A Declaration of Independence and Separation" which stated: "We believe that God has a remnant of ordained members (who have not fallen with apostasy) . . . whose right it is to unite their efforts as gospel ministers in co-operation together according to God's written word and renovate and save the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."¹⁰

The December 1860 conference discussed the Church's name. Some argued for "the Church of Christ," the name under which it was organized in April 1830.¹¹ By 1900, this form was officially standardized. "(Temple Lot)" unofficially distinguishes *this* "Church of Christ" from other denominations using the same name.¹²

In 1857, John E. Page, ordained in 1838 as an apostle in Joseph Smith Jr.'s Quorum of the Twelve, began taking an interest in the

⁸Marshall County, Ill., Property Records, Abner Chapman Jr. to John H. Hedrick, August 14, 1849, Property Records, G:330; Jane O. Hedrick to John Hedrick, December 28, 1849, Property Records, D:72; and Abner Chapman Jr. to John H. Hedrick, H:237, Lacon, Ill. Marshall County is located just north of Woodford County. John H. Hedrick, a Latter-day Saint, may have been the first to return to Jackson County after the 1833 expulsion. He was baptized a member of the Church of Christ in 1856. Before the Church's move to Independence from central Illinois in 1867, John purchased a 245-acre farm near Independence in 1865. He died in Independence in 1872.

⁹*Crow Creek Record*, preface, 1, 14.

¹⁰B. C. Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot)* (Independence: Church of Christ Board of Publications, 1953), 105.

¹¹*Crow Creek Record*, 10.

¹²From 1860 to approximately 1900, the Church of Christ used a variety of names. The *Truth Teller*, published by the Church of Christ between 1864 and 1865 (twelve consecutive monthly issues), followed by two issues in 1868, used "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints" or "Church of Jesus Christ (of Latter Day Saints)" in the masthead. John H. Hedrick's quit-claim deed conveys his three individual lots of the Temple Lot to his brother Granville as "President of the Church of Christ (of Latter day Saints)." The *Searchlight* (its official organ between February 1896 and March 1900) used the "Church of Christ in Zion" in the masthead. William

Crow Creek branch.¹³ Page had been ordained an apostle in the original church in December 1838 at Far West, Missouri. However, within a year and a half of Smith's death, Page became disaffected with Brigham Young's leadership and was excommunicated on the anniversary of Smith's assassination, June 27, 1846.¹⁴ Page's formal affiliation with the Crow Creek branch on November 8, 1862, effected a dramatic change in the fledgling movement, particularly since he was considered as still possessing apostolic authority.¹⁵ On May 17, 1863, he ordained Granville Hedrick an apostle and, two months later on July 19, 1863, also ordained him "Prophet, Seer, Revelator and Translator" of the Church.¹⁶

A. Sheldon, email to R. Jean Addams, August 23, 2006, states: "There has never been Church action to attach 'Temple Lot' to the church name of Church of Christ. It has been done parenthetically according to whim. . . . We have local congregations which do not use the appellation at all." A particular motivation was clarifying that there was no direct relationship with the Church of Christ founded by Alexander Campbell. I use "Church of Christ" in this article unless further differentiation is necessary. See also R. Jean Addams, "Reclaiming the Temple Lot in the Center Place of Zion," *Mormon Historical Studies* 7 (Spring/Fall 2006): 7–20.

¹³Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev. (6 vols., 1902–12, Vol. 7, 1932; rpt., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980 printing) 3:240–41 (hereafter *History of the LDS Church*); R. Jean Addams, "The Church of Christ (Temple Lot), Its Emergence, Struggles, and Early Schisms," 206–33, in *Scattering of the Saints: Schism within Mormonism*, edited by Newell G. Bringhurst and John C. Hamer (Independence: John Whitmer Books, 2007); *Crow Creek Record*, 4.

¹⁴B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century One*, 6 vols. (Provo, Utah: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965 printing), 2:431.

¹⁵*Crow Creek Record*, 12. John E. Page resided in DeKalb County north of Marshall County.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 14–15. Page also ordained David Judy, Adna C. Haldeman, and Jedediah Owen as apostles. All three had been baptized in the original church in the early 1830s. Page declared himself "mouth" for the Quorum of Apostles and, in ordaining Hedrick the prophet, was joined by new apostles Judy, Haldeman, and Owen. See also Addams, "Reclaiming the Temple

THE EMERGENCE OF THE RLDS CHURCH

A second group of scattered Saints emerged under the early leadership of Jason W. Briggs and Zenos H. Gurley Sr. in June 1852.¹⁷ Other early leaders included Henry Deam, Isaac Sheen, and William Marks.¹⁸ These men, members of Joseph Smith's original church, had sought divine guidance after they rejected the claims of Brigham Young and others after 1844. Both Briggs and Gurley had been ordained elders prior to 1844 and had continued to preside over Mormon branches in Wisconsin after Joseph's death. Both men had then been associated temporarily with James Strang and William Smith.¹⁹

Beginning in late 1851, both men independently said they received visions or revelations directing them to reject all claimants to the prophetic mission of the Church's founder. The language of the

Lot in the Center Place of Zion," 7–20.

¹⁷Joseph Smith III and Heman C. Smith, *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 8 vols. (Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Publishing House, 1896; rpt., Independence: Herald House, n.d.), 3:209 (hereafter *History of the RLDS Church*). Jason W. Briggs was baptized and ordained an elder in 1841 in the original church. After Joseph Smith's assassination, he followed James Strang and William Smith, became disillusioned with them, and presided over the New Organization's first conference in 1852. He was ordained an apostle in 1853 and became president of the Quorum of Apostles. The RLDS conference in 1885 did not sustain him, and he formally withdrew in 1886. He died in 1899. Zenos H. Gurley Sr. was baptized and ordained an elder in the original church in 1838, followed James Strang and William Smith after Joseph Smith's death, and was ordained an apostle in the New Organization in 1853. He functioned in this capacity until his death in 1871.

¹⁸*History of the RLDS Church*, 3:217–21, 230–31, 239, 252, 247, 264. Deam received a revelation about Church organization on March 20, 1853. He was ordained an apostle in 1853 but was expelled in 1854 and died in 1860 while making preparations to go to the 1860 conference at Amboy, Illinois. Sheen associated with the New Organization in 1859. He served as president of the high priest quorum and as editor of the *Saints' Herald* and died in 1874. Marks had been president of the Nauvoo Stake at the time of Joseph Smith's death but was not sustained by the Church in October 1844. He briefly followed James Strang. Marks formally associated with the New Organization in 1859, was mouth for the ordination of Joseph Smith III in 1860, and served as a counselor to Smith until his death in 1872.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 3:196–204.

revelation to Jason W. Briggs stated: "In my own due time will I call upon the seed of Joseph Smith."²⁰ Both men proclaimed that Joseph Smith's successor would be Joseph's eldest son, Joseph Smith III. Late in 1851, Gurley read a copy of the revelation given to Briggs, and wrote Briggs: "We have received evidence of your revelation."²¹ After some correspondence, the two "agreed to hold a conference in Newark branch at Beloit, Wisconsin, in June 1852. At the time appointed quite a number of the saints assembled."²²

The Briggs and Gurley group initially called itself the New Organization. (Its unofficial full name was the New Organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints).²³ A year later on April 6, 1853, seven men were chosen as apostles with J. W. Briggs as president of the quorum.²⁴

Over the next several years, the Church's expanding core of leadership reached out to the Saints "left behind" after the 1846 exodus from Nauvoo to the Great Basin. Their missionary efforts drew hundreds of these Saints together, and they simultaneously urged the initially reluctant Joseph Smith III to accept leadership of the group. In March 1860, Joseph Smith III, after receiving divine confirmation of his calling, wrote to William Marks, advising him, "I am soon going

²⁰Ibid., 3:201. Jason W. Briggs received this revelation in October 1851 and published the text in the *Messenger* (Salt Lake City) 2, no. 1 (November 1875): 1. This periodical, published 1874–77, has been reprinted by Price Publishing Company of Independence, 1996.

²¹Ibid., 3:209.

²²Ibid.

²³Steven L. Shields, *Divergent Paths of the Restoration* (Provo, Utah: n.p., 1975), 65. Shields used "New Organization." Ronald E. Romig, Community of Christ archivist, email to R. Jean Addams, February 7, 2008, clarified: "The term New Organization was never an official name of the church. The name was: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. However, the term was and still is often used to describe the early Reorganization." See also Charles Millard Turner, "Joseph Smith III and the Mormons of Utah" (Ph.D. diss., University of California (Berkeley), Graduate Theological Union, 1985), chap. 4; Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 92–96.

²⁴*History of the RLDS Church*, 2:222–23. The seven apostles were Zenos H. Gurley Sr., Jason W. Briggs, Henry H. Deam, Reuben Newkirk, John Cunningham, George White, and Daniel B. Rasey.

Joseph Smith III, president of the RLDS Church during this time period. Photo courtesy Community of Christ Library-Archives.



to take my father's place as the head of the Mormon church."²⁵

This step occurred at the April 1860 conference held in Amboy, Illinois.²⁶ Smith, after being properly introduced to the assembled Saints, described his spiritual witness and commitment to the calling. The conference then "resolved that Brother Joseph Smith be chosen Prophet, Seer, and Revelator of the Church of Jesus Christ, and the successor of his father." Zenos H. Gurley, Samuel Powers, William W. Blair, and William Marks then ordained him "President of the High Priesthood of the church."²⁷

Those in attendance saw this event as the fulfillment of the blessing Joseph Smith Jr. had pronounced on his son January 17, 1844: "For he shall be my successor to the Presidency of the High Priest-

²⁵*History of the RLDS Church*, 3:264; Frederick B. Blair, comp., *Memoirs of President W. W. Blair* (1908; rpt., Independence: Price Publishing Company, 1994); Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, ed., *Memoirs of Joseph Smith III (1832–1914)*, photo-reprint edition, Richard P. Howard, ed. (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1979), 72 (hereafter cited as *Memoirs of Joseph Smith III*). The Anderson edition was serialized in the *Saints' Herald*, November 6, 1934–July 31, 1937.

²⁶*History of the RLDS Church*, 3:264–65.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 3:250–51.

hood; a Seer, and a Revelator, and a Prophet, unto the Church; which appointment belongeth to him by blessing, and also by right.”²⁸ The Church now saw itself as the legitimate successor of Joseph Smith’s original church. On November 7, 1860, Joseph Smith III issued an epistle to the Saints, counseling the Saints on the subject of the “gathering,” which he signed as “President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.”²⁹

The term “New Organization” had been discarded by 1866, and the Church added “Reorganized” to differentiate and distance itself from Brigham Young’s group in Utah (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). “Reorganization” was a frequent shorthand term. In 1872, the Church incorporated in Illinois as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.³⁰

EFFORTS AT EARLY UNITY

As early as 1856, leaders in both the Church of Christ and the RLDS Church made efforts to create “a working basis of harmony”—and even a union—between them.³¹ As early as June 1857, W. W. Blair of the New Organization traveled to the home of David Judy in Macki-

²⁸Elbert Dempsey, “The Church Celebrates Seventy Years of Outing,” *Saints’ Herald* 128, no. 5 (April 15, 1981): 193; variously titled but hereafter cited as the *Herald*. In January 1877, the name of the paper was changed to the *Saints’ Herald* and in 2001, to the *Herald*. See also Shields, *Divergent Paths of the Restoration*, 65.

²⁹*History of the RLDS Church*, 3:280; Joseph Smith III, “An Address to the Saints,” *True Latter Day Saints’ Herald* (Cincinnati, Ohio), 1, no. 11 (November 7, 1860): 254–56. The *Herald* moved from Cincinnati to Plano, Illinois, in March 1863, then to Lamoni, Iowa, in November 1881, then to Independence in 1920. *History of the RLDS Church*, 3:238–41.

³⁰Marjorie F. Spease, “A Pattern from History,” in [no editor], *Genesis of the Remnant Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Independence: n.p., 2003), 30. The national negative publicity about Mormon polygamy was a major reason for emphasizing this difference in the Church’s name, beginning in the 1860s. See also *History of the RLDS Church*, 3:709–12. The April 2000 World Conference approved changing the Church’s name to the Community of Christ, effective April 6, 2001, while legally retaining its incorporation name: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. In historic contexts, I use “RLDS Church.”

³¹W. P. Buckley, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot)* (In-

naw, Tazewell County, Illinois, to attend a meeting of the not yet “officially organized” Church of Christ.³²

Reciprocating in October 1857, Granville Hedrick and Jedediah Owen (also an elder in the original church) traveled to Zarahemla, Wisconsin, to meet with Gurley, Briggs, Blair, and others of the New Organization to explore the possibility of uniting their efforts.³³ At this meeting Hedrick and Owen were received “as the representatives of the saints in Woodford County, Illinois and vicinity and the right hand of fellowship was given them.”³⁴

Also at this meeting, Hedrick and Briggs were appointed to jointly write a pamphlet “setting forth the true position of our doctrine.”³⁵ While the official minutes do not specify the pamphlet’s contents, it is reasonable to assume that at least one point to be covered was polygamy, a doctrine embraced by the LDS Church in Utah and vehemently rejected by the Crow Creek branch and the New Organization. A year earlier, Hedrick had published a scathing denunciation of plural marriage, Brigham Young, and the Utah church in general.³⁶ Perhaps it was the mutual distaste for polygamy that prompted these early meetings in the first place.

No pamphlet appeared, and the April 1858 RLDS conference resolved “that Jason W. Briggs be and is truly exonerated from acting in connection with Granville Hedrick, of Bloomington, Illinois, in writing out matter for publication as directed by the previous fall conference.”³⁷ No other explanation was provided.

Between the fall of 1857 and early 1858, representatives of the New Organization also attended at least one conference of the Crow

dependence: Church of Christ, 1929), 25.

³²Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 103; *Crow Creek Record*, 4.

³³*History of the RLDS Church*, 3:637. For Owen’s priesthood status, see Buckley, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ*, 2.

³⁴*History of the RLDS Church*, 3:233. The RLDS Church’s semi-annual conference held near Council Bluffs, Iowa, on September 24, 1871, rescinded Hedrick’s membership but made no mention of Owen. *Ibid.*, 3:613, 631.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 3:235.

³⁶Granville Hedrick, *Spiritual Wife System Proven False and the True Order of Church Discipline* (Bloomington, Ill.: W. E. Foote’s Power Press Printing House, 1856).

³⁷*History of the RLDS Church*, 3:235.

Creek branch, and Hedrick attended at least an additional New Organization conference in Amboy, Illinois, probably in 1858.³⁸ Joseph Smith III stated in an 1896 letter to John R. Haldeman of the Church of Christ that “we have ever been willing to exchange views; and three or four times have some of us met with the brethern of the Church of Christ to talk the matter over. 1857, 1858 or 9, 1861 and twice at Independence.”³⁹ However, I have found no other evidence of additional meetings until 1884.⁴⁰

DOCTRINAL POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

One of the reasons these early attempts failed to achieve union was the issue of lineal descent, a major point of disagreement for the next 130 years.⁴¹ A second major doctrine on which they disagreed was the prophetic role of Joseph Smith Jr. The Church of Christ contended then (and now) that Smith had become a fallen prophet in 1834. After the Saints were expelled from Jackson County in 1833, Joseph had announced the revelation that created Zion’s Camp, a homegrown militia unit, which set out for Jackson County to effect “the redemption of Zion.” His revelation included authorization for such redemption to come “by power” if necessary. (LDS D&C 103:15, 29; RLDS D&C 100:3.d-e, 6.b).⁴² This revelation, the Church of Christ maintained, was contrary to earlier revelations that Zion should be purchased with money.

In September 1864, Granville Hedrick announced: “The prophet Joseph Smith himself lost his prophetic gift in the month of February, A. D. 1834, and from that period false teachings and

³⁸Ibid., 3:637.

³⁹Joseph Smith III, Letter to J. R. Haldeman, June 1, 1896, Joseph Smith Letterbook 7:56, Community of Christ Library-Archives (hereafter cited as Smith Letterbook by volume and page). At the 1861 meeting, Smith stated that “Mr. Hedrick . . . laid down a prerequisite that we were to put away the Book of Covenants; this we could not do; hence, nothing resulted.”

⁴⁰Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 116.

⁴¹Arthur M. Smith, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ [Temple Lot]—Origins of the Church and Some Differences between It and Factions of the Restoration* (Independence: Board of Publications, Church of Christ, 1971), 12; *History of the RLDS Church*, 3:209.

⁴²For information on Zion’s Camp, see Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:358; *History of the RLDS Church*, 1:439.

false doctrines and false revelations were continually imposed upon the church until the year of his death.”⁴³ This article was in response to an RLDS article, probably by Joseph Smith III as he was the editor of the *Herald*, published three months earlier: “Those who have ‘the best gifts’ of the Holy [S]pirit, know that the revelations, doctrines, and teachings of Mr. H. [Granville Hedrick] contradict known facts and principles of truth and that Joseph Smith was not a false prophet.”⁴⁴ The RLDS Church acknowledged, however, that certain 1840s doctrines, including polygamy and temple ordinances, were not revelations to Smith but innovations introduced by Brigham Young.⁴⁵ The Church of Christ agreed with the RLDS Church on these particular interpretations.

A third major point of controversy, one that would generate argument for decades, began as a result of the positions each church took regarding Joseph Smith’s published revelations. At issue was whether the Book of Commandments, whose printing in 1833 in Independence was interrupted by a mob attack, or whether the Doctrine and Covenants, expanded, renamed, and published in 1835 in Kirtland, Ohio, was the authoritative book of “latter day” scripture from the Lord to Joseph Smith.⁴⁶ The Church of Christ has continued to print and regard as scripture the sixty-five revelations as printed in 1833.⁴⁷

⁴³Granville Hedrick, “The Address Continued,” *Truth Teller* (Bloomington, Ill.) 1, no. 3 (September 1864): 35. The *Truth Teller* moved to Independence in 1868 but published only two issues there before being discontinued.

⁴⁴Joseph Smith III, “Truth Vindicated No.1,” *Herald* 6, no. 4 (August 15, 1864): 53.

⁴⁵*History of the RLDS Church*, 3:309–60; *Memoirs of Joseph Smith*, 70–71, 122; Joseph Smith III, “Truth Vindicated No.1,” *Herald* 6, no. 4 (August 15, 1864): 52–53.

⁴⁶For the printing history, see Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:268, 332–30; *History of the RLDS Church*, 1:370. For pro and con arguments, see Granville Hedrick, “An Address,” *Truth Teller* 1, no. 1 (July 1864): 9–10; Joseph Smith III, “Truth Vindicated No. 1,” *Herald* 6, no. 4 (August 15, 1864): 49–51; “Corrections of the Herald,” *Truth Teller* 1, no. 3 (September 1864): 42; Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 50–57.

⁴⁷*A Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ Or-*

EARLY NEWSPAPERS: A FORUM FOR CONTROVERSY

To better inform its growing membership and to explain or defend its developing doctrine (specifically including the three points cited above), the RLDS Church began publishing a monthly paper called the *True Latter Day Saints' Herald* on January 1, 1860.⁴⁸ For precisely the same reasons, the Church of Christ on July 1, 1864, inaugurated its monthly *Truth Teller*.⁴⁹ The first issue of the *Truth Teller* launched a newspaper battle between the two churches over doctrine and direction. Differences in doctrinal positions issues subsequently became major themes.

An early nondoctrinal issue, however, was the debate over how the Church of Christ obtained the *Herald's* subscription list. Apparently, the *Truth Teller* editors proposed an information trade that the *Herald* editors accepted. However, the *Truth Teller*, edited by Adna C. Haldeman, aggressively recruited subscriptions, invoking the names of the *Herald's* editors to do so: "Bros. W. W. Blair and Isaac Sheen will please accept our thanks for the favor they did us in furnishing the names and P. O. addresses of near 1000 saints, to whom we send the '*Truth Teller*' with the expectation that most of them will become subscribers for it, and receive the benefit of the important information it contains."⁵⁰

W. W. Blair sent a letter to Sheen which was published in the next issue of the *Herald*: "At the time that I gave the names above al-

ganized According to Law, on the 6th of April, 1830, reprinted by Charles R. Putnam and Daniel Macgregor (Independence: n.p., ca. 1926). The *Book of Commandments* has been continually reprinted by the Church of Christ, Board of Publication, since that date. The ca. 1926 printing includes a Certificate of Correctness: "We have carefully compared . . . the pages of the original Book of Commandments printed in Jackson County, Missouri in 1833 by W. W. Phelps and Co., and . . . it is an exact reproduction." All subsequent editions published by the Church of Christ carry this statement. The undated certificate which appears on the reverse of the title page is signed by Daniel Macgregor and Melvina Ritchison, narrowing its production to 1925–27. Macgregor transferred from the RLDS Church following the 1925 conference and died in 1927.

⁴⁸*History of the RLDS Church*, 3:242.

⁴⁹Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 122–23.

⁵⁰"Thanks," *Truth Teller* 1, no. 1 (July 1864): 16. Most of the articles appearing in the early issues were written by either Granville Hedrick or

luded to, to Mr. A. C. Haldeman, I did not know that he and his co-workers designed publishing at all.”⁵¹ Sheen’s indignant response appeared in the same issue:

THE MISNAMED “Truth-Teller” misrepresents us as much as it does Bro. Blair. Mr. A. C. Haldeman came here and said that he would give us some names, to enable us to send the *Herald* to them. As soon as we had written these names and P. O. addresses, he asked for permission to copy a “few” names from our mailing book. We consented, and instead of a “few” it appears that he copied nearly 1,000. After he had copied many of them, he said that he intended to publish a pamphlet on the gathering of the saints to Jackson Co., Mo. Instead of such a PAMPHLET, a *periodical* has been issued.⁵²

Haldeman countered in the *Truth Teller*’s August issue: “We have always thought it the duty of every follower of Christ to feel thankful to every person who did anything by which the *truth* would be placed in the possession of those who were misled and taught by the precepts of men; hence we ‘thanked’ him for the ‘favor’ he did us.”⁵³ These initial prickly feelings were exacerbated by other controversies.

RETURN TO THE CENTER PLACE OF ZION

The two papers expended considerable ink in stating, and then defending, their points of doctrine. In the first issue of the *Truth Teller*, Hedrick published a revelation that he said an angel had delivered to him on April 24, 1864. It instructed him and his followers to “gather together upon the consecrated land which I have appointed and dedicated by My servant Joseph Smith.” The year of gathering to Jackson County was identified as 1867.⁵⁴

Among the diverse expressions of the Latter Day Saint move-

Adna C. Haldeman; however, they were usually not identified.

⁵¹William W. Blair, “Misrepresentations in the ‘Truth-Teller’ Corrected,” *Herald* 6, no. 2 (July 15, 1864): 22.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 24; emphasis Sheen’s.

⁵³Adna C. Haldeman, “Reply to Bro. Blair,” *Truth Teller* 1, no. 2 (August 1864): 28.

⁵⁴Granville Hedrick, “Revelation,” *Truth Teller* 1, no. 1 (July 1864): 4. The personal delivery of the revelation by an angel does not appear in the 1864 article or, to my knowledge, anywhere else in print. Nicolas F. Den-

ment, the Church of Christ (or “Hedrickites,” as members of their church have been called historically) is unique in its early claim to a specific revelation to return as a church to Jackson County and to redeem or reclaim the Temple Lot in the “center place” of Zion. Joseph Smith, after sending missionaries to Missouri in 1830 in a frustrated attempt to convert Indians, visited Jackson County himself in the summer of 1831 and announced a revelation designating Independence, the county seat, as “the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the court-house” (LDS D&C 57:1–4; RLDS D&C 57:1–2). Although local residents expelled the Mormons two years later, the vast majority of Restoration churches who claim Joseph Smith Jr. as their founding prophet attach high value to the Temple Lot as the “center place” of Zion. Not only is it the heartland of the “gathering” of the Saints, but it is also the location of the temple to which Christ will come at the end of time.

The Church of Christ’s revelation to return to Jackson County naturally had an unsettling effect on RLDS members; and four months later, Joseph Smith III counseled: “We would caution all our readers against going to that land before God commands His saints to go there by His prophet Joseph. If any go there before that time, they may expect that the judgments of God will come upon them.”⁵⁵ Smith and the RLDS Church held to this position over the next decade.

Many of Hedrick’s followers sold their farms and homes in central Illinois and elsewhere and moved to Jackson County in 1867 and 1868 after a vanguard of three families purchased property in Jackson County in 1865 and 1866.⁵⁶ Between 1867 and 1874, John Hedrick and William Eaton bought the eight lots (2.5 acres) that comprised the immediate area on or near the spot where Joseph Smith Jr. dedi-

ham, in an emotional reminiscence, related that, as a teenager, the Hedrick family showed him the bed where Granville Hedrick was sleeping when “an angel appeared to him and gave him the revelation to return to Jackson County.” Nicholas F. Denham, Interviewed by R. Jean Addams, September 2005.

⁵⁵Joseph Smith [III], “Truth Vindicated,” *Herald* 6, no. 4 (August 15, 1864): 49. Shortly after Hedrick’s April revelation, Joseph III had counseled the Saints: “You are forbidden to receive his [Hedrick’s] teachings.” Minutes, Special Conference held at Amboy, June 25, 1864, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

⁵⁶Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 108–9; Jackson

cated the temple site on August 3, 1831.⁵⁷

In 1851, two developers had laid out the Maxwell-Woodson Addition to the City of Independence. This addition included Lot 15, traditionally the very spot of the dedication, which had been marked with a stone at the northeast corner.⁵⁸ The location was well known to local citizens and to such early Saints as William McLellin, who returned to Independence prior to June 1869 and joined Hedrick and his followers in 1869.⁵⁹ John Hedrick and Eaton quit-claimed these lots to Granville Hedrick as “trustee in trust” for the Church of Christ

County, Property Records, James and Charlotte Pollock to John Hedrick, October 11, 1865, 43:615–16; Simon and Nancy Walgamet to John T. Clark, April 4, 1866, 44:564–65; and Jessee [sic] and Eliza Taylor to Jedediah Owen, July 23, 1866, 46:405–6, Independence, Missouri.

⁵⁷Jackson County, Property Records, Jacob Tindall to John Hedrick, August 22, 1867, 50:331–32 (lot 21); John Montgomery to John H. Hedrick, September 24, 1867, 50:332 (lot 20); and George W. Buchanan to John H. Hedrick, December 12, 1867, 53:526–27 (lot 16); Joseph C. and Mary Irwin to William Eaton, July 9, 1873, 104:311 (lots 17, 18, 19, 22); and Maria McClanahan and Susan Nelson to William Eaton, March 7, 1874, 104:517 (lot 15), Independence. Joseph Smith’s plat included twenty-four temples to serve various functions. Richard H. Jackson, “The City of Zion Plat,” in *Historical Atlas of Mormonism*, edited by S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 44–45.

⁵⁸Richard and Pamela Price, *The Temple of the Lord* (Independence: Price Publishing Company, 1982), 77. This book prints the testimony of John Taylor (a member of the original church but not the third LDS Church president) in the Temple Lot Case: “The corner stone was up above the ground that marked the Temple, and I saw it myself with these eyes.”

⁵⁹William E. McLellin, Brownsville, Mo., Letter to “Our Very Dear Friends,” July 12, 1869, holograph, photostat, and typescript, Miscellaneous Letters and Papers, P13, f185, Community of Christ Library-Archives. Brownsville is located about sixty miles east of Independence. Today the community is known as Sweet Springs. The next extant McLellin letter is dated at Independence, November 23, 1869. William E. McLellin, “Letter and Reply,” *Herald* 17, no. 10 (May 15, 1870): 290–91. See also Stan Larson and Samuel Passey, eds., *The William E. McLellin Papers (1854–1880)* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2007), 450–57.

on November 8, 1869 and November 5, 1877 respectively.⁶⁰ The *Kansas City Times* on November 17, 1877, announced, though without attribution, "It is definitely asserted that the erection of the Temple will shortly be commenced" as envisioned by Joseph Smith in 1831.⁶¹ Ground-breaking, in fact, did not occur until April 6, 1929.

Within eighteen months of this Church of Christ announcement, Joseph Smith III published his "spiritual vision" of the temple on the sacred Temple Lot in Independence. Almost certainly, this announcement caused great excitement among members of the RLDS Church; but for members of the Church of Christ, it caused concern and perhaps anguish. Artist Ernest Webbe painted the temple as Joseph Smith III described it, and the painting was published.⁶²

Furthermore, by 1877, the RLDS Church was developing its own "gathering" strategy. In January 1877, Joseph Smith III stated: "We now state that we are decidedly of the opinion that those who may so desire, can move into that state (meaning Missouri) in safety. . . . [But] no immigration in a mass can be safely carried forward, neither is it at present advisable, for two reasons, distress would ensue; and, it is stated, there is an order on the statute book of Missouri, unrepealed, preventing it. This, however, need not affect those who may choose to cast their fortunes as individuals in that State."⁶³

Notwithstanding this in-print acrimony, members of both

⁶⁰Jackson County, Property Records, John Hedrick, quit-claimed three lots to Granville Hedrick, November 8, 1869, 73:1-2 (lots 16, 20, 21); William Eaton, quit-claimed five lots to Granville Hedrick, November 5, 1877, 115:452-54 (lots 15, 17, 18, 19, 22).

⁶¹"A Mormon Temple for Missouri," *Kansas City [Mo.] Times*, November 18, 1877, 2.

⁶²Joseph Smith III, "The House of the Lord, as Seen in Vision," *Herald* 25, no. 11 (June 1, 1878): 161-63. This revelation pronounced by Joseph Smith III is also included as a chapter in Alvin Knisley, comp., *Infallible Proofs* (1930; rpt., Independence: Price Publishing, 1988), 71-78. This chapter cites *Saints' Herald*, April 15, 1878, but the reference is in error. The Joseph Smith III vision is also included in "The Temple," *Zion's Warning* 3 (October 1972): 8, which also includes a reproduction of Webbe's painting. Copies of this magazine are in Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

⁶³*History of the RLDS Church*, 4:166-67; Joseph Smith III and Henry

churches remained surprisingly friendly and accommodating toward each other as individuals. During the late 1870s, as individual families of the RLDS Church started to drift into the Independence area, members of the Church of Christ often provided hospitality for the new arrivals.⁶⁴ Interestingly, the *Herald* carried an obituary of John Hedrick's death in 1872 and concluded: "He was a good man and we shall miss him very much."⁶⁵

RENEWED EFFORTS AT UNITY AND A PRELUDE TO LITIGATION

After perhaps five years during which tensions eased, both churches during their respective October 1885 conferences appointed representatives to a committee assigned "to confer in a friendly discussion over the differences, real or supposed, existing between the two bodies."⁶⁶ The record indicates that the RLDS Church initiated this discussion. Extant correspondence among officials in the RLDS Church suggests that the meeting was likely the result of their interest in acquiring the Temple Lot.⁶⁷

When the meeting did not produce meaningful results, due to Joseph Smith III's discomfort with the Church of Christ's possession of the Temple Lot, the RLDS Church filed a "Notice to Quit Possession" in the local court on June 11, 1887.⁶⁸ It claimed that the 2.5 acres in possession of the Church of Christ should be relin-

Stebbins, "Notes on Travel," *Herald* 24, no. 2 (January 15, 1877): 25.

⁶⁴Mark H. Forscutt, "Diary Reminiscences.—No. 2," August 23, 1871, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

⁶⁵"Dead," [John Hedrick], *Herald* 19 (September 15, 1872): 574.

⁶⁶*Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III*, 314; see also Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 117; *History of the RLDS Church*, 4:480–81.

⁶⁷Alexander H. Smith, Letter to Edmund L. Kelley, May 22, 1884; G. A. Blakeslee, Letter to Edmund L. Kelley, June 21, 1884, Letters, P16, f6, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

⁶⁸Notice to Quit Possession, Served by G. A. Blakeslee, by Attorney, Bishop and Trustee for the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, June 11, 1887, Independence, Exhibit 24, in *The Temple Lot Case* (1893; rpt., Independence: Price Publishing, 2003), 247–48. The 1893 printing did not include the "Decision of John F. Philips, Judge in the Temple Lot Case" since his decision was not announced until March 3, 1894. The "Decision" was printed separately, together with selected interrogatories by Herald Publishing House. Price Publishing Company prints

quished to the RLDS Church as the rightful owner/successor of the original trust created when Edward Partridge purchased 63.27 acres for the Church in 1831.⁶⁹

The Temple Lot had thus become a major point of self-identification and competition between these expressions of Joseph Smith Jr.'s theology. To no one's surprise, the Church of Christ moved quickly to solidify its ownership. In fact, even before the RLDS Church filed its notice, it took action. For twenty years, it had planned to build a chapel, but the plans had never advanced beyond discussion. No doubt having heard of the RLDS planned action, the Church of Christ's April 1887 conference appointed "a committee of three . . . to superintend the building of a house of worship and to locate the same on the temple grounds."⁷⁰ Construction began (date unknown) and the small building (16 x 25 feet) was completed at a cost of \$377.41 before October 5, 1889, when the Church of Christ discharged the committee.⁷¹ From the RLDS leaders' point of view, this act overtly defied their "Notice to Quit Possession."

The question arises: Why had the RLDS Church waited two and a half years after the "Notice," regardless of the Church of Christ's construction of the small meeting house? The answer may be more in the motive than in the means. Joseph Smith III was very determined to prove to one and all that the church over which he presided was the legitimate successor to the organization founded by his father in 1830. Acquisition of the sacred space known as the Temple Lot was a way of solidifying that perspective. The record shows, however, that Smith had been specifically counseled against using, as a means of validity, the recently acquired (June 9, 1887) Partridge-Cowdrey-Johnson deed. A month prior to the actual purchase of the deed, William W. Blair (a counselor to Smith since 1873) wrote Edmund L. Kelley (a counselor to the Presiding Bishop) that "the deed by E. Partridge to

Philips's ruling and briefly summarizes the decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals, which reversed Philips's ruling.

⁶⁹Jackson County, Property Records, Jones H. Flourney and Clara Flourney to Edward Partridge, December 19, 1831, B:1. The legal description is "63 and 43/160th acres in Section 3, Township 9, Range 32."

⁷⁰Church Record (Independence: Church of Christ), 65, quoted in Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 114–15.

⁷¹Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 115.



Church of Christ (Temple Lot) 1889 meetinghouse, and congregation, south side, ca. early 1890s. Photograph courtesy Church of Christ (Temple Lot).

the children of O. Cowdrey . . . is doubtless a fraud.”⁷² Joseph Smith III was undoubtedly informed of this conclusion by Kelley or by Blair himself.

Nevertheless, the deed was acquired and Smith next sought legal advice from RLDS Church counsel George Edmunds. On June 22, 1887, Edmunds wrote Smith, after questioning the deed itself, that: “It seems that organization [Church of Christ] has title. . . . I think you are too late to enforce a resulting trust in Partridge. The rights of Auditors have intervened.”⁷³ Even Smith expressed doubts in his June 29, 1887, response to Edmunds. He wrote: “As to the right of succession as a church, I have not a particle of doubt; but as to the result of the lapse of years, the mutations of changing claimants. . . . I am in grave doubt, and am prepared in mind for adverse judgment.”⁷⁴

Perhaps efforts were made (1887–90) by RLDS Church leaders

⁷²William W. Blair, Letter to Edmund L. Kelley, May 12, 1887, E. L. Kelley Papers, P16, f15, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

⁷³George Edmunds, Letter to Joseph Smith III, June 22, 1887, Miscellaneous Letters and Papers, P13, f341, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

⁷⁴Joseph Smith III, Letter to George Edmunds, June 29, 1887, Miscellaneous Letters and Papers, P13, f343, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

to purchase the property. In 1884, Alexander H. Smith, Joseph's brother and apostle, wrote to Edmund L. Kelley: "Ed, what think you of buying the Temple lot here? [Independence] We can now buy it for just the cost of purchase, back taxes, and cost of improvements [there was no building on the property at that time]. \$1800.00. The Hedricites [sic] wants us to buy it."⁷⁵

Regardless of what action RLDS leaders may have initiated, Joseph Smith III was personally dedicated to the proposition that the RLDS Church was the rightful successor to the original church and he intended to prove it in the court of law. Reflecting on his decision in later life he stated: "Soon after beginning my ministry with the Reorganized Church . . . I became thoroughly convinced . . . that some day . . . the group with which I had identified myself in 1860 would be called to stand before the great American Jury in the civil Courts . . . and there the causes of difference . . . would be thoroughly examined, weighed, and determined. . . . The idea that this contest would inevitably come became so firmly fixed in my mind that I am quite willing to admit it assumed almost the proportions of a prophetic obsession, so sure was I that it would come to pass."⁷⁶ Smith was thus determined to press the issue, notwithstanding internal and external advice.

Escalating the controversy was Charles A. Hall, a member of the RLDS Church since 1878.⁷⁷ His administrative skills and missionary zeal had brought him quickly into the leadership ranks. In April or May of 1884, he became president of the Kewanee District in Illinois.⁷⁸ But unexpectedly, Hall left the RLDS Church in the spring of 1885, became a member of the Church of Christ in which he was ordained an elder on April 12, 1885, and was formally "expelled" from

⁷⁵Alexander H. Smith, Letter to Edmund L. Kelley, May 22, 1884, E. L. Kelley Papers, P16, f6, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

⁷⁶*Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III*, 310.

⁷⁷Membership Record, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Book B, 272 (Henderson Grove, Ill.) and Book B, 296 (Burlington, Iowa), Community of Christ Library-Archives.

⁷⁸Joseph Smith III, Letter to Charles A. Hall, May 10, 1884, MS 596, f3, LDS Family History Library, on letterhead: "Herald Steam Publishing House, Lamoni, Iowa." This letter details Hall's responsibilities as district president. My thanks to Larry and Tracey Long for copies of Hall's diaries and papers; Larry is Hall's great-grandson.

the RLDS Church on May 17, 1885.⁷⁹ He subsequently moved his family to the Independence area.⁸⁰

The talented Hall was chosen “presiding High Priest over the High Priesthood of the Church” (in essence, Church president) on April 7, 1889,⁸¹ replacing Richard E. Hill, who was ordained as bishop to the church. Hall threw his energy and skill into the Temple Lot Case, as the developing contestation of the 2.5 acres came to be known.⁸²

THE TEMPLE LOT CASE

In spite of the developing adversarial feelings, leaders of the Church of Christ made another effort to head off a major confrontation. The conference of September 4, 1891, agreed to write Wilford Woodruff as president of “the church in Utah,” Joseph III as president of the Reorganized Church, and John Christian Whitmer as leader of “the Whitmerites,” to suggest appointing delegates the following April who would “meet at a time and place agreed upon to present the claims and doctrines of their respective churches and try to come to a unity of the faith.”⁸³

Whether these letters were sent is not known and, as a matter of fact, on August 6, 1891—a month before this proposal—the RLDS Church had already filed a bill of equity in the U.S. District Court in

⁷⁹Membership Record, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Book B, 272 (Henderson Grove).

⁸⁰Church of Christ Membership Records, n.d. typescript provided to R. Jean Addams by officials of the Church of Christ. Record in possession of the Church of Christ, Independence. I have found no explanation of why Hall left the RLDS Church and joined the Church of Christ. He settled in Centropolis, a few miles northwest of Independence.

⁸¹Church of Christ, Minutes, April 7, 1889. Typescript provided to R. Jean Addams by officials of the Church of Christ. Record in possession of the Church of Christ.

⁸²*Temple Lot Case*, 4–5. Hall is cited frequently throughout the record. The first building constructed on the temple lot was completed in October 1889, during his presidency.

⁸³Church Record, 182, typescript provided to R. Jean Addams by officials of the Church of Christ. Record in possession of the Church of Christ, quoted in Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 117.

Kansas City, Missouri, against the Church of Christ.⁸⁴ This action initiated a tangle of litigation known historically as the Temple Lot Case that consumed the attention of both organizations for the next four and a half years. At the time of the filing, the Church of Christ had fewer than a hundred members, while the RLDS Church had approximately 25,300.⁸⁵

After leading the Church of Christ's legal efforts for nearly two and a half years, Charles A. Hall on February 18, 1894, abruptly "stated to the church . . . that he could not support our position as a church and requested the privilege of withdrawing his name and resigning his offices in the church. . . . The request was granted."⁸⁶ The local press speculated that the Mormon Church was the "power behind the throne in the Temple lot controversy," that Hall was now drawn to that movement, and that it would eventually build a temple at Independence.⁸⁷

Hall was indeed baptized a member of the LDS Church four months later by Elder Daniel F. Stout at Centropolis, a small community northwest of Independence.⁸⁸ He apparently had developed strong relationships with some Mormons including John M. Cannon,

⁸⁴*The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Complainant, vs. the Church of Christ at Independence, Missouri: Richard Hill, Trustee; [et al.]*, Bill of Equity, U.S. Circuit Court, Western Missouri District, Kansas City, August 6, 1891. Typescripts of the Temple Lot Case are available at the Community of Christ Library-Archives, Kansas City (Missouri) Public Library, and LDS Church History Library. See also Ronald E. Romig, "The Temple Lot Suit after 100 Years," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 12 (1992): 3–15; and Paul E. Reimann, *The Reorganized Church and the Civil Courts* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Company, 1961), 149–64.

⁸⁵John R. Haldeman, "Secretary's Report," *Searchlight* 1, no. 7 (August 1896): 56; *History of the RLDS Church*, 5:643.

⁸⁶Church of Christ, Minutes, February 18, 1894.

⁸⁷"News at Independence: President C. A. Hall Renounces the Hedrickite Belief," *Kansas City Times*, February 20, 1894.

⁸⁸Charles A. Hall, Diary, June 24, 1894, LDS Family History Library, MS 596, f2: "On this day, my wife Helen, Mary, Martha and G. A. Cole and myself was [sic] baptized and confirmed members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints by Elder D. F. Stout." See also John Pratt, "Homesick Missionary," www.johnpratt.com/ruth/histories/dfstout/dfstout.html, April 7, 2007. Pratt's personal essay quotes excerpts from

an attorney in Salt Lake City, who was a nephew of George Q. Cannon, influential first counselor in the First Presidency of the LDS Church. Through Cannon, Hall had arranged some loans in his own name, so as not to encumber the Church of Christ, to pay the legal fees required to defend the Church's title to the Temple Lot.⁸⁹ Despite his departure from the Church of Christ—and much to the dismay of the RLDS Church—Hall did not abandon his efforts to see the Temple Lot Case through to its conclusion.⁹⁰ Joseph III expressed feelings about Hall that were unusually strong for him:

I may, however, be pardoned for saying that through the operation of that gift which the Apostle Paul in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians calls the gift of discernment of spirits, I had at various times been given that prescience which is practically a foreknowledge concerning the nature and acquired qualifications of men with whom my life work has had to do. At times this perception has served to arm me against adversaries. . . . By this peculiar spiritual gift I was given to know the character of Charles A. Hall.

Mr. Hall allowed himself to show what is known in legal phrase as *animus*—that strong feeling of antagonism that hinders a person from extending to an adversary the proper degree of respect and courtesy. As a matter of fact, none of us who appeared in the suit as witnesses or advocates received due credit from President Hall as having any honesty of intent or purpose in planting the suit.⁹¹

In 1894, the RLDS Church obtained a favorable ruling at the U.S. District Court level from Judge John F. Philips, who ordered that the Temple Lot be relinquished to the RLDS Church.⁹² The Church of Christ appealed the decision, and, in 1895, the U.S. Court of Appeals reversed the decision, ruling: “The members of the Reorga-

Stout's missionary journal and confirms the date and place of Hall's baptism.

⁸⁹Charles A. Hall, Letters to John M. Cannon, March 26 and May 27, 1893, John M. Cannon Papers, MS 2625, LDS Church History Library.

⁹⁰Following the close of the Temple Lot Case in 1896 but before 1900, Hall relocated his family to Pueblo, Colorado. Hall died in California in 1946. Family history provided to R. Jean Addams by Tracey Long, Las Vegas, Nevada, great-granddaughter-in-law of Charles A. Hall. See also Twelfth Census of the United States, Colorado, Pueblo County, Pueblo City, 33.

⁹¹*Memoirs of President Joseph Smith*, 311.

⁹²*The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Complain-*

nized church have acquiesced too long in assertion of adverse right to the property in controversy to be now heard to complain. . . . Under these circumstances, we think that laches is a good and sufficient defense to the action."⁹³

In January 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear an RLDS appeal and remanded the case to the U.S. Court of Appeals for compliance.⁹⁴ The Church of Christ therefore retained the property.

This clash between the churches colored their relationship for at least the next eighty years. The financial cost of the litigation was significant for both organizations but was particularly crippling for the small Church of Christ, who had laid out more than \$7,600. The U.S. Court of Appeals required the RLDS Church to pay the Church of Christ about \$2,200 for costs of litigation; by August 1896, "all but \$200.00 of the costs owing us [the Church of Christ] by the Reorga-

ant, vs. the Church of Christ at Independence, Missouri: Richard Hill, Trustee; [et al.], Bill of Equity, U.S. Circuit Court, Western Missouri District, Kansas City, March 1894 (60 Fed. 937.); "Temple Lot Case Decided: Josephites Rout the Hedrickites and Certain Possession," Kansas City [Mo.] Times, March 4, 1894, 5.

⁹³*The Church of Christ, [et al.], vs. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit, St. Louis, Mo., September 30, 1894 (70 Fed. 179), 188–89; "Judge Philip's Decision Reversed in the U. S. Court of Appeals," Deseret Evening News, September 30, 1895; The Church of Christ, et al., vs. the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit, St. Louis, Mo., September 30, 1894 (71 Fed. 250).* The second citing is a request to the court for a "rehearing" which was dismissed and thus set the stage for an appeal to the U. S. Supreme Court. "Laches" means "negligence in the observance of a duty or opportunity." See also Addams, "The Church of Christ (Temple Lot), Its Emergence, Struggles, and Early Schisms," 215.

⁹⁴*The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Complainant, vs. The Church of Christ at Independence, Missouri, [et al.], U.S. Supreme Court, Washington, D.C., June 27, 1896 (163 U.S. 681); "Temple Lot Suit," Herald 43, no. 5, (January 29, 1896): 69; "By Way of Explanation," Searchlight 1, no. 1 (February 1, 1896): 1.* Legal terminology used for this appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court was "writ of certiorari." James H. McKenney (clerk of the Supreme Court), Telegram to E. L. Kelley, Lamoni, Iowa, January 27, 1896, Washington D.C., "Petition for Certiorari in the Church Case Denied." "Temple Lot Suit," *Herald* 43, no. 5 (January 29, 1896): 69.

nized Church have been collected.”⁹⁵

Four months earlier, John R. Haldeman, editor of the *Searchlight*, expressed bitterness over the situation as his people interpreted it: Joseph Smith III “allowed his people to do wrong to drag us into the courts of the land and force many of our people to spend the earnings of a life time in defense of a God given trust.”⁹⁶ For their part, the RLDS Church interpreted Judge Philips’s initial ruling as the correct one—particularly his identification of RLDS Church as “but a reproduction of that of the church as it existed from 1830 to 1834,”⁹⁷ and by interpretation, the rightful successor to the original church—and made much of that point. Furthermore, Judge Philips denounced Brigham Young and the practice of polygamy, and referred to the Church of Christ as “essential nondescripts, and in practice ‘squatter sovereigns.’”⁹⁸ Ronald E. Romig, in his analysis of the Temple Lot Case, summarized:

By design or misunderstanding, RLDS church leaders straight-away assumed the position that the Decree of the Appeals Court did not affect issues contested in the lower court, but only prevented the RLDS from possessing the Temple Lot. . . . However it may be construed, the Appellate Decree mandated the reversal of the decision of the lower court with the effect of completely setting aside and vacating its proceedings. For the past 100 years, the practical effect of the Appellate Decree is as if Judge Philips’ opinion and decree had never been entered.⁹⁹

FIRST PERIOD OF COOPERATION 1897–1902

Sometime after the conclusion of the Temple Lot Suit in January 1896, apparently wanting to put the Temple Lot Case and its asso-

⁹⁵George P. Frisbey, James A. Hedrick, and John R. Haldeman, “Reports Presented to Quarterly Conference,” *Searchlight* 1, no. 7 (August 1896): 55. The exact amount was \$7,630.31.

⁹⁶John Haldeman, “Editorial,” *Searchlight* 1, no. 3 (April 1896): 19.

⁹⁷*The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Complainant, vs. the Church of Christ at Independence, Missouri: Richard Hill, Trustee; [et al.]*, Bill of Equity, U.S. Circuit Court, Western Missouri District, Kansas City, March 1894 (60 Fed. 954.)

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 955.

⁹⁹Romig, “The Temple Lot Suit after 100 Years,” 15; see also Reimann, *The Reorganized Church and the Civil Courts*, 168–82.

ciated bad feelings behind them, John R. Haldeman, *Searchlight* editor, initiated correspondence with his counterpart at the *Herald* looking towards an adjustment of the difficulties existing between the two bodies.¹⁰⁰ As a result, a meeting was arranged with representatives of the RLDS Church and the Church of Christ to “reduce the points of differences between the two organizations.”¹⁰¹ On January 8, 1897, Joseph Smith III wrote to Haldeman: “I have consulted with my brother A. H. Smith and others, and we are agreed that at any time convenient to yourself we will come to Independence [from Lamoni, then RLDS headquarters] prepared for the talk and interchange of views &c. of which we have been corresponding. . . . Let us know as soon as convenient, and we will come down and arrange as to when, where, and who shall be present as well as to agree as to methods of interchange of views &c. Of course I do not refer to it as a Debate; but only to what we have been written of.”¹⁰²

The Church of Christ was still struggling with the financial burden caused by the protracted litigation and also with its small—fewer than a hundred—membership.¹⁰³ Meetings were held on January 16, 18, 19, and 20, 1897, involving RLDS participants Joseph Smith III, Alexander Hale Smith, Rhoderic May, William H. Garrett, and George E. Harrington and Church of Christ participants Richard Hill, John R. Haldeman, George P. Frisbey, George D. Cole, and James A. Hedrick.¹⁰⁴ Although these meetings did not result in unity, they laid the groundwork for future conversations between the two bodies and produced a statement of concurrence or an “Epitome” on

¹⁰⁰“A Noteworthy Incident,” *Searchlight* 2, no. 1 (February 1, 1897); 1–2.

¹⁰¹*History of the RLDS Church*, 5:383–85; Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 117.

¹⁰²Joseph Smith III, Letter to John R. Haldeman, January 8, 1897, Smith Letterbook 7:373.

¹⁰³Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 125. Membership in 1896 was 55 but had jumped to 100 by 1897. Apparently, once the Temple Lot Case was decided, many former or previously disaffected members of the Church of Christ began to reaffiliate.

¹⁰⁴Alexander Hale Smith was Joseph III’s brother and counselor in the First Presidency. Ronald E. Romig, comp., *Alexander Hale Smith: Joseph and Emma’s Far West Son* (Independence: John Whitmer Books, 2009). George P. Frisbey was born in Marietta, Ohio, in 1834 and was baptized a

several points of belief and doctrine.¹⁰⁵

The Epitome of 1897 included fourteen points of common or accepted doctrine. Three of the items were restatements of the Articles of Faith provided by Joseph Smith Jr. in his well-known letter to John Wentworth of the *Chicago Democrat* which was published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842 at Nauvoo, Illinois,¹⁰⁶ including the belief “that the city of Zion will be built at Independence, Missouri, and that the saints of God will gather there.” One item specifically disavows two LDS doctrines: It states: “What is known as the ‘King Follett Sermon,’ and the Book of Abraham, are not accepted as a basis of doctrine.” Other points reiterate common themes found throughout the Restoration movement such as: “The law of consecration is necessary to the establishment of Zion.” Finally, a statement essential to the Restoration message—and critically necessary for an agreement of any kind between these two organizations—was included: “We believe that there are individuals in the different factions, who hold the priesthood.”¹⁰⁷

Over the next few years, articles in both the *Herald* and the *Searchlight* continued to prod each other publicly, while privately Joseph Smith III and John R. Haldeman corresponded during 1897

member of the Church of Christ in Tazewell County, Illinois, in 1865 by David Judy. Frisbey left Illinois with other members of the Church of Christ and traveled to Independence in 1867 where he became a successful merchant. A few years before his death in 1919, Frisbey served as the Church of Christ’s presiding elder. Richard Hill baptized George D. Cole into the Church of Christ in April 1870 in Independence. Cole became a very successful missionary and died in 1918. James A. Hedrick was the eighth child of Granville Hedrick. He was born August 19, 1865. James served the Church in a variety of capacities, including as presiding elder in the early 1900s. He died in 1926.

¹⁰⁵*History of the RLDS Church*, 5:382; Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 118; Richard Hill and William H. Garrett, “Minutes of a Conference,” *Searchlight* 2, no. 1 (February 1897): 98–99; “‘The Searchlight’ on the Doctrine and Covenants,” *Herald* 44, no. 32 (August 18, 1897): 517–18. Several versions of the “Epitome” exist with slight and unimportant differences in detail.

¹⁰⁶*Joseph’s Wentworth Letter* (Independence: Price Publishing, 2000), 13–14.

¹⁰⁷*History of the RLDS Church*, 5:382; Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 118.

over what was said (or was not said) in the two publications, as well as engaging in a series of questions and answers.¹⁰⁸

In January 1900, John R. Haldeman and George P. Frisbey of the Church of Christ, “after protracted seasons of prayer and fasting . . . had been moved upon” to call for a joint meeting. It was held January 18–19 in the RLDS headquarters city of Lamoni, Iowa, between the two Church of Christ elders and the RLDS First Presidency, then consisting of Joseph III, Alexander H. Smith, and Edmund L. Kelley.¹⁰⁹ The Church of Christ’s specific concern was “agreeing upon a common ground upon which the two organizations might unite in an effort to prosecute the work of gathering, and the building of the temple at Independence, Missouri.”¹¹⁰

At the Lamoni meeting, Haldeman proposed that two representatives from the Church of Christ travel to Utah and meet with the LDS First Presidency and ask for its participation in a meeting with four representatives from each church (Church of Christ, RLDS Church, and LDS Church) in Independence. On the afternoon of February 8, 1900, George P. Frisbey and George D. Cole, as official representatives of the Church of Christ, having arrived by train from Independence, met with the First Presidency of the LDS Church, then consisting of Lorenzo Snow, George Q. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith, accompanied by Apostle Charles W. Penrose. The Church of Christ elders stated that their objective in coming was for “the purpose of ascertaining if it is not possible for a delegation of our church, a delegation of the ‘Reorganite’ church and a delegation of their own organization could not meet together for the purpose of trying to harmonize their views on doctrine with a view to our coming together and uniting into one body” and that we “ought to take some steps towards placing this ground [the Temple Lot] so it can be used for the purpose indicated in the revelations.”¹¹¹

A second meeting was held on February 10 at the office of the First Presidency with all three members of the presidency and

¹⁰⁸Joseph Smith III, Letters to J. R. Haldeman, January 11, 1897, February 18, 1897, Smith Letterbook 7:376, 412.

¹⁰⁹*History of the RLDS Church*, 5:488–89.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹¹Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830–present), February 8, 1900, 2, Church History Library; “Probable Amal-

William B. Preston of the Presiding Bishopric. The Church of Christ elders were given the opportunity to present their thoughts and proposal regarding the three-church meeting. Questions were asked and answers freely given. At the conclusion of the meeting President Lorenzo Snow asked the visitors if they could remain in Salt Lake City until seven members of the Quorum of Twelve could be contacted and summoned to Church headquarters. Frisbey and Cole readily agreed and were housed at LDS Church expense.¹¹²

By February 21 the much-anticipated third meeting was held at 10:30 A.M. Those in attendance included the First Presidency; Apostles Francis M. Lyman, John Henry Smith, George Teasdale, Marriner W. Merrill, John W. Taylor, Anthon H. Lund, Abraham O. Woodruff; and William B. Preston and John R. Winder of the Presiding Bishopric. President Snow briefly outlined the meeting's purpose and again asked Elders Frisbey and Cole to express their feelings. LDS Church officials asked questions of their visitors. At the meeting's conclusion, the First Presidency asked the Church of Christ representatives to allow them to discuss the proposal privately, then meet again the next day. However, after checking individual calendars, Snow reassembled LDS officials at 2:15 P.M. the same day. After a thorough and frank discussion, Snow reached a decision sustained by those present.¹¹³

At 4:30 P.M. "Elders Frisby [sic] and Cole of the Hedrickite church returned to the office, having been called for." President Snow "conversed privately with them and advised them that their proposal would not be accepted." Snow then "expressed the desire for the Church to pay their expenses here and back to their home," a sum of \$88. The two elders graciously accepted this offer.¹¹⁴

The representatives returned to Independence, disappointed but not surprised, and reported to the members of the joint committee at the follow-up meeting of March 6: "Results were as they [had]

gamation," *Independence Sentinel*, March 1, 1900, 2. First Presidency minutes, usually not available to researchers, were included in the Journal History for only a brief period.

¹¹²Journal History, February 10, 1900, 1–6.

¹¹³Ibid., February 21, 1900, 2–24.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

expected” and that “L. D. [sic] Snow stood in the way.”¹¹⁵ Undaunted, the committee decided to proceed with what its members still felt could be a historic undertaking. They expanded the committee so that six men represented each church for a total of twelve participants. The RLDS representatives were Alexander H. Smith, Edmund L. Kelley, Heman C. Smith, Joseph Luff, Roderick May, and Richard S. Salyards. The Church of Christ appointed George P. Frisbey, Abraham L. Hartley, Richard Hill, Alma Owen, George D. Cole, and John R. Haldeman. Beginning on March 5, 1900, they held a series of meetings in March, succeeded in establishing a much friendlier working relationship, and managed to agree on some additional points of common belief and doctrine. They also agreed to reconvene on May 1.¹¹⁶

First, they reaffirmed the main points of the 1897 Epitome. The only change was in Item 8 of the 1900 Epitome: “We believe there are [changed from “are” to “may be” in 1900] individuals in the different factions who hold the priesthood.”¹¹⁷ Second, they agreed on five additional points of doctrine:

- (1) It is the opinion of this council in order to accomplish the work of the Lord committed to his people it is necessary for them to unite in one organization in harmony with the law of God;
- (2) It is evident that we need special divine help and revelation to enable us to agree upon the best methods by which to unite and cooperate for the accomplishment of the work
- (3) We indorse the revelations contained in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants;
- (4) We indorse the articles on Marriage and Of Government

¹¹⁵More than one set of minutes was taken. Minutes of Joint Committee Meeting, March 5–11, 1900, holograph, unnumbered pages, Miscellany Collection, P19, f54, Community of Christ Library-Archives (hereafter cited as Minutes of 1900). The minutes use “joint committee” and “joint council” interchangeably in the minutes and in printed references to these meetings; I standardize as “joint committee.” Lorenzo Snow had no middle initial, but the tone of the minutes suggests only a slip of the mind.

¹¹⁶*History of the RLDS Church*, 5:490-91; Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 118; “Denies Rumor of Union: Joseph Smith Says LDS Will Not Join the Mormons,” *Independence Sentinel*, March 16, 1900, 6.

¹¹⁷*History of the RLDS Church*, 5:490-91. Item 8 of the 1900 Epitome was item 7 in the 1897 Epitome.

and Laws in General, in [the] 1835 edition of Doctrine and Covenants.

(5) We indorse the revelation found in a letter from Joseph Smith the Seer to W. W. Phelps concerning the "One Mighty and Strong," dated November 27, 1832.¹¹⁸

The minutes show that this committee discussed a merger, but the effort faltered. Alexander's son, Frederick Alexander Smith, reporting his father's experience, relates that, after much discussion, the Hedrickites requested that the committee fast and ask the Lord "to tell them the way to unite." The committee agreed and, the following day, met while fasting and continued their discussion on points of doctrine. At the first meeting on March 5, Alexander H. Smith had been chosen as chairman of the joint committee. Before dismissing at the day's end on March 8, he asked the Hedrickite representatives: "Through whom do you want this message to come?" After consultation, they answered, "Through whomsoever the Lord wills."¹¹⁹ According to Frederick A., "Elder A. H. Smith told me he went home . . . and went to bed and went to sleep but along in the night he was awakened by an Angel and told to get up and write as he [the angel] gave the message."¹²⁰ He announced that revelation at the committee meeting held Friday, March 9. He stated the Lord had told him: "My children of the Church of Christ are not sufficiently humble or willing to submit to my will" and instructed: "Let my children of the church of Christ cease to contend . . . against the revelations I have given through my servant." The revelation concluded: "Behold it is my will that you become reconciled to thy brethren of the Reorganization of my Church, and join with them in the work of building up Zion . . . and the building of my Temple,

¹¹⁸Ibid. The letter about the "One Mighty and Strong," was canonized as LDS D&C 85 but does not appear in the Book of Commandments or the RLDS D&C. See also William Shepherd, "To Set in Order the House of God: The Search for the Elusive 'One Mighty and Strong,'" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 18–40.

¹¹⁹Minutes of 1900.

¹²⁰Frederick Alexander Smith, "Details of Revelation to Hedrickites," n.d., Miscellany Collection, P19, f54, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

which I will command in my own time to be built.”¹²¹

This revelation obviously put the burden of change and accommodation on the Church of Christ, whose representatives conferred and, on March 11, asked the joint committee for more time so that “the same can be more clearly understood after a full explanation on our part, of the matter presented as teachings of the Spirit unto the elders of the Church of Christ.”¹²²

Although this measure postponed action on a possible union, both churches agreed to publish the five additional points of agreement in the next issues of their publications and to send representatives to each other’s conferences in April. They adjourned their meetings until May 1, 1900.¹²³ The RLDS conference agreed to continue the joint committee and to exchange representatives at the April 1901 conferences of the two bodies.

INTERIM PERIOD: PURSUIT OF OLD ARGUMENTS, 1903–17

Nothing further appears to have developed over the next several years, however. On April 17, 1908, Alexander H. Smith reported to the RLDS conference that “Richard Hill of this church (Church of Christ) was willing to make no concessions and that the relations of the two branches remained as before.”¹²⁴ (Hill was the presiding elder of the Church of Christ and a trustee of the “Temple Lot.”)¹²⁵ Nevertheless, at the request of Elder George P. Frisbey of the Church

¹²¹Minutes of 1900; *History of the RLDS Church* 5:492.

¹²²Minutes of 1900; *History of the RLDS Church*, 5:492–93.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 5:493.

¹²⁴“Conference Continues,” *Jackson Examiner* (Independence), April 17, 1908, 2.

¹²⁵Richard E. Hill, born in 1827 and baptized LDS in England, immigrated to the United States in 1848 and settled in Eagle, Wisconsin. He left for Jackson County in 1868 (not 1867) in compliance with Granville Hedrick’s revelation of return, reestablished his wagon-making and repair business on the Square in Independence, became a reasonably prosperous businessman, and was considered a respected and well-known member of the Independence community. Hill was chosen third president of the Church of Christ in 1886 upon David Judy’s death. In 1888, he stepped aside for Charles A. Hall. No reason is given in the Church of Christ minutes, which state only that Hall was “chosen by casting lots.” Church Min-

of Christ, “the committee was continued.”¹²⁶

Between 1903 and 1917, both churches apparently backed away from the “understanding of 1900” and reiterated many of the same arguments that separated them, in particular acceptance of certain revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, lineal priesthood, the Book of Commandments and the Doctrine and Covenants, the identity of the “One Mighty and Strong,” and the doctrine of baptism for the dead. The joint committee still existed but met infrequently or not at all. Correspondence between Alexander H. Smith and Richard Hill continued until the latter’s death on February 9, 1911.¹²⁷ For a short while thereafter, Smith corresponded with Hill’s successor, George P. Frisbey, as presiding elder.¹²⁸

Much of the rhetoric in these letters, and others preceding them, dealt with a proposed debate between the churches and a purported promise to pay the travel expenses of the Church of Christ elders so they could come to Lamoni. The RLDS Church did not readily agree to the debate; nevertheless, Church of Christ elders traveled to Lamoni in April 1903 in anticipation of the debate and with the expectation of having travel expenses reimbursed.¹²⁹ From the Church of Christ perspective, both churches had agreed to the debate in Inde-

utes, April 7, 1889. Hill returned to lead the Church as presiding elder in the early 1900s (no specific date available) and died in Independence in February 1911 at age eighty-three.

¹²⁶*History of the RLDS Church*, 6:289.

¹²⁷“Elder Richard Hill,” *Evening and Morning Star* 11, no. 10 (February 11, 1911): 1. This periodical should not be confused with the original *Evening and Morning Star*, also published in Independence but in 1832–33 and in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1834. This second *Evening and Morning Star* replaced the *Searchlight* in May 1900 as the Church of Christ’s official newspaper and ceased publication in late 1916. *Zion’s Advocate*, edited by Daniel Macgregor, replaced the *Evening and Morning Star* as the Church of Christ’s official organ in May 1922 and has been continually published to the present. Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 124; Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 286.

¹²⁸Joseph Smith III, Letter to Richard Hill, August 19, 1910, and Letter to George P. Frisbey, May 30, 1911, both in Church of Christ (Temple Lot) Correspondence, 1910, P75, f26, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

¹²⁹Joseph Smith III, Letter to Heman C. Smith, May 28, 1910, and

pendence earlier that year. However, after arriving in Lamoni, the RLDS officials declined to hold the debate or pay the travel expenses. This “non-debate” was fodder for disagreement and bad feelings which lasted from 1903 to at least 1910.¹³⁰

Another informal debate in 1910 between John R. Haldeman and William H. Kelley, president of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles of the RLDS Church, caused further problems.¹³¹ In May 1910, Joseph Smith III referred to this debate in a letter to Richard Hill, pointing out that he had “tried studiously to avoid either speaking out or writing touching the attitude of the two bodies upon known disputed points.” He accused Haldeman of not being “so careful.” He mentioned the joint committee but cautioned that, if such a meeting were to occur, “a practical agreement as to [the] scope of such discussion and the standards of authority to be used by both parties to such discussion” would have to be reached in advance.¹³²

In a May 30, 1911, letter to Smith, Frisbey noted that “our late conference made provision for the consideration of any matter your body may wish to officially present.” He then added, “I am not very hopeful that much progress will be made in adjusting matters” due to the “reluctance displayed by your official organ to correct untrue statements.”¹³³

Internally, during this period, both churches were involved in efforts to define and experiment with the law of consecration, which was included in the points of agreement of March 1900.¹³⁴ The RLDS Church announced its efforts to gather the Saints to Independence through the implementation of the United Order of Enoch in

Joseph Smith III, Letter to Richard Hill, May 25, 1910, both in Church of Christ (Temple Lot) Correspondence, 1910, P75, f26, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

¹³⁰Joseph Smith III, Letter to Heman C. Smith, May 17, 1910, Church of Christ (Temple Lot) Correspondence 1910, P75, f26.

¹³¹William H. Kelley joined the RLDS Church in 1860 at age eighteen, became an apostle in 1873, served as president of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles (1897–1913), and died August 14, 1915.

¹³²Joseph Smith III, Letter to Richard Hill, May 2, 1910, Church of Christ (Temple Lot) Correspondence 1910, P75, f26.

¹³³George P. Frisbey, Letter to Joseph Smith III, May 30, 1911, Church of Christ (Temple Lot) Correspondence, 1911, P75, f26.

¹³⁴*History of the RLDS Church*, 5:490–91; Flint, *An Outline History of the*

1909.¹³⁵ The Church of Christ similarly organized a venture called Zion's Cooperative Industrial Association in 1916 after years of discussing the matter at various Church conferences.¹³⁶

Notwithstanding these internal developments and the latest round of debate/non-debate and charge/counter-charge between the churches, on December 24, 1913, a joint "Articles of Association and Unity" appeared. The three-page document spelled out in detail the terms by which these two churches would merge. Members of the Church of Christ could unite with the RLDS Church in a body, as individuals, or on a branch basis. Article 6 provided for the transfer of "lots Numbers Fifteen to Twenty-three [should have been Twenty- two] . . . together with attaching strip upon the north" to the RLDS Church.¹³⁷

This document bears no signatures, explanations, or attachments, nor has a search for other documents provided any context that would explain how it came into being. Neither the *History of the RLDS Church* nor Flint's *An Outline History of the Church of Christ* even hints at a meeting between these two bodies in late 1913, let alone the preparation of such a critical document. Nothing came of this effort, although serious thought had obviously gone into its preparation, at least by the RLDS Church.

By the end of 1914, early leaders of both organizations had passed away. Richard Hill, the former president, bishop, and presiding elder of the Church of Christ, died on February 9, 1911.¹³⁸ Smith died on December 10, 1914.¹³⁹ Frisbey succeeded Hill and was himself succeeded by James A. Hedrick, son of founder Granville Hedrick. Frederick M. Smith, Joseph III's son, became RLDS president

Church of Christ, 118.

¹³⁵*History of the RLDS Church*, 6:659.

¹³⁶Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 134; R. Jean Addams, "The Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and the Law of Consecration," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 28 (2008): 88–113.

¹³⁷"Articles of Association and Unity," December 24, 1913, 2, Church of Christ (Temple Lot) Correspondence (1910–17), P75, f26, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

¹³⁸"Elder Richard Hill," *Evening and Morning Star* 11, no. 10 (February 11, 1911): 1; "Richard Hill Is Dead," *Jackson Examiner*, February 17, 1911.

¹³⁹*History of the RLDS Church*, 6:577.



Frederick Madison Smith, successor to Joseph Smith III. Photo from Lois Larsen taken six months before Smith's death, courtesy of Bill Curtis.

following his father's death.¹⁴⁰

SECOND PERIOD OF COOPERATION, 1918–24

By 1917, a new era of possibilities and potential cooperation had developed. At the April 1917 conference of the RLDS Church, the "Committee on the Church of Christ" was reconstituted.¹⁴¹ That summer of 1917, the two churches jointly sponsored "tent" or "union" meetings on the Temple Lot. Better understanding and increased fellowship developed between the members of both churches, along with renewed interest in building the temple.¹⁴² Unfortunately, continued meetings were canceled in September as a result of dissatisfaction by some members of the Church of Christ, some of whom saw the RLDS Church's participation as motivated by a desire to gain access to the Temple Lot.¹⁴³

Regardless of this disappointing end to the "union" meetings, both churches designated representatives for a joint committee who first met on December 30, 1917. These meetings continued through January 27, 1918, resulting in a document titled: "Agreements of Working Harmony." This agreement significantly surpassed former efforts to agree on doctrine and accommodation. This "Agreements [sic] of Working Harmony" used the 1900 Epitome as its beginning point with minor adjustments, and greatly expanded the document to include twenty-four points of doctrine and mutual understanding.¹⁴⁴ The following "major" items were either added or expanded:

(3) that . . . the redemption of Zion must be by purchase.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 6:586–87. Joseph III had provided for this transition by designating Frederick M. Smith as his preferred successor.

¹⁴¹Ibid., 7:192.

¹⁴²Large Record, Church of Christ, n.d., 241, quoted in Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 134; *History of the RLDS Church*, 7:204.

¹⁴³Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 134.

¹⁴⁴*History of the RLDS Church*, 7:280–82. The document is also referred to as "Articles of Working Harmony" in later reports and is cited by that title in *History of the RLDS Church* (1925–26). The Church of Christ generally referred to this same document as the "Agreement of Working Harmony" or "Working Agreement." See Henry Stebbins Papers, P24, f34, Community of Christ Library-Archives; Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 119–21, 134. The authors of the document were the joint committee participants, namely: George D. Cole, Clarence L. Wheaton,

(4) that we indorse the revelations contained in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

(5) that we indorse the revelation found in the letter from Joseph Smith, the Seer, to W. W. Phelps concerning the “the one mighty and strong,” dated November 27, 1832.

(15) that the principle of consecration is necessary to the establishment of Zion.

(19) that the question of who the “one mighty and strong,” is, whether Christ or man, [shall] be left an open question until further revelation from God shall definitely determine who it is.

(20) that the doctrine of baptism for the dead “by proxy” [shall] . . . not [be] taught as a part of the faith and doctrine of the church, unless commanded by a revelation accepted by the church.

(21) that what is known as the “King Follet sermon” and the book of Abraham [shall] . . . not [be] accepted as the basis for doctrine.

(22) that the branch of the Church of Christ which was presided over by Elder Granville Hedrick and his successors, shall be continued.

(24) that whereas the Church of Christ, and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints consist of members who have been baptized by men holding authority . . . and, whereas, both organizations stand for and maintain the same fundamental doctrine and practice . . . therefore, be it mutually agreed, that each recognize the standing of the other as representing Christ, the Master, and the priesthood of each as legally constituted, and the administration of each as equally binding before God, when done in accordance with the law.¹⁴⁵

The “Agreements of Working Harmony” were presented and adopted at the April conferences of both churches.¹⁴⁶ The *Independence Examiner* headlined its article: “Hedrickites and Reorganized in Agreement.”¹⁴⁷ While the Church of Christ legally maintained control of the Temple Lot, monumental changes in the relationships of

and James M. Hartley for the Church of Christ and Francis M. Sheehy, Walter W. Smith, and Mark H. Siegfried for the RLDS Church. Others who participated by invitation were Estie Stafford, Thomas J. Sheldon, and Israel A. Smith.

¹⁴⁵*History of the RLDS Church*, 7:280–82; Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 119–20.

¹⁴⁶*General Conference Minutes* (Independence: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, April 6, 1918), 2607–11; and *General Church Record* (Independence: Church of Christ on the Temple Lot, March 31, 1918), 257–66; Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 119–21.

¹⁴⁷“Next Conference, Iowa—Building of an Assembly Being Consid-

the two bodies occurred. The document provided for the transfer of membership between the two churches with no requirement for re-baptism, since both “recognize the standing of the other.” This item would have major and critical implications in the years ahead. The two groups began implementing their agreement by exchanging preachers at their Sunday services.

During the period from 1918 to early 1921, the joint committee continued to meet and review the ongoing relationship between the two churches. One of the specific items that was discussed at length was Article 4, above, which turned out to be something of a landmine. This issue, the acceptance of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants,¹⁴⁸ published in Kirtland, Ohio, versus the 1833 Book of Commandments, whose printing in Independence had been interrupted by mob action, had been debated for sixty-five years and had not appeared as a point of agreement in the 1897 or 1900 Eptomes. However, it had been a sticking point at the December 1917 and early 1918 joint committee meetings but had been supposedly resolved as Article 4 in the Agreements of Working Harmony on January 27, 1918.¹⁴⁹

Between 1919 and early 1921, the joint committee explored and analyzed the differences contained in the 65 revelations common to both texts, together with the revelations published at Independence in the early issues of the *Evening and Morning Star* (1832–33), identify-

ered—Hedrickites and Reorganized in Agreement,” *Independence Examiner*, April 9, 1918, 1.

¹⁴⁸Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 121. The 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants contained revelations not included in the Book of Commandments, which the Church of Christ omitted from its 1921 analysis. The differences ranged from minor grammatical and typographical errors to such major changes as additions, deletions, and rewriting. The Book of Commandment divisions were called chapters; the Doctrine and Covenants divisions were called sections. Two major changes were the addition of 148 words and the deletion of 147 words from Chapter IV (Section 5 in the current Community of Christ and LDS editions of the Doctrine and Covenants). Chapter XXIV adds 168 words and deletes 17 words (compare RLDS D&C 17 and LDS D&C 20). See Daniel Macgregor, *Changing of the Revelations* (Independence: Board of Publications—Church of Christ, 1976), 6.

¹⁴⁹*History of the RLDS Church*, 7:280–82; Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 119–21, 134.

ing both major and minor differences.¹⁵⁰ The secretary of the joint committee was John Arthur Allen, an RLDS elder. By March of 1921, Allen “had compiled his report of the alterations noted, consisting of 35 pages in parallel columns.”¹⁵¹

Soon thereafter, Walter W. Smith (no relation to Frederick M. Smith), a member of the joint committee who was also pastor of the RLDS Stone Church (located across the street and north of the chapel of the Church of Christ),¹⁵² attacked the Church of Christ from his pulpit for its “new” position, apparently also criticized the other joint committee members (which would have included his own Church members and especially Allen), and insisted that the Church of Christ accept the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.¹⁵³ (By 1921, the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants had canonized more revelations for a total of 133, most recently on April 7, 1920.)

Wheaton, also a member of the 1921 joint committee, immediately requested pulpit time with Walter Smith’s congregation. Smith refused,¹⁵⁴ although both churches had exchanged pulpits freely since 1918. At the April 1921 general conference, the Church of Christ resolved:

Whereas, the position of the Church of Christ with reference to the 1835 edition of the Book of Covenants [Doctrine and Covenants] is not fully understood,

Therefore, be it resolved, that we endorse the revelations as contained in that edition except where they differ from the way they were printed in the Book of Commandments, and *The Evening and Morning Star*. That where such differences occur, such revelations shall be considered upon their merits.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 122.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*

¹⁵²Richard A. Brown, *An Illustrated History of the Stone Church* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1988), 8. The Stone Church’s cornerstone was laid April 6, 1888. *History of the RLDS Church*, 4:602.

¹⁵³Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 122. No minutes of this meeting (the Allen report) or other joint committee meetings between 1918 and 1921 have been located. The official *History of the RLDS Church* does not mention this meeting until 1926.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁵⁵Large Record, 306, quoted in *ibid.*

The official RLDS Church position (disregarding the Allen report), however, was that the Church of Christ by conference action in 1921 had “greatly modified if not abrogated article four of the ‘Articles of Working Harmony.’”¹⁵⁶ Between 1897 and 1917, the Church of Christ had seemingly committed to accepting the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

The Church of Christ maintained that the RLDS Church was aware of its concern over this issue and had agreed in 1918 to “let it stand as originally adopted [meaning the 1900 Epitome] by the previous committee until such time as the present committee could make a review of the changes, and make recommendations accordingly.”¹⁵⁷ By March of 1921, they felt that the review promised in 1918 was about to be undertaken by the joint committee. This controversy resulted in a cessation of the joint committee meetings, even though the public harmony between the two groups seemed unbroken.¹⁵⁸

Samuel A. Burgess, RLDS Church historian, told a correspondent in 1924: “For a great many years our church has paid all taxes upon this lot, [and] has kept up the property,” probably as a result of this agreement.¹⁵⁹ The next year to another correspondent, RLDS Bishop C. J. Hunt of Michigan, he described the joint use of facilities, including buildings and baptismal fonts, implemented after the “Agreements of 1918.” In fact, according to Burgess, the RLDS Church “has kept up the fence where there was a fence. I note our janitors cutting the lawn.”¹⁶⁰

SUPREME DIRECTIONAL CONTROL, SOURED RELATIONSHIPS

This period of “almost unity” ended as a result of the adminis-

¹⁵⁶*History of the RLDS Church* 8:66–67.

¹⁵⁷Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 121.

¹⁵⁸“Large Record,” 306, quoted in *ibid.*, 122.

¹⁵⁹Samuel A. Burgess, Letter to Robert Orme, December 30, 1924, S. A. Burgess, Subject Collection, Community of Christ Library-Archives. Burgess had been president of the RLDS Graceland College in Lamoni, Iowa. In 1925 he was named RLDS Church historian, served until 1942, and died in 1950.

¹⁶⁰Samuel A. Burgess, Letter to Bishop C. J. Hunt, August 29, 1925, Samuel A. Burgess Subject Collection, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

trative position taken by RLDS President Frederick M. Smith. As early as 1919, differences in opinion had arisen between the Quorum of Twelve, Presiding Bishopric, and the First Presidency over the role of the First Presidency—and in particular the Church president—in directing the affairs of the Church. In fact, Smith tendered his resignation in his opening remarks at the April conference of 1919. His resignation was not accepted.

The internal situation among the RLDS general officers perhaps deflected their attention away from the controversy over the Church of Christ's 1921 resolution on Article 4 of the Agreements of Working Harmony. Regardless, by 1924 the position that President Frederick M. Smith had continually advocated since 1919 became the focal point of the 1924 April conference when he set forth what became known as Supreme Directional Control (SDC).¹⁶¹

The controversy continued throughout 1924 and early 1925. Meanwhile, many disgruntled RLDS Church members transferred their memberships to the Church of Christ.¹⁶² By the time the April 1925 RLDS conference convened, a proposal known as the "Document on Church Government," together with a modified substitute motion, was presented to the church.¹⁶³ The motion passed in each quorum, conveying to President Smith the control and authority that he wanted by approximately a two-to-one margin. The voting delegates of the conference then adopted the original motion, 919 to 405.¹⁶⁴ During the recesses between sessions, the Church of Christ made its facilities available for opposition groups to gather and discuss their options.¹⁶⁵

Immediately following the close of the April 1925 RLDS conference, Daniel Macgregor, a vocal opponent of SDC and a highly respected RLDS missionary and writer, found the now-official doctrinal position of the RLDS Church outrageous. Accordingly, he transferred his membership to the Church of Christ in early June 1925 and almost immediately became editor of its periodical, *Zion's*

¹⁶¹*History of the RLDS Church* 7:600, 626–38.

¹⁶²Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 138–39.

¹⁶³*History of the RLDS Church* 7:625–30.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.* 7:639.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 7:631, 633–34.

Advocate.¹⁶⁶ In August he published an article dealing with SDC and the action of the RLDS Church against him. He wrote: "The ink was scarcely dry on the records of the late General Conference when a hastily summoned Council of the Reorganization called by the Presidency let loose the Dogma of S.D.C. in all its fury. If at first it had only gums, it did not take long to grow teeth."¹⁶⁷ On April 27, 1925, James A. Gillen of the Quorum of Twelve sent Macgregor a letter informing him that "a Joint Council of the First Presidency, Quorum of Twelve, and the Presiding Bishopric" had silenced him and demanded his minister's license. In an open letter, RLDS Bishop Elmer O. Clark of Des Moines, Iowa, discredited Macgregor and questioned his testimony because he had changed his views on doctrinal points. Church of Christ Elder C. E. Bozarth promptly responded in a fifteen-page rebuttal pamphlet.¹⁶⁸

Perhaps the most outspoken opponent of Supreme Directional Control was RLDS Presiding Bishop Benjamin McGuire.¹⁶⁹ Other officers and members likewise opposed the new policy; and with the door open for an easy transfer of membership to the Church of Christ, many dissatisfied and disaffected members simply moved

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 2–3; see also Daniel Macgregor, "Why I Transferred My Membership from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, to the Church of Christ," *Zion's Advocate* 2 (June 15, 1925): 2–3.

¹⁶⁷Daniel Macgregor, "Supreme Doctrinal Control in Operation," *Zion's Advocate* 2, no. 7 (August 15, 1925): 2.

¹⁶⁸C. E. Bozarth, *Reply to Bishop Clark of Des Moines, Iowa of the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints, in His Attack on Elder Macgregor and Church of Christ* (Independence: Church of Christ, ca. 1925); photocopy courtesy of Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri, in my possession. Bozarth's pamphlet quotes extensively from Clark's open letter. I have been unable to locate a copy of the original Clark letter. Although American men in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries typically used only initials, I have used full names wherever possible for the reader's ease in differentiating these historical personages, often little known at present.

¹⁶⁹*History of the RLDS Church*, 7:651–55; "Chip Falls at Church Session: Fight Begins with Seating of Smith as Chairman," *Kansas City [Missouri] Post*, April 6, 1925, stated: "Benjamin R. McGuire, presiding bishop of the church is the leading opponent of the document." The "Document on Church Government" was scheduled for presentation the following day by President Frederick M. Smith.

across the street. Almost overnight, Church of Christ membership soared. This departure of talented and prominent members caused great consternation to Frederick M. Smith, his counselors, and others in RLDS leadership.¹⁷⁰

DISSOLUTION OF THE “AGREEMENTS OF WORKING HARMONY”

This explosive growth of the Church of Christ had brought membership from about a hundred members in 1916 to perhaps 500 in 1925, most of them transfers from the RLDS Church.¹⁷¹ These new members brought with them a tradition of apostolic leadership. Clarence L. Wheaton had served as the presiding elder of the Church of Christ from 1918—before the inception of the “Agreements of 1918”—until the October 1925 conference.¹⁷² At that conference, in accordance with a revelation received by Daniel Macgregor, the Church abolished the office of presiding elder with the purpose of perfecting “the organization in harmony with the teachings of the Bible and Book of Mormon.” A second resolution passed the same day (October 8) called for petitioning “the Lord for direction as to the choosing of the Apostles.” After prayer, late in the day Macgregor reported: “Verily thus saith the Spirit, in order that the Church of Christ may be prepared to

¹⁷⁰Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 138–39.

¹⁷¹“Plans Are from God Three Churchmen Say,” *Independence Examiner*, April 3, 1929; “Temple by Revelation,” *Independence Examiner*, April 10, 1928, 1; Clarence L. Wheaton, “Delegates or Referendum,” *Zion’s Advocate* 9, no. 9 (September 1929): 129. The April 3 article quotes Apostle Clarence L. Wheaton as saying: “Three years ago we had only one hundred members. We now have one thousand.” The official membership totals for 1928 and 1929 were 889 and 1,232, respectively. Wheaton’s estimate of 1,000 “three years ago” (1926) was incorrect. Allowing for continual growth (transfers from the RLDS Church) after 1925–26, 500 seems more reasonable.

¹⁷²Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 134–35, 139. Clarence L. Wheaton, a printer, was born July 6, 1893, in Missouri. His grandfather’s brother was Adna C. Haldeman, an original member of the Church of Christ and one of the four men John E. Page had ordained to the apostleship in 1863. Wheaton was baptized in the Church of Christ in 1906, elected the Church’s presiding elder in 1915 at age twenty-one, ordained an apostle in 1926, and spent most of his life as a Church administrator and missionary.

Otto Fetting, a transfer from the RLDS Church in about 1925, became a Church of Christ apostle, then head of his own church in 1930. Photo courtesy of Paul Savage.



more effectively occupy, it is the wish of the Spirit that my servants H[iram] E. Moler, and F[rank] F. Wipper, shall be a committee to select a Committee of Three, who shall serve as Apostles before me.”¹⁷³ Moler and Wipper were, like Macgregor, recent transfers from the RLDS Church.

Moler and Wipper reported on October 11 that they had been unable to determine membership on the committee. The members then resolved that “a committee of five be chosen to have oversight of the church.” Four of these five members were recent transfers from the RLDS Church: Macgregor, Moler, Wipper, and Andrew Himes. Wheaton was the fifth member.¹⁷⁴

At its April 1926 conference, the Church of Christ organized a Council or Quorum of Apostles, initially consisting of seven men: Macgregor, Moler, Samuel Wood, Wipper, Norris Headding, and Otto Fetting (all RLDS transfers) and Wheaton. Fetting, baptized

¹⁷³Ibid., 139. Flint cites “Record No. 5,” Church of Christ, 89. Daniel Macgregor joined the RLDS Church in 1891 at age sixteen, was ordained a seventy in 1898, and became well known as a missionary, orator, and author. His name is frequently misspelled as McGregor. He died in 1927, only a year after his appointment as an apostle.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

RLDS in 1891, was ordained an elder, served in congregational leadership in Port Huron, Michigan, until 1925 and transferred to the Church of Christ during the Supreme Directional Control controversy in the mid-1920s. He would soon play a critical, controversial, and pivotal role in the future of the Church of Christ.¹⁷⁵

The reintroduction of the office of apostle by the Church of Christ brought its amicable relationship with the RLDS Church to a public end. As long as there was only one Quorum of Apostles, RLDS leaders felt they could deal with the issue of membership transfer since, according to Article 22 of the “Agreements of Working Harmony” approved by both churches in 1918, the “Church of Christ on the Temple Lot” was considered a branch of the larger church. From the RLDS perspective, the creation of the apostolic office in the Church of Christ made reconciliation more difficult, if not impossible. According to the *History of the RLDS Church*, “Having set up a general church organization, the Church of Christ could no longer be regarded as an unattached but related group of the Restoration movement.”¹⁷⁶

It seems likely that the relatively small community of Independence had known that the Church of Christ was contemplating establishing an apostolic quorum; but the public point of dissolution became, not the apostles, but the time-worn debate of the Book of Commandments versus the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. Prior to the 1926 April RLDS conference, a Joint Council (First Presidency, Quorum of Twelve, and Presiding Bishopric) met to discuss the deteriorating relationship with the Church of Christ. This group’s detailed report was presented to the general conference for a vote. It read in part: “We were informed for the first time by Clarence Wheaton, as spokesman for the ‘Church of Christ’ Committee . . . that the ‘Church of Christ’ had by Conference action taken about 1921 greatly modified if not abrogated article four of the ‘Articles of Working Harmony’ (meaning the Doctrine and Covenants versus the Book of Commandments).” It is difficult to take this statement at face value as the RLDS representatives on the joint committee held significant leadership positions in their church. Still, this maneuver sidestepped the question of the comparative validity of the two apostolic quorums. The conference voted to accept the report which rescinded the Agreements of Working Har-

¹⁷⁵Paul Savage, email to R. Jean Addams, December 9, 2009.

¹⁷⁶*History of the RLDS Church*, 8:77.

mony, declaring them “null and void.”¹⁷⁷

It was a new era of bad feeling. Transfers to the Church of Christ continued—and so did the rhetoric of accusation and blame. On May 1, 1927, Church of Christ Elder James E. Yates announced a revelation at Independence on Sunday, May 1, 1927: “Verily I have rejected the Reorganized Church, with its sins and its follies and its system-making, because they have departed from me and by the deception of the wicked one their leaders have caused a defilement of much of mine heritage.”¹⁷⁸

Although Joseph Smith III had muted the interdenominational disagreements during his tenure as president by discouraging debate, the two churches held a series of extensive debates in 1927–28. The first debate, which lasted two weeks, began on November 6, 1927, at Black River Falls, Wisconsin. RLDS Elder Leonard G. Holloway had challenged Elder Bert C. Flint of the Church of Christ. When Flint was unable to attend, Clarence L. Wheaton was selected as his replacement. Augmenting the RLDS effort was Apostle James Franklin Curtis. The first debate lasted two weeks. A second debate followed in January 1928 in DeKalb, Illinois, again between Wheaton and Curtis.¹⁷⁹ Topics covered included revelations of Joseph Smith Jr., polygamy, the Doctrine and Covenants versus Book of Commandments, Hedrick’s revelations, the Temple Lot Case, the office of high priest, the Book of Abraham, the office of bishop, and, of course, lineal priesthood through the Smith family.¹⁸⁰

THE REVELATION TO BUILD A TEMPLE

Meanwhile, another significant stumbling block on the road to harmony had occurred on February 4, 1927, when Church of Christ Apostle Otto Fetting announced that he had received a visitation and a “message” from an angelic being at his home in Port Huron, Michi-

¹⁷⁷*History of the RLDS Church*, 8:67-68.

¹⁷⁸*Word of the Holy Spirit* (Independence: n.p., n.d.). This is a one-page flier or proclamation, photocopy provided courtesy of Apostle William A. Sheldon. The revelation was later published in *Zion’s Advocate*, March 1952.

¹⁷⁹Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 140–41.

¹⁸⁰J. Franklin Curtis and Clarence L. Wheaton, “Curtis-Wheaton Debate,” P57, Box 2, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

gan. Among other instructions, this messenger stated, "The revelation that was given for the building of the temple (Malachi 3:1) was true and the temple soon will be started."¹⁸¹ A second message followed on March 4, 1927, also at Fetting's home. This time, the messenger identified himself as John the Baptist.¹⁸²

On March 22, 1928, Fetting announced the receipt of "Message 5": that the church should begin constructing the temple in 1929 and complete it within seven years.¹⁸³ Accordingly, the Church of Christ held an impressive ground-breaking ceremony on Saturday, April 6, 1929, in conjunction with the annual conference. In the mild spring weather, 200 to 300 faithful Saints and curious outsiders assembled about 100 feet south of the meetinghouse.¹⁸⁴ "After appropriate songs, sermons, prayers, and scripture reading, Bishop Alma O. Frisbey 'took the spade and cut out and laid upon the ground a small square of sod.'"¹⁸⁵ Excavation commenced in late April 1929.¹⁸⁶

This bold step toward fulfilling Joseph Smith's long-awaited prophecy must have been difficult for RLDS members, especially since perhaps as many as a thousand former RLDS members had af-

¹⁸¹*The Word of the Lord* (Independence: Church of Christ with the Elijah Message, 1943; rpt., 1971), 7. Fetting numbered his messages sequentially as he received them.

¹⁸²*Ibid.*, 8–10.

¹⁸³*Ibid.*, 13–16.

¹⁸⁴"The Marking of an Epic," *Zion's Advocate* 6, no. 5 (May 1929): 56–62; Julius C. Billeter, *The Temple of Promise: Jackson County, Missouri* (Independence: Zion's Printing and Press Company, 1946), 139.

¹⁸⁵Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 141; Church of Christ, *Program for the Breaking of the Ground for the Temple*, Independence, April 6, 1929; photocopy courtesy of Geri Adams, a great-great-granddaughter of Granville Hedrick, Blue Springs, Missouri; R. Jean Addams, "The Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and Its Quest to Build a Temple in Zion," Paper presented at the John Whitmer Historical Association annual meeting, Burlington, Wisconsin, September 2008. Alma O. Frisbey was a son of George P. Frisbey, one of the original 1867 pioneers of the Church of Christ.

¹⁸⁶"Clearing Temple Lot: Trees Being Removed from Temple Site," *Independence Examiner*, April 26, 1929.



Church of Christ Bishop Alma O. Frisbey, standing next to the American flag, is ready to lift out the first square of sod. Behind him is a platform erected over the Church's outdoor baptismal font on which are seated members of the Quorum of Apostles. Photo courtesy Church of Christ (Temple Lot).

filiated with the Church of Christ by 1929.¹⁸⁷ At this point, the Temple Lot owned by the Church of Christ officially comprised 2.75 acres.¹⁸⁸ On April 7, the previous day's groundbreaking was undoubtedly on the minds of many of those in attendance at the Sunday communion service in the RLDS Stone Church. Elbert A. Smith, a

¹⁸⁷Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 139, 142, claimed 4,000 in October 1929, but Ronald E. Romig, Community of Christ archivist, email to R. Jean Addams, March 6, 2009, concluded that the maximum number of transfers to the Church of Christ in the 1920s and 1930s was 1,500. My own estimate is between 1,250 and 1,600 transfers during 1916–36. For statistical data, see “Church of Christ Meet,” *Independence Examiner*, April 7, 1928; and Clarence L. Wheaton, “Delegates or Referendum,” *Zion's Advocate* 6, no. 9 (September 1929): 129.

¹⁸⁸On July 17, 1906, the City of Independence sold Richard Hill, act-



RLDS Church President Frederick M. Smith and Elbert A. Smith, his counselor and cousin, stand on the steps of the monumental Auditorium in Independence. Photo courtesy Bill Curtis.

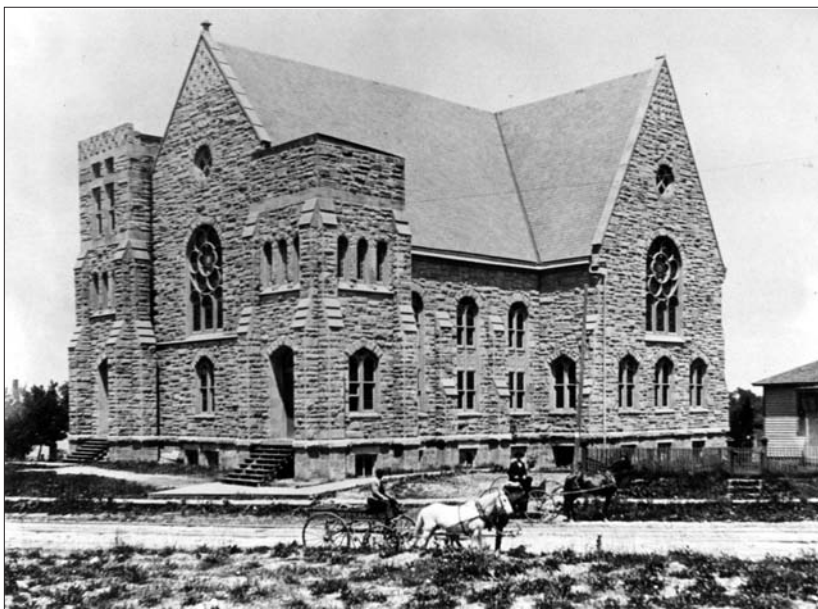
counselor in Frederick M. Smith's First Presidency, gave an "inspired statement" concerning the temple:

I have gathered my people out from the world, saith the Lord, even from many different parts of the earth, and you are here as seed to be planted in my fields of Zion, and if you will be faithful and humble and consecrate yourselves the harvest shall be very great and very beautiful. . . .

In one of the darkest hours I gave the promise to my people, Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered, . . . to build up the waste places of Zion. . . .

Be not troubled in your minds by anything that shall occur. Mark

ing as trustee in trust for the Church of Christ, a small, triangular strip of land (approximately .25 acre) lying just north of the 2.5 acres the Church already owned. He paid \$75. The small triangle had originally been platted as part of a street but had been abandoned by the city. Jackson County, Property Records, City of Independence to Richard Hill, July 17, 1906, 264:621-22.

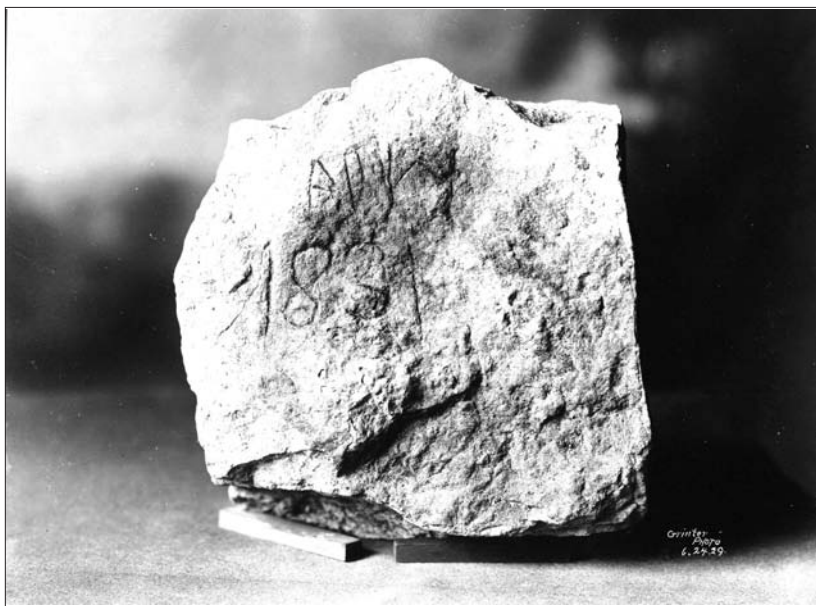


Exterior of the RLDS Stone Church, Independence. Photo courtesy Bill Curtis.

this well: I say unto you, The only temple standing on earth today built by commandment of heaven is in your possession (the Kirtland Temple), . . . and when the time shall come, in my way, and in my hour, and in my manner, . . . I will command you further concerning the building of my temple in Zion.¹⁸⁹

Apostle J. Franklin Curtis followed up quickly by writing a sixty-three-page pamphlet, published in June 1929, *The Temple of the Lord: Who Shall Build It?* The pamphlet was published by the RLDS Church-

¹⁸⁹*History of the RLDS Church*, 8:102–3. Elbert A. Smith was born March 8, 1871, at Nauvoo, Illinois, the son of David Hyrum Smith, Joseph and Emma's youngest child, and Clara Hartshorn Smith. He was ordained a counselor to Joseph Smith III in 1909 and became Frederick Madison Smith's counselor in 1915 when Fred M. was sustained as the prophet-president of the RLDS Church. Elbert A. was ordained presiding patriarch in 1938. He died May 15, 1959.



This stone was found May 18, 1929, when, following Fetting's instructions, the surveyors' markers were moved an additional ten feet. The bottom row reads "1831." The top row consists of three figures: a backward "4" (a surveyor's mark for "4," backwards to prevent confusion with "9"), "0" ("zero"), and "W." Together they mean "40 feet west" of the northeast cornerstone. Nineteenth-century surveyors would create such stones as backups in case the initial corner-stone was moved or destroyed. This discovery added to the credibility of Fetting's message. Photo courtesy Bill Curtis.

owned Herald Publishing House.¹⁹⁰ It examined the claims of the Church of Christ, rehashing subjects that had been argued over for many years. Curtis's pamphlet questioned "the spot," Otto Fetting's "Messages," Granville Hedrick as a prophet, those who had defected from the RLDS Church, and the validity of the cornerstone with the carved date 1831, which the Church of Christ announced it had un-

¹⁹⁰J. Franklin Curtis, *The Temple of the Lord: Who Shall Build It?* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1929). Curtis was baptized RLDS in 1883 at age eight, was ordained an apostle in 1909, then was ordained an evangelist in 1938. In addition to this book, he authored *Our Beliefs Defended* (1928) and was a star participant in the much-heralded Curtis-Wheaton debates of this period. Curtis died in 1966.



Carved into this second stone are the letters “SECT” and, below them, “1831,” discovered June 26, 1929. Church of Christ (Temple Lot) officials believe that the inscription stands for “south east corner temple 1831.” Photo courtesy Alex Baugh.

covered on May 18, 1929.¹⁹¹ Joseph Smith and others had dedicated the temple site in Independence on August 3, 1831.¹⁹²

The rhetoric escalated with an editorial, "The Enemy Shows His Hand," published in the September 1929 issue of *Zion's Advocate*. A direct response to the Curtis pamphlet, it scathingly denounced him and his writings:

At last, the enemy who has been beating about the bush and hurling missiles at the workmen on the walls of Zion sallies forth to launch an open attack on the Church of Christ. We have waited patiently for this onslaught, content to bide the time when the man in dark would expose his position in a way that he could not deny what he said. That time h[a]s come with the publication of "The Temple of the Lord, Who Shall Build It?" by J. F. Curtis [RLDS apostle], the man who "bluffs" his way through when he finds himself in a tight place.

But neither bluff, subterfuge, nor sophistry will avail him anything in this case. He is up against a proposition unlike anything he has met heretofore. The tables have been turned and Apostle Curtis finds himself in a relative position with many of ignoble memory who opposed the Angel Message [restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith Jr.] at the first

Apostle Curtis has written a sixty-four [sixty-three] page booklet, and space in the *Advocate* is too limited for a comprehensive reply. But let Mr. Curtis and his fellows know that a reply is forthcoming. We will meet him with his chosen method of expression, and lay bare his glaring misrepresentations. We, too, have some affidavits of an interesting nature concerning the stone. Nor is that all—we have the stone, and WE HAVE THE TEMPLE LOT.¹⁹³

For its part, the RLDS Church had begun constructing its massive Auditorium in 1926.¹⁹⁴ The auditorium site, while not on the temple lot, stood within the original 63¼ acres that Edward Partridge

¹⁹¹"Find Historic Stone upon the Temple Lot," *Independence Examiner*, May 29, 1929, 1. See also Steven L. Shields, "The Temple of the Lord," 10, Paper presented at the Mormon History Association conference, Independence, 1985; photocopy in my possession courtesy of Shields.

¹⁹²Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:256.

¹⁹³Elmer E. Long, "Editorial: The Enemy Shows His Hand," *Zion's Advocate* 6, no. 9 (September 1929): 119.

¹⁹⁴*History of the RLDS Church*, 7:639. The April 1925 conference resolved "that the Auditorium should be built without delay." *Ibid.*, 8:160–62. Groundbreaking occurred on February 1, 1926, immediately south of the

had purchased in December 1831.¹⁹⁵ The RLDS Church never considered it as either a temple or the location for a temple.

Notwithstanding the dismay of their neighbors, the apostles of the Church of Christ began to aggressively solicit construction funds from all “branches” of the Restoration, including the LDS Church in Utah. At the October 1929 conference of the LDS Church in Salt Lake City, President Anthony W. Ivins, first counselor in Heber J. Grant’s First Presidency, commented:

It is a well known fact to many of you that these people [Church of Christ] have sent out their agents, who have recently visited many of the wards of the Church in the stakes of Zion that are in Utah, Arizona, California, Idaho and in other places. The message which they bring us is this: that the Lord has revealed to them that the time has come when the temple is to be erected upon the temple lot at Jackson county, that this scripture which I have read, from section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants, may be fulfilled. . . .

They have come to our office, soliciting aid. They would like us to assist them in building a temple. . . . It is true that a house may be erected upon that tract of ground in this generation, but it will not be a temple erected to the name of the Lord and accepted by him, until the time comes when he shall speak through the proper channel, and the work be accomplished by his recognized church.¹⁹⁶

Charles W. Nibley, second counselor in the First Presidency, followed Ivins, stressing: “Do not allow this question of the building

Church of Christ’s 2.75 acres. The footings for the Auditorium were poured on May 24, 1926. By September 1928 offices were made available for the various quorums and departments of the church. The Great Depression halted construction in January 1931. It recommenced in the 1940s and “regained speed in 1946 when the church’s debt was diminishing.” The Auditorium was completed in 1958 and dedicated on April 6, 1962, when the facility had been completely paid for. Rachael Meisinger, Community of Christ Librarian, emails to R. Jean Addams, December 8 and 9, 2009. The two churches’ timing for these two major buildings corresponded closely.

¹⁹⁵Jackson County, Property Records, B:1.

¹⁹⁶*Deseret News*, October 7, 1929, in *Journal History*, October 6, 1929, 1–2. Anthony W. Ivins, ordained an LDS apostle in 1907, became a counselor to President Heber J. Grant in 1921, and died in 1934.

of the temple in Jackson county to worry you.”¹⁹⁷ The following day, Monday, October 7, 1929, Rudger Clawson, president of the LDS Quorum of the Twelve, quoted Ivins’s statement that “the time was not ripe for the erection of a Temple at Jackson County, Missouri,” then added dismissively: The Church of Christ had “sought subscription from the Church here to aid the movement; though naturally none was granted . . . though they are building a structure on the site originally Chosen by the Lord, it will be merely a house rather than a building.”¹⁹⁸ This position, naturally, discouraged LDS participation in the construction, though probably individual Saints remained interested.

The RLDS Church took a similar position. RLDS Apostle Joseph Luff announced a revelation on February 19, 1930, which he said was specifically directed to the Church of Christ: “Awake from your delusion, while time is yours. . . . The Temple of your proposing ye shall not be permitted to build as ye have planned.”¹⁹⁹ Needless to say, this revelation was not well received by Church of Christ members. Furthermore, in December 1929, LDS Apostle Orson F. Whitney stated in a radio address: “All premature, unauthorized movements in that direction [building the temple] are fated to end in fail-

¹⁹⁷Journal History, October 6, 1929, 3–4. Charles W. Nibley, a successful Mormon businessman, became LDS presiding bishop in 1907, then Heber J. Grant’s counselor in 1925. He died in 1931.

¹⁹⁸Journal History, October 6, 1929, 4–5. Rudger J. Clawson, ordained an LDS apostle in 1898 at age forty-one, became quorum president in 1921, and served until his death in 1943.

¹⁹⁹“Revelation Given to the Church of Christ (Temple Lot)” by Joseph Luff, February 19, 1930, Special Collections AC 901.A1a, no. 4318, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. See also “Revelation Given to the Church of Christ (Temple Lot)” by Joseph Luff, February 19, 1930, J. F. Curtis Collection, P57, f19, Community of Christ Archives. Joseph Luff was preparing himself for the ministry in the Methodist Church when he encountered the RLDS Church. He was baptized in 1876, became a medical doctor, then served as an apostle (1887–1909) when he was released to devote more time in his additional calling as Church physician. He lived next to the Stone Church in Independence, across the street from the Temple Lot.

ure and as the Lord liveth they will come to naught.”²⁰⁰ Such pronouncements only increased hostile feelings.

As an additional frustration, on October 7, 1930, Israel A. Smith, RLDS general secretary and brother of President Frederick M. Smith, appeared before Independence’s city council and demanded that the city build “Smith Street,” as shown on the 1851 plat map of the Maxwell and Woodson Addition to the city.²⁰¹ However, this proposed street was part of land which had long been enclosed by a fence on the west end of the lots owned by the Church of Christ and was likely assumed to be part of its property. Furthermore, the excavation of the temple was underway.²⁰² The controversy quickly escalated.

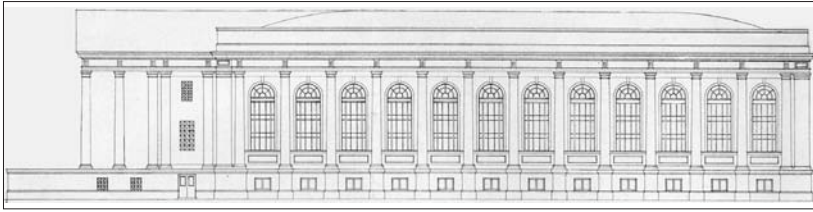
The timing of the RLDS demand on the city, as Elmer E. Long, editor of *Zion’s Advocate*, pointed out was certainly suspect; “It seems to us to be very inconsistent on the part of the Reorganized Church to now have it opened. We wonder what the reaction . . . would be if the conditions were reversed.” No one from the RLDS Church had extended the courtesy of informing the Church of Christ of its intention to go to the city council.²⁰³ Fortunately, the mayor called a joint meeting with the two parties and, with no viable alternative, the Church of Christ concurred that the street should be built. The mayor agreed to

²⁰⁰Orson F. Whitney, address, KSL Radio in Salt Lake City on Sunday, December 1, 1929, published as “Zion and Her Stakes,” *Liahona: The Elders’ Journal* 28, no. 2 (July 8, 1930): 31. The *Liahona* was printed in Independence for LDS missionaries in the United States and Canada. Whitney, ordained an LDS apostle in 1906, had been editor of the *Millennial Star* (1881–83). In 1899 he became assistant Church historian. Whitney died in 1931.

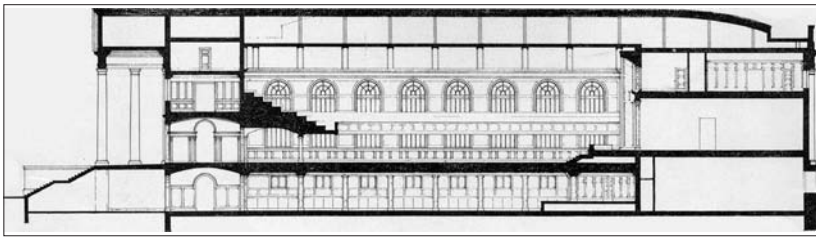
²⁰¹Independence City Council, Minutes, October 7, 1930, Book O:388; Woodson and Maxwell, Plat of Addition to the Town of Independence, filed March 31, 1851, Jackson County, Property Records, 1:7, Samuel D. Lucas, clerk. Israel A. Smith, the third son of Joseph Smith III and a grandson of Joseph Smith Jr., earned a law degree from Lincoln-Jefferson University, Hammond, Indiana. He served as the RLDS Church’s general secretary (1929–40), served as a counselor in the First Presidency of his brother, Frederick M. Smith (1940–46), became prophet-president in 1946, and died in a car accident in 1958.

²⁰²Billeter, *The Temple of Promise*, 144.

²⁰³Elmer E. Long, “Strange Request,” *Zion’s Advocate* 7, no. 17 (November 1930): 169.



*North elevation of the proposed Church of Christ Temple, architect Norman L. Wilkinson, Kansas City, Missouri (p. 166). All elevations and floor plans from *Zion's Advocate* 7, no. 17 (November 1, 1930), cited by page number.*



Longitudinal section, looking south.

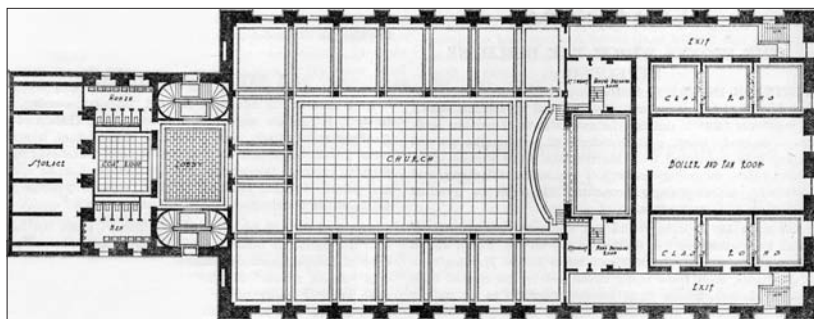
present and support the proposal to the city council, which approved the action on October 21.²⁰⁴ The city graded the street, named Temple Court but, probably due to the Great Depression, did not pave it until 1941–42.²⁰⁵

Despite this open opposition from the RLDS and LDS Churches, Church of Christ leaders sent a special temple issue of *Zion's Advocate* to all subscribers in November 1930. It contained architect's renderings of the elevations and floor plans of the proposed temple, testimonies regarding its fulfillment of prophecy and scripture, and strongly worded encouragement to donate to the building fund.²⁰⁶ The *Salt Lake Tribune* published an article with the somewhat misleading headline "Church Plans New Temple in Missouri" on Decem-

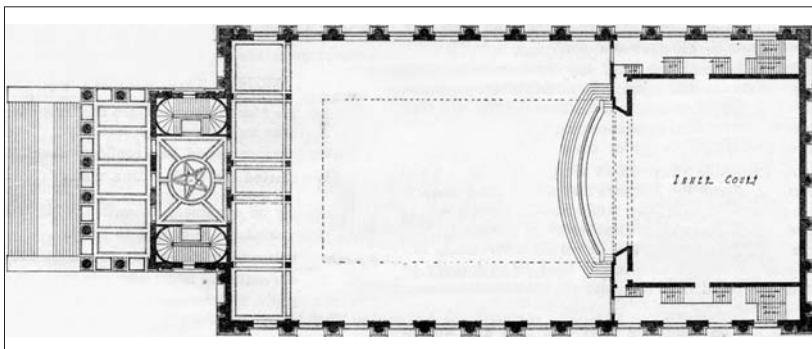
²⁰⁴Independence City Council, Minutes, Book O:391, 394.

²⁰⁵Richard B. Trowbridge, "Addenda," *Zion's Advocate* 19, no. 4 (April 1942): 55–56.

²⁰⁶"Temple Issue," *Zion's Advocate* 7, no. 17 (November 1930): 167–84.



Lower Court Plan, first floor basement (p. 170).



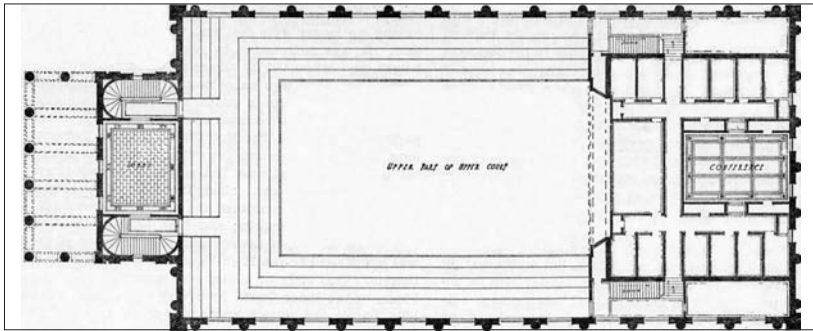
Lower part inner court-main floor (p. 170).

ber 7, 1930. It quoted Wheaton's description: "One of the features of the building will be an assembly hall seating 3,500 persons. . . . The building will be classic in design, 90 by 180 feet in ground area, and of concrete, steel and stone construction."²⁰⁷ (See cover.)

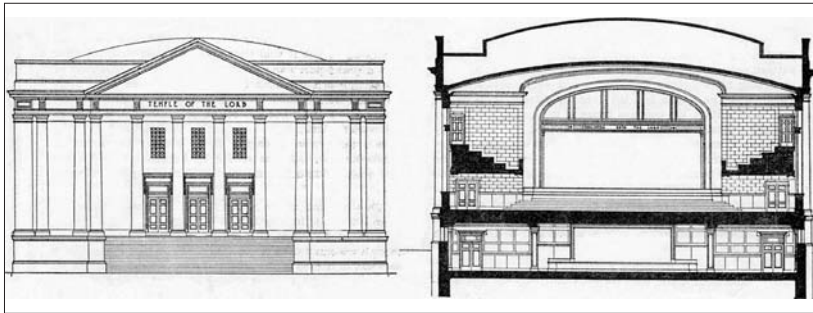
But despite gallant efforts, the Church of Christ found little support outside its own members, who struggled mightily to fund even the excavation. Church of Christ Apostle James E. Yates announced a revelation at the April 1931 conference that \$5,000 must be raised before construction could be continued.²⁰⁸ A lengthy August 1931 appeal "To All Divisions of the Church of the Restoration" garnered lit-

²⁰⁷"Church Plans New Temple in Missouri," *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 7, 1930.

²⁰⁸James E. Yates, "Revelment in Answer to Fasting and Prayer of



Higher part inner court (p. 171).



Front east elevation (p. 171) and transverse section looking west (p. 171).

tle or no outside support.²⁰⁹

The last such appeal apparently occurred in 1936. On May 8, 1936, LDS Apostle David O. McKay recorded in his diary: "Attended to current duties including writing a reply to a committee of the Church of Christ, Independence, Missouri, inviting our church to join in building a temple in Jackson County. We courteously refused."²¹⁰ Two months later on July 3, 1936, Samuel A. Burgess, RLDS Church, wrote to Mabel Burns, a member of the Church of

the Assembly," *Zion's Advocate* 8, no. 13 (July 1931): 98. Yates, called to the apostleship in 1928, served until his death in 1954.

²⁰⁹"To All Divisions of the Church of the Restoration and to All People in All Lands and Countries Who Believe in God the Eternal Father and in Jesus Christ His Son," *Zion's Advocate* 8, no. 16 (August 15, 1931): 131.

²¹⁰David O. McKay, Diary, May 8, 1936, typescript, Gregory A. Prince

Christ living in Detroit, at the direction of Frederick M. Smith, explaining that the Church of Christ was “making [an] approach to all of the other factions, including the Utah faction and ours, for a group effort, cooperative, to build this temple.”²¹¹ The temple project was virtually abandoned by the late 1930s and formally stopped in 1943.²¹² In the spring of 1946, the excavation was filled in.²¹³ Today, according to Apostle William A. Sheldon the temple project is not a “primary focus of the church.”²¹⁴

FRACTURE IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The temple project never moved beyond the foundation, in spite of the sincere efforts of faithful Church of Christ members. The Great Depression, which began in late 1929 and lasted throughout the 1930s, shrank disposable funds to a bare minimum, especially since few members of the Church of Christ were affluent. Further, Yates’s revelation set \$5,000 as a threshold for beginning the temple construction, which was itself problematic and not always supported from within the Church.²¹⁵

In late July 1933, the building committee initiated plans “for the

Collection, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

²¹¹Samuel A. Burgess, Letter to Mabel Burns, July 3, 1936, Temple Lot folder, Inez Smith Davis Papers, P22, f110, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

²¹²Billeter, *The Temple of Promise*, 146.

²¹³Clarence L. Wheaton, William B. Anderson and Bert C. Flint, “Ministers’ Conference, 1946,” *Zion’s Advocate* 23, no. 5 (May 1946): 73–74. The membership passed a resolution in April 1946 for “grading and beautification of the temple lot.” On April 10, 1946, the Church of Christ accepted an offer from the city of Independence to fill in the temple excavation. I have found no date for the fill. To prepare the site for the excavation in 1929–30, all of the trees save one, which had been planted on the temple lot in the 1880s, had been cut down.

²¹⁴Apostle William A. Sheldon, Interviewed by R. Jean Addams, April 2006. Sheldon, email to Jean Addams, December 2006, confirmed: “The primary focus today is missionary work and building up the Kingdom of God.” As for the temple, “We will simply await the Lord’s further direction.”

²¹⁵C. A. Gurwell, “The Sum of Five Thousand Dollars,” *Zion’s Advocate* 8, no. 17 (September 1931): 131.

collection and storing of material to be used in the construction of the proposed temple.”²¹⁶ The Church requested volunteers who could provide construction labor, assuring them of “good food and comfortable sleeping quarters,” and also renewed its plea for donations of food and cash.²¹⁷ The records do not clarify how much progress was made through this effort.

Finally, in 1941, when the required milestone of \$5,000 had finally been reached, an audit shockingly found that approximately \$4,000 had been placed elsewhere or had not been specifically designated for the temple. More turmoil resulted, and the Church sued its business manager. The court appointed a receiver for the Church who engaged a local CPA to conduct an audit which found only \$1,626.98 in the temple fund on March 15, 1942.²¹⁸ In May 1943, a special conference voted to abolish the “Plans and Temple Building committees” and assign the project to the General Bishopric. The missing funds, which approximated the recent generous contributions of Mrs. T. Alice Bender, and apparently totaled \$3,912.50, were returned to her by “certified check” on January 17, 1942, according to the auditor’s report.²¹⁹ Over the years, however, the Church of Christ has continued to accept money for the temple fund.

The second reason for the collapse of the temple project was an internal schism, which began on July 18, 1929, when Apostle Otto Fetting interpreted his “Twelfth Message” as requiring all new members from other Mormon groups, including the RLDS Church, to be rebaptized to enter the Church of Christ. In October, the Council of Apostles ruled that this provision was out of order, and the “Agreements of Working Harmony,” still accepted by the Church, specifically provided being accepted on one’s original baptism. However, Fetting and those associated with him continued the practice.²²⁰ A special October 1929 conference called to deal with the issue resulted, after several heated sessions, in the silencing of Fetting and fel-

²¹⁶“Church of Christ Committee Meets,” *Independence Examiner*, July 26, 1933.

²¹⁷“The Temple of the Lord in Zion: Actual Work on the Excavation Begins in Earnest,” *Zion’s Advocate* 10, no. 7 (July 1933): 93–94.

²¹⁸Roy A Guyton, CPA, “Comments,” *Zion’s Advocate* 19, no. 6 (June 1942): 85.

²¹⁹*Ibid.*

²²⁰“Twelfth Message” to Otto Fetting, July 18, 1929, *The Word of the*

low apostle Walter F. Gates. The conference specifically forbade them to practice rebaptism and dropped Fetting from the apostolic quorum, while a referendum went to all members of the Church for a vote.²²¹ Gates tendered his resignation announcing, "I want to go back to my grain job and go to work until next conference." The quorum asked him to withdraw his resignation, then decided to table it "until the next conference."²²² As the meetings continued for two more days, other leaders were also silenced.²²³

Fetting was defiant, rejected the silencing, and preached publicly to a large congregation meeting at the "Church of Jesus Christ, another Mormon faction in Independence, although the general conference of the Church of Christ had put a ban of silence upon him Saturday." He also announced that he would conduct baptisms "making use of the fount [sic] in the Church of Jesus Christ . . . beginning at 2 o'clock Tuesday."²²⁴ Gates also continued to preach, teach, and rebaptize, with the result that both were disfellowshipped at the April 1930 conference. By then, Fetting had already organized his own "Church of Christ."²²⁵

Approximately 300–400 individuals, mostly former members

Lord, 28–32, does not use the term "rebaptism" but the crucial passage reads: "Behold, the Lord has rejected all creeds and factions of men, who have gone away from the word of the Lord and have become an abomination in his sight, therefore, let those that come to the Church of Christ be baptized, that they may rid themselves of the traditions and sins of men" (v. 4).

²²¹J. F. Curtis, "October 1929 Special Conference of the Church of Christ," J. F. Curtis Collection, P57, f19, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence. As an RLDS apostle, Curtis attended these stormy sessions and took copious notes. The conference vote was 92–66.

²²²*Ibid.* Gates later withdrew his resignation and continued to serve the RLDS Church.

²²³"Silenced Three More High Church Officers," *Independence Examiner*, October 15, 1929.

²²⁴"Fetting to Carry: Rebaptism Will be Administered by Deposed Prophet," *Kansas City Times*, October 15, 1929. The "faction" was the "Church of Jesus Christ" founded by Benjamin R. McGuire after he was removed as RLDS presiding bishop during the SDC crisis of 1925.

²²⁵Flint, *An Outline History of the Church*, 142; Arthur M. Smith, "Recorder's Report," *Zion's Advocate* 9, no. 4 (April 1932): 54. Flint stated that the church's membership at the time of the October "Special Conference" was approximately 4,000 and that "nearly one-third of the membership" left

of the RLDS Church who had previously transferred their memberships to the Church of Christ—roughly one-third of the total church membership—followed Fetting into his new church while others returned to the RLDS Church.²²⁶ The schism obviously had a demoralizing effect, even for those who stayed, as evidenced in the conference vote on the rebaptism referendum. The official vote was 369 against rebaptism and 71 in favor—a total of only 440 individuals or approximately 38 percent of the membership.²²⁷ The Church of Christ April 1936 ministers' conference, by a vote of 23–8, rejected “any supposed allegiances to those messages as being the word of God.”²²⁸

the Church and followed Fetting. I consider this figure significantly overstated. Likewise, the percentage of those who left the Church at this time seems too high. A more realistic percentage of departing members is probably closer to 20–25 percent. Allowing for a continued influx of transfers from the RLDS Church between April and October of 1929, the revised total membership before the Fetting departure was probably closer to 1,500. Finally, the 1932 membership was reported at 1,607. If the defection was 20 percent, then membership in 1929–30 would have been about 1,200. Allowing for continual transfers from the RLDS Church and elsewhere, plus internal growth, the 1932 reported number of 1,607 seems reasonable. Ronald E. Romig, Community of Christ archivist, after reviewing RLDS membership data for this period concluded that the maximum number of transfers to the Church of Christ in the 1920s and 1930s was 1,500. Romig, email to Addams, March 5, 2009. This number matches my estimate of 1,250 to 1,600 RLDS transfers in 1916–36.

²²⁶*Ibid.*, 142. Fetting continued to receive messages from John the Baptist—a total of thirty—until his death on January 30, 1933. In the ensuing seventy-plus years, several schisms have afflicted Fetting's Church of Christ, their leaders frequently claiming a continuation of the messages.

²²⁷Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 142. As noted above, Flint's membership estimates are significantly inflated. The total vote on the 1929 referendum was 440. If the drop-out rate was 25 percent, the voters were about 39 percent (and if 20 percent, then about 37 percent). I have used 38 percent.

²²⁸Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 146; “Minutes of the General Ministers' Conference of the Church of Christ,” *Zion's Advocate* 18 (May 1, 1936): 54. Immediately after the vote to repudiate the Fetting “Mes-

RENEWED CONTROVERSY

The lingering Great Depression, World War II, and other issues minimized dissension and controversy between the two churches for many years. However, at the RLDS conference of 1952, old wounds were reopened. Elder Leonard J. Lea brought up the “Temple Lot Case” in his front-page article (printed beside the transcript of President Israel A. Smith’s opening conference address) in the March 31, 1952, *Conference Daily Edition* of the *Herald*. “A great victory for the Reorganization was the winning of the Temple Lot Suit in March, 1894, in the U. S. Circuit Court under Judge John F. Philips,” he wrote. “The decision cleared Joseph Smith of the charge of polygamy and recognized the Reorganized Church as the true successor of the original church—a decision that has never been controverted successfully, nor reversed.”²²⁹

A three-man committee from the Church of Christ consisting of Clarence L. Wheaton, Arthur M. Smith, and Robert R. Robertson, immediately penned “An Open Letter” of rebuttal, rebuke, and disappointment, which they hand-delivered to the RLDS Church.²³⁰ The letter quoted Lea’s comments, then chastised the misrepresentation: “Surely you brethren are not so ignorant of the

sages,” Apostle Elmer E. Long resigned from the quorum stating that, as he was called to the apostleship in one of Fetting’s “Messages” and since the messages were rejected, his calling was likewise rejected. He and Thomas Nerran, another Fetting follower, organized a new church in 1938, also called the “Church of Christ.” Headquartered in Denver, Colorado, it was not associated with the ongoing Fetting Church of Christ.

²²⁹Leonard J. Lea, “Centennial of the Reorganization, 1852–1952,” *Herald* (Conference Daily Edition), no. 2 (March 31, 1952): 34, 39. In the same issue, President Israel Smith, “The Return: Conference Address of the President,” 37, made similar remarks about Judge Philips’s comments. In fact, the judge had not ruled on the RLDS Church’s claims to be the true successor to Joseph Smith’s church but merely confirmed its long-standing possession of the building. See Kim Loving, “Ownership of the Kirtland Temple: Legends, Lies, and Misunderstandings,” *Journal of Mormon History* 30 (Fall 2004): 1–80. In 1952, Leonard J. Lea was book and tract editor at the RLDS-owned Herald House and was also on the RLDS Church’s Standing High Council. He resigned in 1954 and died in 1960.

²³⁰Clarence L. Wheaton, Arthur M. Smith, and Robert R. Robertson, Letter “To the First Presidency and Council of Twelve of the Church of Je-

facts of this case that you will acquiesce in such misleading statements, for you know that after this 'great victory' decision was handed down by Judge Philips as of March 16, 1894, that the same was appealed to the U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals in 1895, and the Church of Christ in this action not only "controverted successfully" the decision of the Circuit Court but succeeded also in getting the Appellant Court to reverse the decision of Judge Philips."²³¹ Charges and counter-charges followed.

On April 8, 1952, Paul M. Hanson, a spokesman for the RLDS Church, acknowledged receipt of the April 5 letter and concluded stiffly: "It is not appreciated that copies of your letter were publicly circulated by you before an opportunity was permitted by me to reply."²³² Having not heard from any RLDS Church official by April 7, the Church of Christ purchased space in the local *Independence Examiner* and published the text as "An Open Letter." It appeared on April 8, the same day as Hanson's response, while both conferences were still in session.²³³ On April 10, the RLDS Church (presumably Hanson) prepared another response and hand-delivered it to the Church of Christ.²³⁴ Clarence Wheaton, Arthur Smith, and Robert Robertson explained to RLDS President Israel A. Smith on April 12 that, since the Church of Christ had not received an answer, referring to their hand-delivered letter, "we felt that our only means of getting the facts before the public and especially your church was to address an 'open letter' [in the *Independence Ex-*

sus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Conference Assembled," April 5, 1952, original and typescript, Miscellaneous Letters and Papers, P13, f1914, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

²³¹"An Open Letter." In the hand-delivered original, "reverse" is underlined; in the printed *Independence Examiner* version, it is capitalized.

²³²Paul M. Hanson, Letter to Clarence L. Wheaton, Arthur M. Smith, and Robert R. Robertson, April 8, 1952, Temple Lot, Subject Collection, P22, f111, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

²³³Clarence L. Wheaton, Arthur M. Smith, and Robert R. Robertson, "An Open Letter," *Independence Examiner*, April 8, 1952, 5. The letter in the *Examiner* is dated April 5, 1952.

²³⁴Paul M. Hanson, Letter to Clarence L. Wheaton, Arthur M. Smith, and Robert R. Robertson, April 10, 1952, Temple Lot, Subject Collection, P22, f111, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

aminer]. Such was done.”²³⁵

Two weeks later, Israel Smith wrote a lengthy article in the *Herald* which further exacerbated the ill feelings on this matter.²³⁶ Correspondence between the two bodies continued on this issue and others for the rest of the year. As a result of this unresolved situation, several years lapsed before a new effort at reconciliation and unity emerged, although Wheaton and Smith exchanged several pointed but cordial letters regarding doctrine and history in August 1955.²³⁷

A NEW EFFORT AT RECONCILIATION

Sometime in late 1959, it appears that an RLDS Church member, Justus S. Allen residing in Antioch, California, wrote to Church of Christ leaders about possibly renewing the 1918 “Agreements of Working Harmony.” On November 6, 1959, Leon A. Gould and Don W. Housknecht, apostles in the Church of Christ, responded in a return letter to Allen that “we are in accord with your desire to see the 1918 efforts . . . renewed to effect a working Harmony Agreement.” Allen then sent a letter to the Standing High Council of the RLDS Church suggesting that it take this matter to other authorities within the Church for consideration. The results of this proposed meeting are unknown.²³⁸

In 1970 W. Wallace Smith, who became president of the RLDS Church in October 1958, initiated a new effort to mend fences. On

²³⁵Clarence L. Wheaton, Arthur M. Smith, and Robert R. Robertson, Letter to Israel A. Smith, April 12, 1952, Temple Lot, Subject Collection, P22, f111, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

²³⁶Israel A. Smith, “The Temple Lot Suit Again,” *Herald* 99, no. 19 (May 12, 1952): 5–7, 16–17.

²³⁷Clarence L. Wheaton, Letters to Israel A. Smith, August 3, 4, 6, 8, 1955; Israel A. Smith, Letter to Clarence L. Wheaton, August 2, 2 (separate letter), 9, 16, 1955, Subject file, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

²³⁸Leon A. Gould and Don W. Housknecht, Letter to Justus S. Allen, November 6, 1959, Minutes of Joint Relations Committee, Acc 8155, f36, Community of Christ Library-Archives; Justus S. Allen, Letter to Dear Brother (Standing High Council), December 9, 1960, Minutes of Joint Relations Committee, Acc 8155, f36, Community of Christ Library-Archives. The letter that initiated the correspondence to the Church of Christ apostles has not been located.

August 14, Smith asked his assistant to write Apostle Clarence Wheaton “regarding the possibility of a renewal of former conversation having to do with an effort toward better understanding between our two branches of the Restored Church.”²³⁹ Both organizations authorized a joint relations committee, which met for the first time on October 3, 1970,²⁴⁰ after a forty-five-year hiatus.

Over the next fourteen years, the joint committee carefully chose and discussed several topics, such as how to “increase understanding and develop friendly relations between these two branches of the Restoration.”²⁴¹ Tasks included “identifying commonly held interests and beliefs and . . . attempting to avoid difficulties that might lead to argument, debate, and strife”²⁴² and such mundane but practical topics as arranging for the shared use of parking facilities.²⁴³ Good will replaced the previous hostility and suspicion. In October 1979, W. Wallace Smith responded to a correspondent who inquired about the possibility of a union between the two churches: “As you may know, there has been a liaison committee composed of members of the Temple Lot Church and the Reorganized Church which meet together from time to time to discuss items of mutual interest. That committee is currently in dialog, and if any mergers or joint ventures

²³⁹Notice of Relations Committee Meetings for *Zion's Advocate*, Minutes of Joint Relations Committee, Acc 8155, f38, Community of Christ Library-Archives. The document is neither dated nor signed.

²⁴⁰Minutes of the Relations Committee Meeting, Internal Memorandum, Church of Christ, November 14, 1970, signed by Robert H. Jensen, E. Leon Yates, and Archie F. Bell, Acc 8155, f38, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

²⁴¹John C. Stuart, Memorandum, “Committee Meetings with the Church of Christ (Temple Lot),” ca. 1970, Minutes of Joint Relations Committee, Acc 8155, f37, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

²⁴²Franklyn S. Weddle and Robert H. Jensen, Letter to the President of the Church of Jesus Christ (Monongahela, Pennsylvania), April 6, 1971, Minutes of Joint Relations Committee, Acc 8155, f36. Specific topics included the Church of Christ’s “Articles of Faith and Practice” and the RLDS Church’s “A Statement of Belief.” Franklyn S. Weddle, Meeting Minutes of September 11, 1971, Acc 8155, f38, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

²⁴³Wallace B. Smith, Letter to Franklyn S. Weddle, May 5, 1971, Minutes of Joint Relations Committee, Acc 8155, f36, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

were to arise it would be most likely that they would have their genesis in that Committee.”²⁴⁴

On November 14, 1979, the Joint Relations Committee issued a report describing its role “as liaison bodies, rather than negotiating authorities.”²⁴⁵ This statement was repeated in the Church of Christ’s April 1980 Ministers’ Conference minutes.²⁴⁶ Apparently, the committee saw its work as clarifying positions and maintaining cordial relations, rather than working toward unification. However, both churches extended (and accepted) an invitation to the other to have a designated representative speak at their respective April 1980 conferences, a gesture that was “well received” by each.²⁴⁷ Although this effort succeeded in establishing courteous and mutually respectful relationships, the necessity for meeting seemed to wane. I have found no correspondence or minutes after 1983 or possibly 1984.

Perhaps the new interest of the RLDS Church in building a temple of its own was a factor. As early as 1942, President Frederick M. Smith asked Samuel Burgess to “look into” whether the temple “might be shifted considerable from that spot [the Church of Christ’s 2.75 acres] and still be in the confines of the sixty-three acres.”²⁴⁸ Burgess’s answer is unknown; but RLDS members rejoiced in 1968 when Presi-

²⁴⁴Wallace B. Smith, Letter to John Leabo, October 9, 1979, Minutes of Joint Relations Committee, Acc 8155, f36. John Leabo had been raised in the RLDS Church but had transferred his membership to the Church of Christ in 1944 at age thirty-two. In 1979 he reaffiliated with the RLDS Church.

²⁴⁵Report of the Committee on Relations with the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), cover page, November 14, 1979, Minutes of Joint Relations Committee, Acc 8155, f36.

²⁴⁶Minutes of 1980 Ministers’ Conference, April 1980, 3, citing “Report of the Relations Committee,” in Minutes of Joint Relations Committee, Acc 8155, f39. Representing the Church of Christ were Robert H. Jensen, Archie F. Bell, and E. Leon Yates. Representing the RLDS Church were John C. Stuart, Paul W. Booth, and Franklyn S. Weddle.

²⁴⁷Wallace B. Smith, Letter to William A. Sheldon, December 14, 1979, and William A. Sheldon, Letter to First Presidency, RLDS Church, April 14, 1980, Minutes of Joint Relations Committee, Acc 8155, f38, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

²⁴⁸Frederick M. Smith, Letter to Samuel A. Burgess, August 21, 1942, Temple Lot, Subject Collection, P22, f111.



RLDS Temple, announced in 1984 and dedicated in 1994. Photo by Thayne Whiting.

dent W. Wallace Smith announced a revelation at the Church's world conference: "The time has come for a start to be made toward building my temple in the Center Place. It shall stand on a portion of the plot of ground set apart for the purpose many years ago by my servant Joseph Smith, Jr[.]" (RLDS D&C 149:6a). In 1972, an additional revelation stated: "Continue your study toward . . . selecting a place for a temple in my name" (RLDS D&C 150:8). That site—RLDS property directly east of the Temple Lot where the RLDS Temple now stands—is on part of the site Edward Partridge purchased in December 1831. The location was selected by 1974; and at the April 1984 world conference, the long-awaited revelation was canonized by Church members: "The temple shall be dedicated to the pursuit of peace. It shall be for reconciliation and for healing of the spirit. It shall also be for a strengthening of faith and preparation for witness. . . . Therefore, let the work of planning go forward, and let the resources be gathered in, that the building of my temple may be an ensign to the world of the breadth and depth of the devotion of the Saints" (RLDS D&C 159:6).²⁴⁹

A shared concern over a temple on the original Temple Lot diffused the need for a close working relationship with the Church of Christ. Church of Christ leaders may have developed the same feelings. No additional joint committees on reconciliation or unity have met since at least 1984.

CONCLUSION

For more than 150 years, the Reorganized Church and the Church of Christ, both early expressions of the Restoration, have traveled much the same path. Both have sincerely obeyed the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith's early revelations as they understood them. Both churches eventually set up their headquarters in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, with the intent to "redeem Zion." Part of that mission for both was to build the promised temple on the site that the Prophet had dedicated for that purpose on August 3, 1831.

This similarity in mission has often put these two early expres-

²⁴⁹H. Michael Marquardt, "The Independence Temple of Zion," 1997, 7–8; photocopy courtesy of H. Michael Marquardt. See also Price and Price, *The Temple of the Lord*, 92. The revelation was announced April 10, 1984, the ground-breaking was held April 6, 1990, and the edifice was dedicated April 17, 1994.

sions of the Restoration at odds with each other. At times this similarity has led to misunderstandings and even legal action. Their mutual efforts to unite, or at least to come to a “unity of the faith” on basic doctrine, also led them to several interesting crossroads and exasperating controversies. A little more compromise by either or both parties might have produced an entirely different configuration within the Restoration movement than exists today. However, when the opportunities at the crossroads faded or failed, controversy or misunderstanding inevitably followed. Still, although fundamental doctrinal differences remain unresolved, these two early neighbors of the Restoration now exhibit much greater understanding, accommodation, and respect toward each other.

RELIEF SOCIETY BIRTH AND DEATH RITUALS: WOMEN AT THE GATES OF MORTALITY

Susanna Morrill

SINCE THE FOUNDING OF THE RELIEF SOCIETY in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1842, Mormon women have participated in the communal life of Mormonism through this women's auxiliary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. On the surface, much of the work of the Relief Society was practical and charitable. Local units of the Relief Society were expected to assist the ward bishop in looking after community members who were poor, sick, or in despair. This work took many forms, but Relief Society women regularly assisted at the birth beds and deathbeds of friends and neighbors. As revealed by contemporary women's diaries, journals, and Relief Society publications for the period I studied (1870s–1920s), these were important duties in the Mormon women's world in Utah and other Mormon core cultural areas.

However, on a deeper level, this seemingly practical work of Relief Society women had profoundly religious meaning. Even

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though they were not part of the Church-sponsored rituals performed in the ward house or the temple, these birth and death rituals were part of the expected social “mothering” administered by women of the community. The rituals gave women immense, multifaceted religious authority within the daily experience of Mormon lived religion. Historian of religions Robert Orsi has described lived religion as “religious practice and imagination in ongoing, dynamic relation with the realities and structures of everyday life in particular times and places.”¹ This concept is a way to describe how members of any given religious community make meaningful and workable for themselves the institutional, ritual, and theological structures within which they live. Lived religion usually intersects in important ways with what might be called official or institutional manifestations of religion perpetuated by religious authorities. However, lived religion also can fill in the gaps of meaning that institutional religions inevitably leave. Scholars often use the concept of lived religion to find and interpret women’s roles in religious communities because women have historically been excluded from the institutional and theological structures of most Judeo-Christian religions and, thus, from narratives of religious history.

Birth and death rituals were vital in the lived Mormon religion of this era, but they were not commonly discussed by Church officials in sermons or Church publications. They became important to the community as women performed these actions repeatedly and consistently—in some cases, as directed by bishops or other Church officials. They were expected and comforting rituals in the daily religious lives of Mormon men and women—an essential element in how Mormons dealt practically and religiously with the joyful and searing realities of birth and death.

In performing these rituals, women became, in essence, managers of the transition from the premortal spirit world to mortality upon birth and from the mortal world to the spirit world at death. According to Mormon theological logic, they assisted spirit children in making the transition from the premortal to earthly existence, then at the end of life eased the passage of spiritually tested souls back to the divine presence. I have argued elsewhere that, in doing this work, Re-

¹Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002), xiii. For a more detailed description of “lived religion,” see pp. xix–xxiv.

lief Society women acted as mediators of liminality because they were instrumental in helping human spirits negotiate the transition between the divine and mortal realms at times of birth and death.² Because of the Mormon belief in a premortal existent state, for the Mormon community, these times were especially dangerous, uncertain, and anxious—when the worlds of mortality and divinity briefly connected. These birth and death rituals placed women at the theologically crucial points of entrances to and exits from the spirit world. Women stood at the gates of mortality in the context of the lived, if not the institutional, religion of Mormonism.

It makes theological sense in the Mormon tradition that Mormons of this era understood women to be at the gates of mortality. Women's physical bodies served as the literal gates by which human souls entered the next stage of existence in the plan of salvation.³ In many ways, this Mormon theological view conforms to larger American Victorian popular understandings that God sent children to mothers, whose divine mission included an inescapable responsibility for shaping their moral and religious lives.⁴ But in the Mormon community, this idea had clear theological grounding. In Mormon theology, the birth process started with the Mother in Heaven. In the

²Susanna Morrill, *White Roses on the Floor of Heaven: Mormon Women's Popular Theology, 1880–1920* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 121–23.

³This idea also appears in the contemporary Mormon women's literature. An article from the *Woman's Exponent* argues: "Our girls must have a better knowledge of themselves, know how to take care of their own bodies how to dress, eat, exercise, work and study for the highest development of themselves, and then they will be in a condition to furnish bodies worthy of the noble spirits that are to roll on the work in this Last Dispensation, to make ready for the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." R.S.D., "The Economy of Women," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 5 (August 1, 1895): 40. Laura Louisa Smith, "A Short Sketch of the Life of Laura Louisa Smith," 35, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, expressed the same idea: "I felt divinely called, that I was in partnership with god in bringing into the world bodis [sic] for the spirit children of god to dwell in while here on the Earth."

⁴For the religious roles of mothers in mainstream Protestant traditions, see Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in Early America, 1600–1850: The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 131–41. Popular literature also expressed the concept that babies were heaven-sent and that motherhood was a sacred power—for example:

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Mormon theology held that God the Father was a physical, embodied being who paired with a divine Mother in Heaven to produce spirit children in a premortal spirit world.⁵

This concept is theologically important for two reasons. First, in Mormon theology of this era, the divine birth of spirit children directly paralleled the later, physical birth of these children into mortality. In the process of giving these children physical bodies and then giving birth to them, mortal mothers mirrored the work of the Mother in Heaven who gave them spiritual bodies and gave birth to them in the spirit world. Perhaps the parallel is even closer, given that there was no clear dichotomy between the spiritual and material in early Mormonism. Mormonism's founder Joseph Smith famously declared in revelation: "There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes" (LDS D&C 131:7). In both cases, mothers served as the literal gates of existence for these pre-mortal and mortal beings. The

In our home, where light and longing
Struggle sore thro' toil and strain,
Comes a presence, sweet and holy,
Thro' Life's sacrament of pain;
And a tender awe is blended
With our love's protecting balm,
As we kiss the baby features,
Nearest Heaven's immortal calm.

Elaine Goodale and Dora Read Goodale, "Nearest Heaven," *Apple-Blossoms: Verses of Two Children* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1879), 130–31.

⁵Joseph Smith also described God's embodiment in his King Follett Discourse in April 1844: "First, God Himself who sits enthroned in yonder heavens is a Man like unto one of yourselves—that is the great secret." Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (1978): 7. Apostle John A. Widtsoe later talked about the divine pair: "Since we have a Father who is our God, we must also have a mother, who possesses the attributes of Godhood." John A. Widtsoe, *Rational Theology: As Taught by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: General Priesthood Committee, 1915), 65. For the development of the Mother in Heaven concept in Mormon thought, see Linda P. Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," *Sunstone* 5 (September/October 1980): 9–15.

gates into spiritual existence and the gates into mortality were female in substance. It makes symbolic and logical sense that those assisting spirit children into mortality would be similarly female.

Second, those women assisting at birth beds and deathbeds—standing at the gates of mortality—were following the precedent of their Mother in Heaven. Nineteenth-century Church leaders rarely mentioned the female divine figure in their sermons or publications. The figure of the Mother in Heaven was most clearly enunciated in the poem/hymn “O My Father,” written by Eliza R. Snow in the 1840s. This hymn was extremely popular into the twentieth century and was used to open religious and secular meetings from surprise birthday parties to church-wide gatherings.⁶ Perhaps most strikingly, on one occasion the hymn was sung at the moment of a young girl’s passing.⁷ Mormons, then, most frequently encountered the Mother in Heaven in their communal ritual life. Snow’s hymn describes the reality of premortal life and the last verse puts in the mouths of its

⁶For instance, on June 19, 1890, the afternoon session of the Salt Lake Stake Relief Society meeting opened with the hymn. “Salt Lake Stake,” *Woman’s Exponent* 19, no. 1 (July 15, 1890): 31. The general Relief Society conference held on October 7, 1891, closed with it. “Relief Society Conference,” *Woman’s Exponent* 20, no. 8 (October 15, 1891): 62. The Relief Society jubilee opened with “that Grand Invocation by Eliza R. Snow.” “Relief Society Jubilee: Exercises at the Tabernacle,” *Woman’s Exponent* 20, no. 19 (April 1, 1892): 140. At a party for the remembrance of deceased poet Hannah Tapfield King, the hymn was sung after the “ice cream and sweet-meats were served.” “Memorial Day: Hannah T. King,” *Woman’s Exponent* 22, no. 1 (July 1 & 15, 1893): 6. The Tabernacle Choir sang the hymn at a public performance in Independence, Missouri, in the fall of 1893. “Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir,” *Woman’s Exponent* 22, no. 5 (September 15, 1893): 37. On November 20, 1893, it was also sung at the surprise birthday party of Relief Society leader Mary Isabella Horne. “Three Quarters of a Century,” *Woman’s Exponent* 22, no. 9 (December 1, 1893): 69.

⁷“Death of a Sweet Child,” *Woman’s Exponent* 21, no. 6 (September 15, 1892): 46. The death notice of Grace Victoria Winn records: “Often, she would request those who were around her to sing for her; and at the time when her last breath was drawn, they were singing her favorite hymn, ‘O! my Father, Thou that dwellest,’ she opened her eyes for a moment and smiled upon her friends, last of all, her mother, then closed them as if in peaceful sleep.” The hymn was sung again after the dedicatory prayer was given at her grave.

singers the longing to return to this happier state and the first, divine parents:

When I leave this frail existence,
 When I lay this mortal by,
 Father, Mother, may I meet you
 In your royal courts on high?
 Then, at length, when I've completed
 All you sent me forth to do
 With your mutual approbation
 Let me come and dwell with you.⁸

In this one outstanding and oft-repeated description of her, the Mother in Heaven, paired with God the Father—the most prominent figure in the hymn—nurtures, sends off Her spirit children to mortality, and then welcomes them back to the spirit world where they will continue to work and improve and wait for the end of time and the final resurrection.

This image, at least, is the way in which contemporary Mormon women writers extrapolated the role of the Mother in Heaven from the hymn. Sometimes directly echoing the words of Snow's hymn, in Mormon women's religious literature of this period, authors most often mention the Mother in Heaven when they describe spirit children leaving or reentering the spirit world.⁹ Jane Kartchner Morris's hymn, "Oh! My Mother," rewrites Snow's hymn to focus on the Mother in Heaven at center stage as she sends Her spirit children off

⁸George D. Pyper, *Stories of Latter-day Saint Hymns* (N.p., 1939), 1. This hymn is No. 292 in the current *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985). See also Jill Mulvay Derr, "The Significance of 'O My Father' in the Personal Journey of Eliza R. Snow," *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996-97): 84-126.

⁹Emily Hill Woodmansee quotes Snow's hymn in her poem, "Apostrophe. . .," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 15 (January 1, 1888): 113:

Free from this most "frail existence"—
 Free to lay "this mortal by"—
 Free to span the starry distance
 To the "royal courts on high."
 Ransomed spirit! deathless essence!
 Hie thee hence to realms so fair;

into mortality and welcomes them back to the spirit world after death.¹⁰ In a short story published in the *Relief Society Magazine* in 1916, for instance, author Laura Moench Jenkins, in a fictional depiction, describes how the Mother in Heaven meets with and gives gifts to two of Her spirit daughters before they leave for mortality. She is also the first to greet one who returns prematurely to the spirit world when the child's earthly mother has an abortion.¹¹

As articulated in Mormon women's writings of the time, one of the Mother in Heaven's most salient characteristic was that She sent off Her loved ones to the journey of mortality and then welcomed them back to Her and Her consort's presence. When women assisted at the birth beds and deathbeds of their neighbors, they were mirroring in reverse the work of their divine Mother. As the Mother in Heaven sent Her children into mortality, Relief Society women stood ready to welcome them, just as the Mother in Heaven stood ready to welcome back Her matured spirit children sent out from mortality by their Relief Society caretakers. Apparently, in the lived religion of Mormonism, the gates into mortality were female and so were attendants who stood immediately on either side of them.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Relief Society women did not create Mormon birth and death rituals from nothing; rather, within the context of distinctive Mormon theology, they adapted practices common in mainstream American society. Historically, the function of women who attended their

Gain thy "Father's radiant presence;"

Greet thy noble "Mother there."

Louisa Lulu Greene Richards, "A Thread of Thought," *Woman's Exponent* 29, nos. 6–7 (August 15 and September 1, 1900): 27, adds details to the less explicit departing scene in the hymn:

We were there, with God, our Father,
And voted "Thy will be done,"
And our Mother, Queen in Heaven
Smiled on us every one[.]

¹⁰Jane Kartchner Morris, *Journals and Reminiscences*, October 1916–February 1971, 3:148, LDS Church History Library.

¹¹Laura Moench Jenkins, "Beyond the Portals," *Relief Society Magazine* 3, no. 6 (June 1916): 325–34.

neighbors at times of birth and death is well known.¹² Women-driven birth and death practices were part of the lived religion of most American communities. Martha Ballard, a Maine midwife who kept a diary from 1785 to 1812, routinely documents the assistance of the mother's female relatives, friends, and neighbors during the delivery. For example, on October 3, 1789, Ballard describes one such communal scene: "Mrss. Goffs illness increased & shee was safe delivered at 11 hour & 30 minute morn a daughter. Her marm, Mrs Bullin, Mrs Ney were my assistants. Mrs. Jacson Came back at 1 h p.m."¹³ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, who edited the diary, terms this concept "social medicine" in which the midwife had a distinctive role as "the most visible and experienced person in a community of healers who shared her perspective, her obligations, her training, and her labor."¹⁴ Ballard also recorded that women nursed the sick, attended the dying, and laid out bodies for burial.¹⁵ In an example that shows the cross-fertilization between Mormon and wider practices, Nancy Peirson, a first-generation Mormon convert who was living with her non-Mormon family in Massachusetts in the 1840s, also describes watching at the beds of dying friends and relatives and helping to make burial clothes, noting on one occasion that she "went to Mr Griffins and helped Mrs. Sharp make his shroud."¹⁶ Women like Peirson brought these common American cultural practices with them when they converted to the Mormon Church.

In the Mormon community, however, female-identified birth and death rituals came to be associated specifically with the Relief Society and took on Mormon theological meanings.¹⁷ Relief Society leaders in the 1870s, most prominently Eliza R. Snow herself, could draw on the explicit encouragement of Joseph Smith in

¹²Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Women: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1986), 60–71.

¹³Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785–1812* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 103.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 39, 72.

¹⁶Nancy Peirson, Diary, October 27, 1848[?], Huntington Library, San Marino, California. See also January 7, 1849; February 13, 1847.

¹⁷Linda King Newell, "Gifts of the Spirit: Women's Share," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana: Uni-

Nauvoo for the organization's combined practical and spiritual focus, including work around birth and death. According to the version of the Relief Society minutes of June 9, 1842, that were incorporated into the Church's official history, Smith admonished Relief Society members that their work, properly performed, had vital significance: "You must repent and get the love of God. Away with self-righteousness. The best measure or principle to bring the poor to repentance is to administer to their wants. The Ladies' Relief Society is not only to relieve the poor, but to save souls."¹⁸ Two months earlier in April 1842, Smith had explicitly assured members of the Relief Society that they were authorized to bless the sick in a manner parallel to priesthood blessings: "If the sisters should have faith to heal the sick, let all hold their tongues, and let everything roll on."¹⁹

In the mid- to late nineteenth century, women engaged in the kind of social medicine Ulrich describes, combining the Relief Society's practical and spiritual work as they developed a distinctive Mormon version of birth and death rituals. In Nauvoo in 1847, Patty Sessions, a respected and well-known midwife, was set apart by Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball to attend to the medical needs of the women of the Mormon community.²⁰ Throughout her life, she delivered hundreds of infants following the practices of midwives across the country and, like them, carefully recorded payments for her services.²¹ Interestingly, Sessions recorded that the patriarch who bestowed her patriarchal blessing upon her also "ordained" her to lay hands on the sick for healing, and her diary includes many examples

versity of Illinois Press, 1992), 117.

¹⁸Joseph Smith et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976 printing), 5:24–25.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 4:603. For a discussion of this point, see Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 66.

²⁰Patty Sessions, *Mormon Midwife: The 1846–1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions*, edited by Donna Toland Smart (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997), 7.

²¹*Ibid.*, 402.

of washing and anointing women for their health.²²

In the St. George Stake in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Relief Society presidency took care of the sick, assisted at births, attended the dying, comforted the survivors, washed and laid out bodies, and attired them in burial clothing they had made. They routinely called on other Relief Society members to help perform these tasks, a pattern that was typical of most Mormon Relief Societies.²³ Clothing for the dead who had been temple endowed also included temple-related clothing such as the apron or veil. By at least the 1890s, one local Relief Society began to sell pre-made burial robes that presumably met the proper temple requirements.²⁴ In 1912, the Temple and Burial Clothing Department was established by the central Relief Society leadership to provide ready-made temple and burial garments to the entire church, though in isolated areas Relief Society women still sewed these gar-

²²Ibid., 349; for examples, see 359, 360, 362, 368, 379.

²³Verna L. Dewsnup and Katharine M. Larson, comps., *Relief Society Memoirs: A History of Relief Society in St. George Stake, 1867–1956* (St. George: St. George Stake Relief Society, 1956), 39, 76, 157–60.

²⁴According to Salt Lake Stake Relief Society leaders Mary Isabella Horne, Maria Young Dougall, and Gladys Woodmansee, “Our Shopping Department,” *Young Woman’s Journal* 2, no. 6 (1891): 289, their cooperative store was offering burial suits for sale, noting: “We make a specialty of temple clothing and burial suits.” This function eventually became a full-fledged business, taken over by Beehive Clothing, with temple clothing, including burial raiment appropriate for endowed deceased members available through Church-maintained distribution centers. The current *Church Handbook of Instructions* (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 2006), 81, provides detailed instructions for burial in temple clothing, including who may or may not be eligible, the recommendation that stake presidents “in areas where temple clothing may be difficult to obtain” should keep a complete set of temple clothing for a man and another for a woman on hand and, that “where cultural traditions or burial practices make this [being buried in temple clothing] inappropriate or difficult, the clothing may be folded and placed next to the body in the casket.” The responsibility of dressing the deceased is now assigned to the family unless no one of the same gender is an endowed member. In that case, “the bishop asks the Relief Society president to assign an endowed woman to dress a deceased woman” and assigns an endowed man the parallel responsibility. Ibid.

ments on their own.²⁵ Ritualized death and birth care, in short, took on characteristic elements of Mormon culture as they became integral parts of women's religious duties in the Relief Society.

The work of Eliza R. Snow offers a window into this process of development. Snow was an authoritative model for women to follow because of her vital role in the first Nauvoo Relief Society, for which she acted as the secretary. She was also considered to be a prophetess in her own right; the hymn "O My Father" was ranked as a revelation by her contemporaries.²⁶ Long after Snow's death in 1887, a 1916 article in the *Relief Society Magazine* highlighted Snow's active work at both birth beds and deathbeds along with her supervision of temple work for women: "She made many temple robes and other garments for the clothing of the dead. She was never idle."²⁷ Furthermore, "no night was too dark, no distance too great, for her to go out and administer to the sick child or to the discouraged mother. She has waited upon thousands and has washed and anointed multitudes of prospective mothers for their future confinements."²⁸ Snow modeled the essential role of women at the entrance into and exit from mortality; Relief Society women similarly accepted among their duties those of ministering at the childbeds and deathbeds of their friends, neighbors, and family members.

In mainstream American culture, especially urban Protestant culture, the concept of social medicine began to recede with the increasing professionalization of medicine. By the mid-nineteenth century, though at first with mixed success, medical leaders began to standardize medical education; they attempted to marginalize those, including midwives, whom they saw as falling outside of these standards.²⁹ Patients increasingly looked to male doctors associated with local medical schools or hospitals. By the early twentieth century, women increasingly chose to have their children in hospitals assisted

²⁵Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 197. In 1938, Cad-die Neilson, president of the Washington Ward Relief Society in the St. George Stake, reported that Relief Society women still made burial clothes. Dewsnap and Larson, *Relief Society Memoirs*, 79.

²⁶Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 30.

²⁷"The Mother of the Mothers in Israel: Eliza R. Snow," *Relief Society Magazine* 3, no. 4 (April 1916): 186.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Geoffrey Marks and William K. Beatty, *Story of Medicine in America*

by doctors, nurses, and the latest in medical technology.³⁰ Exceptions to these trends occurred, especially in rural or immigrant communities.³¹ Yet as the twentieth century progressed, most women preferred hospital births assisted by doctors.

Similarly, undertakers followed the example of the medical establishment as they self-consciously sought to become more professionalized. As historian James Farrell has documented, the National Funeral Directors' Association was founded in 1882. This group pressed to take over the management from the family of the body and the funeral. After the 1880s, morticians encouraged embalming, the use of mass-produced caskets, and moving the funeral from the home parlor to the funeral parlor.³²

However, Mormon women continued to perform birth and death rituals well into the twentieth century. No doubt one reason was the lack of qualified doctors in frontier Utah.³³ Yet from the founding of the Relief Society as encouraged by Joseph and Emma Smith, Snow, and other Mormon leaders, this women's practical, charitable work also had great religious significance. The Mormon community may have preserved these rituals longer precisely because they expressed deeply Mormon religious meaning and identity for the men, women, and children of the community—meaning that they

(New York: Scribner, [1973]), 199; Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Women*, 230–31.

³⁰Judith Walzer Leavitt, "Twilight Sleep': Technology and the Medicalization of Childbirth," in *Major Problems in the History of American Medicine and Health*, edited by John Harley Warner and Janet A. Tighe (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 373.

³¹For instance, Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, 132, notes that, even into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Catholic Italian immigrants in New York City often felt more comfortable calling to sickbeds older Italian women who were skilled in treating medical conditions, rather than opting for an American male doctor.

³²James J. Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 152, 146, 157–60, 169–73, 172–75.

³³The lack of medical care for women was a consistent concern for male and female Church leaders. They encouraged women to obtain formal medical training at eastern colleges and also established nursing and obstetrical courses in Utah under the auspices of the Relief Society. Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 106–7.

developed over time and through lived experiences. And in fact, after 1880, while other Americans increasingly deferred to funeral directors in caring for the corpse, Relief Society women continued to perform these last rites as an integral part of the burial process.³⁴ Even today women still dress the bodies of deceased loved ones.

Men were not absent during these critical times of entrance into and departure from mortality. However, nineteenth-century diaries, journals, poetry, and stories most often note and express appreciation for the presence of women. In their capacity as priesthood holders, men gave blessings to women before childbirth, to the ill, and to the dying.³⁵ During regular and special ward meetings, they led community members in prayers for the health, safety, and sometimes even welcome death of terminal sufferers.³⁶ They blessed babies and

³⁴Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death*, 147–50. There is a clear connection between the Relief Society's diminishing authority and autonomy and the increasing restrictions placed on women washing, anointing, and giving blessings to other women. The central leadership of the Church had banned these practices by the mid-twentieth century as part of a larger process of standardizing Church practices and repositioning the Relief Society as an auxiliary rather than an institution that was seen to be somewhat parallel to the priesthood. See D. Michael Quinn, "Women Have Had the Priesthood since 1843," in *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, edited by Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 365–409; Newell, "Gifts of the Spirit: Women's Share," 111–50. Other aspects of birth and death rituals seem to have gradually fallen away in the twentieth century as Mormons increasingly followed wider American culture in using the services of doctors and morticians.

³⁵Midwife Patty Sessions records numerous blessings from priesthood holders when she was ill. Smart, *Mormon Midwife*, 302, 328, 330. A very dramatic example is President Lorenzo Snow's administering to Ella Wight Jensen, a young woman in her twenties, on her deathbed and reportedly calling her back from "the other world." Jensen said she had already crossed the threshold into the next world when she heard Snow inform her: "Sister Ella you must come back as your mission is not yet finished here on this earth." Ella Wight Jensen, "Statement 1934, Feb. 5, Salt Lake City," 3, LDS Church History Library.

³⁶Anna Griffiths, Diary, June 10, 1923, LDS Church History Library, notes that her family was instructed to dedicate their Aunt Lillie to the Lord

dedicated graves.³⁷ In some communities, certain men had the assignment of washing and dressing male corpses.³⁸ Men were present and important actors at times of birth and death, exercising their priesthood power to smooth over these difficult times. Yet in the lived religion of the community, it was women who dominated at the moments of birth and death.

The assumed presence of women is vividly demonstrated in a fictional story from the *Young Woman's Journal*, a publication of the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association (now succeeded by Young Women for girls ages twelve to eighteen). The protagonist, Inid, describes waking up, at first unable to speak or move. She gradually realizes that she is in a coffin, the apparent victim of a drowning. Though Inid requires three pages to put the pieces together, the reader instantly grasps the situation because Inid is aware of a group of women friends and relatives who are speaking in hushed tones and working on a white garment. "Gradually her sight grew clearer, and she could distinguish the people in the room—one of them a neighbor, Mrs. Burbridge, the others her mother and Aunt Julia. They were sewing on some filmy white material, edged with delicate lace and it seemed to Inid that it looked like a wedding garment."³⁹ The author, well-known Mormon writer Josephine Spencer, was tapping into an easily recognized element of her readers' lived religion and using it as a literary device to juxtapose their awareness against Inid's increasingly annoying obtuseness and denial of her "death." What else would a group of women speaking in hushed, mournful tones and sewing beautiful white robes be doing but making burial garments for a corpse?

because someone with great faith was holding her to the earth.

³⁷Elder Joseph H. Felt dedicated the grave of Victoria Grace Winn. "Death of a Sweet Child," *Woman's Exponent* 21, no. 6 (September 15, 1892): 46.

³⁸Juliaetta Bateman Jensen, *Little Gold Pieces: The Story of My Mormon Mother's Life* (Salt Lake City: Stanway Printing Company & Hiller Bookbinding Company, 1948), 143, reports that her father washed and dressed deceased men in their community. He also provided this service to President John Taylor (pp. 120–22).

³⁹Josephine Spencer, "Cross Lines," *Young Woman's Journal* 10, no. 9 (1899): 395–96.

BIRTH RITUALS

In the diaries and journals of Mormon women and men from the 1870s through the 1920s, women are the constant, background presence at these difficult times. Though multiple Relief Society women usually assisted at births and deaths, often the central figure was the midwife who helped at times of birth and death, because, all too often, the times of birth became times of death for either the mother or infant. In his diary, Allen Frost, for instance, describes the harrowing scene of the death of his wife, Elsie, after she gave birth to a daughter in January 1880. She had not expelled the afterbirth; the local midwife and her assistants desperately “wished me to call in Sister Judd, who is also a midwife, to see if she can remove the afterbirth.”⁴⁰ Though the afterbirth was finally expelled two days later, Elsie, after another three days, died with much suffering. On each of these agonizing days, Frost lists the presence of three or four women in constant attendance, trying to help Elsie, relieve her pain, and make her more comfortable.⁴¹ Similarly, in his diary in February 1902, Osmer D. Flake described how eight local women assisted his family when his young son died after an extended illness: “Mary sees to the clothes. Pearl Turley sat up the after part of the night. Sisters West, Sarah Hunt, Bell Flake, Nellie Hunt, Blanck [Blanche?] Flake & Pearl McLaws are helping Mary.”⁴² Women were the assumed, collective presence at these times; they were the quiet supporters of the central actors who were coming into or leaving the mortal world. Women also encouraged and comforted family members and made sure that the daily round of chores and meals continued, despite the upset of events.

The assistance that Relief Society women provided at childbirth was vital because these moments involved great psychological upheaval: joy, anticipation, and anxiety. Relief Society women were essential for providing emotional support and physical comfort at these times. Indeed, motherhood was the main religious role that women were expected to play in the Mormon community. Throughout the writings of this time period, priesthood and Relief Society leaders

⁴⁰Allen Frost, Diary, January 23, 1880, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, January 23–28, 1880.

⁴²Osmer D. Flake, Diary, February 28, 1902, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

consistently expressed the centrality of motherhood for women. At the funeral of Catherine Perkes McAllister, the stake president, Nephi L. Morris, proclaimed in tribute: "I sometimes feel in the presence of a woman who has filled the full measure of her being as a mother, and has done so acceptably to those to whom she owed such sacred obligations, that I stand in the presence of the most sacred life conceivable."⁴³

Most women of this era communicate great eagerness for motherhood. In her autobiography, Edna Richardson, originally of West Jordan, joyfully compares the anticipated birth of her first child to the arrival of an angel: "My little angel, that God in his goodness was sending to me to love, and to cherish and to care for as long as he should see fit to leave her with me."⁴⁴ On the birth of this first child, she noted: "My darling baby—I wish I could put into words my feeling for this little bit of Heaven that had come into our home."⁴⁵ Richardson and her contemporaries looked forward to welcoming, as they saw it, those visitors from heaven whom they were assigned to guide, nurture, and protect through their early journeys on earth.

Yet because of still-high rates of infant and maternal mortality, these times of birth were also fraught with anxiety and real danger. Jane Hindley, just past her own child-bearing years, noted in her journal in March of 1874 that one of her friends had died in childbirth, another terrible blow to Hindley who had already suffered through the

⁴³Nephi Morris, "Beautiful Tribute to Motherhood," *Woman's Exponent* 35, no. 8 (March 1907): 57. Mothers were seen as having great power for good or ill. Aunt Ruth, "Our Children," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 24 (May 15, 1887): 189, quoted Brigham Young as saying: "I will tell you the truth as you will find it in eternity. If your children do not receive impressions of true piety, virtue, tenderness, and every principle of the holy Gospel, you may be assured that their sins will not be required at the hands of the father, but of the mother." Apostle Rudger Clawson, "Birth Control," *Relief Society Magazine* 3, no. 7 (July 1916): 364, took the position that women could safely have eight to ten children, perhaps more: "The law of her nature so ordered it, and God's command, while it did not specify the exact number of children allotted to woman, simply implied that she should exercise the sacred power of procreation to its utmost limit."

⁴⁴Edna Rae Cummings Richardson, "Down Memory Lane," [1965?], 114, LDS Church History Library.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 115.

painful process of having her husband take a plural wife (she was the first wife), the death of an infant son whom she never forgot, and at least two miscarriages. She wrote: "Today a Dear frie[n]d of [mine?] Died in child Bed the boy is all right but the Mother is gon and left Eight children. . . . I spent a day with her just before she was taken ill it has caused me to have very solemn thoughts."⁴⁶ Perhaps because of her own experiences and her friend's death, Hindley was "quite anxious about My [daughter] Ester she Expects to be confined soon I Pray God that all will be well with her. I shall be so thankfull when it is over and she is well again."⁴⁷

Interestingly, like Hindley, in their personal writings, Mormon women rarely express concern for their own safety. Rather, they focus on the health and well-being of husbands, children, family, and friends—as their community expected.⁴⁸ If they had felt differently, it seems unlikely that they would have recorded these feelings since these diaries and journals were usually written to be histories and sal-

⁴⁶Jane Charters Robinson Hindley, *Journal 1855–1905*, March 17, 1874, LDS Church History Library.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, May 18, 1874. More than twenty years later, another daughter, Minnie, lost a child and Hindley could not bear to witness the scene just a few days before the infant boy's death: "I have been at Minnies this afternoon her Baby is very ill, and Minnie is frantic for fear it will die I tried all I possibly could to comfort her but could not. . . . I was so upset that I had to leave[.]" *Ibid.*, November 8, 1898.

⁴⁸A repeated theme in Mormon women's literature of this period was that an important part of being a mother was to suffer and sacrifice oneself on behalf of loved ones. During the height of the government's campaign against polygamy, Relief Society general president Zina D. H. Young argued that it was women's duty to suffer while caring for the well-being of the community: "Isaiah says the daughters of Zion shall be polished after the similitude of a palace, and this will be brought about by all doing their duty, and may all have the gift of wisdom with power to overcome that we may have faith to feed the flocks that they faint not." Z. D. H. Y., "Letter to the Sisters," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 7 (September 15, 1890): 54. Nephi Morris, "Beautiful Tribute to Motherhood," 57, praised Catherine Perkes McAllister for her self-sacrifice: "She was, like many other women, a sufferer. It seems to me that the apotheosis of woman is through her suffering, and in her destined sorrows she nearest approaches the Son of Man, the greatest of sufferers. . . . He is approached, I say, more nearly by woman in her sufferings for others, than by anyone else."

utary tales for future generations.⁴⁹ Writers tend to present themselves in the best light possible. Still, judging from the anxious reflections of Hindley and others on the birthing process of loved ones, women must have feared for their own safety as well, since childbirth was still all too often fatal for mothers and infants.⁵⁰

As a result of these hard realities and the resulting fears, Relief Society members, as well as male priesthood holders, would often bless expectant mothers before childbirth. Relief Society women took an active role in attempting to stabilize these joyful but dangerous times of birth, providing reassurance and comfort with overtly religious rituals. As Linda King Newell has shown, the practice by women seems to have often involved a detailed ritual of washing the expectant mother in water while speaking blessings and then repeat-

⁴⁹There is internal evidence that women such as Martha Cragun Cox, Elizabeth Ramsay Fraser, and Marie M. C. Jensen intended even their private writings to be read. Cox titled her autobiography, now housed in the LDS Church History Library: "Biographical Records of Martha Cox. Written for my children and my children's children, and all who may care to read it." Similarly, she opens her work with the explanatory note: "There are few lives so uneventful that a true record of them would not be of some worth—in which there are no happenings that can serve as guide or warning to those that follow. It is to be hoped that in the pages that follow there will be somethings found that may be taken as good lessons to those who read." Elizabeth Ramsay Fraser, *Diary*, July 2, 1887, LDS Church History Library, opened her diary noting that thirty years had passed since her birth had begun "a life of joy and sorrow of which I intend showing forth on these pages. Praying that the Lord will strengthening me, and bring to my mind or cause me to think correctly and write the same." Marie M. C. Jensen, *Diary*, January 1, 1900, LDS Church History Library, echoed similar themes in her opening entry: "I have decided to [write?] me a journal that my children can have when I am no more."

⁵⁰Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale*, 170, comments: "But as late as 1930, there was one maternal death for every 150 births in the United States; the major gains in obstetrical safety have come in the past fifty years." According to Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 231, in 1922, Relief Society general president Clarissa Smith Williams urged spending more on infant and maternal care because of what she saw as an unacceptably high death rate among mothers and infants in the Church that year: 58 mothers and 751 babies.

ing the process with consecrated oil.⁵¹ These blessings bear formal similarity to washings, anointings, and blessings performed during temple ceremonies.⁵²

From the relatively scanty evidence, it appears that the women who gave these blessings were often (though not always) midwives—a logical extension of their practical work in attempting to bring mothers and infants through the process in a healthy state. For instance, Susannah Fowler, a midwife and folk doctor, was also “called” by local Church officials to wash and anoint women in connection with child-bearing. In June 1900, she noted: “Called to assist in washing and anointing three sisters. Ettie Norton and Laurie Wimmer preparatory to confinement, and Mary Brasher for barrenness. Took part with all.”⁵³ This brief mention of her participation underscores that these rituals were part of the fabric of everyday life even as it obscures their power and meaning for the women administering and receiving them.

WASHINGS, ANOINTINGS, AND BLESSINGS

Those giving the blessings pronounced in association with washing and anointing were generally middle-aged or older, respected women. If they were not midwives, like Patty Sessions and Susannah Fowler, they held other positions of responsibility and respect. For instance, Ruth May Fox, eventually the general president of the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association, regularly washed and anointed local women before childbirth and, more generally, for their health. On March 6, 1900, when she was in her late forties, she noted in her diary that she attended a Relief Society meeting in Salt Lake City and “from their went with Sister Elisabeth Stephenson to wash and anoint Sister Edith [Smith?] Pendleton previous to her [confinement?] My first time.”⁵⁴ Just two years later in Spring City, Utah, Marie M. C. Jensen, then in her mid-forties, also made particular note of her first time: “Been called to assist in washing an anointing Antomine Larsen

⁵¹Newell, “Gifts of the Spirit: Women’s Share,” 131.

⁵²David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), 11, 23, 36–40, 78–81, 105.

⁵³Mary Susannah Fowler, Diary, June 4, 1900, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

⁵⁴Ruth May Fox, Diaries, 1894–1931, March 6, 1900, LDS Church His-

for her confinement. Ellen Julegren[,] Stina Acord[,] Maria Larsen it was our first attempt an we felt very weak an humble but I pray the Lord will ecnolech [acknowledge?] our work, an she may recived the benefit.”⁵⁵ Women like Fox and Larsen felt privileged and humbled to step in at these delicate times. They felt the weightiness of their work and the importance and danger of the transitional times that they were attempting, at some level, to control.

We can see some of the emotional and spiritual results of these blessings for the recipients in one of the few extended descriptions of the process written from the point of view of a woman receiving the blessing. In this case the blessing was for illness, rather than pregnancy. Anna F. Griffiths of Salt Lake City had a chronic condition, diabetes, of which she eventually died. In hopes of improving her health when she was a teenager, two local, older, respected women washed and anointed her for her health. She was so moved by her experience that she included an in-depth description of the event. As she expresses it, the prayers of such rituals put women and their ailments in the hands of God, provided the physical comfort of tender touch and the spiritual sustenance of prophetic blessings by friends who knew the afflicted intimately. Preparatory to the blessing, Griffiths bathed and then lay in a gown on her couch:

The sisters had a word of prayer offered by grandma Eardley. In that prayer she asked for the Lord to be with them that day in their work and to bless me his handmaid. To look over our faults and imperfections, and if there was anything standing that day, between us & God, to forgive and make me well. Then they started their blessed work. Sister Burnham washed me with water to cleanse my whole body. Sister Eardley followed drying. First sister Burnham washed my forehead, asking as she washed it, for my pain to be [cleared?], that I would be able to discern right from wrong, then my eyes that I may always have my natural sight, my cheeks that I would have the glow of health and purity in them, my nose that I would always be able to smell, my lips that I would always praise God, my ears that I could hear the still small voice and heed its warning. Then she washed my back and shoulders and asked for blessings upon them, my chest that I would not catch colds in it or anything of any evil nature come to it, also washed my stomach and then my legs, and lastly my feet, so I could run and not

tory Library.

⁵⁵Marie Jensen, *Diary*, November 12, 1902.

be weary and be able to go into the Lord's house and perform duties and praise the Lord all my days.⁵⁶

The women "sealed" the washings with a prayer and then "Grandma Eardley" followed the washing by anointing Griffiths's body with oil and repeating almost the same prayers and in the same order. Again, the procedure was "sealed" with a prayer and the women left with assurances that she would get well. Indeed, Griffiths felt great confidence in their work, noting: "When sister Eardley was set apart of this work, she was promised by one of the presi[?]e[?]dents of our church who set her apart, that never a case would be lost, where she had helped to wash & anoint them, but they would get well."⁵⁷

By ritually invoking the power of God upon Griffiths, this ceremony had beneficial psychological and spiritual effects for the young woman. During the blessings, she was overwhelmed with the power of the work, reflecting: "When the dear soul [Eardley] had knelt at my feet and was rubbing them with her hands, I couldn't help but let a few tears fall, to think of those dear sisters being so humble, that they could even wash peoples feet. It reminded me also of the savior and the lesson taught by him." In their actions, the women were recapitulating the words and actions of Jesus Christ as he demonstrated his authority through humble service to others. In these difficult times of transition, women sought to tap into the spiritual power of their—according to Mormon theology—elder brother, Jesus Christ. This blessing brought great peace to Griffiths who felt a positive sense of calm and peace as a result: "It has been about an hour since those sisters left, and I feel well, my head has stopped aching, and I am thrilled beyond words. I have something to live for and my body is clean."⁵⁸ In birth and healing rituals, women provided spiritual and physical comfort. Indeed, it is hard to see where the physical ends and the spiritual begins.

DEATH RITUALS

Although Anna Griffiths's record is unusual in its detail, it was

⁵⁶Anna F. Griffiths, *Diaries 1920–41*, March 20, 1926, LDS Church History Library. Newell, "Gifts of the Spirit: Women's Share," 130, notes that Relief Society women seem to have formulated standardized forms of prayers given during washings and anointings although these forms were not required by Church leaders.

⁵⁷Griffiths, *Diary*, March 20, 1926.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

not an unusual experience for women suffering from various ailments; its logical connection to the experience of childbirth is obvious. Washing was also associated with the deathbed—the second major transition between immortality and mortality. Just as Relief Society members cared for women and their babies, so they prepared the bodies of their sisters in the faith for death and burial, both processes that required cleanliness and appropriate clothing. Susannah Fowler, who had helped in washing and anointing Ettie Norton for childbirth, also attended the birth and had the responsibility to “wash and dress the baby.”⁵⁹ Similarly, the main death rituals in which women participated were attending the dying, making the burial clothes, washing and dressing the corpse, laying out the body, and attending and sitting up at night with the body until the actual funeral.

Throughout public and private women’s literature, the two functions—assistance at childbed and deathbed—are linked. A history of the Gunlock Ward in southern Utah in the late nineteenth century makes this common link: “During these early years, the Relief Society sisters, especially in the small isolated wards, were called upon to assist in caring for the sick and needy, acting as midwives, and preparing bodies for burial. They went day or night, through storm or sunshine, heat or cold, to help in these activities.”⁶⁰ On a more personal level, Julina L. Smith paid tribute to one of her plural sister wives: “Though you [the deceased plural wife] have left us sorrowing I know your five precious ones, and Aunt Edna’s [another plural wife] four, and my one who preceded you, are rejoicing in this reunion. As we stood by each other to assist and welcome the new-born, so we stood side by side when the angel of death visited our home.”⁶¹ Smith associated these exits and entrances as parallel inversions of each other and also, significantly, as places where women “stood by each other,” forging strong, deep bonds with each other.

Similar to experiences in blessing and assisting in births, those who participated in preparing the bodies saw it as a sacred duty and were often overwhelmed at their first experience with it. Added to the fears of mismanaging a sacred moment were fears associated with handling the dead. In the mid-1860s, St. George teenager Martha

⁵⁹Fowler, Diary, June 25, 1900.

⁶⁰Dewsnup and Larson, *Relief Society Memoirs*, 120.

⁶¹Julina L. Smith, “A Loving Tribute to Sarah Ellen Richards Smith,” *Relief Society Magazine* 2, no. 5 (May 1915): 216.

Cragun Cox was sent by her mother to sit up with a sick infant in a neighbor's home during an epidemic. In this case, the baby died when Martha Cragun Cox was on watch. "When it was all over, the mother asked me if I would not perform the next sad rights [sic]," meaning to wash, dress, and lay out the baby's corpse. "I could not refuse as there was no other way," Martha recorded, adding even after the recollection of years: "I did the best I could but suffered under the ordeal and when I had washed the little fellow and wrapped him in a piece of and an [sic] old white window curtain I laid him out on the flat top of an old chest."⁶² While death in Mormon theology was seen as a gateway to another, better realm, its physical reality was unsettling and uncomfortable. This young woman was unsure, frightened, and even repelled the first time that she performed these burial preparations.

It was unusual for such a young woman to take part in the death rituals, and no doubt it was primarily the epidemic that pressed Cox into service. Most women who performed the rituals were midwives or active members of the Relief Society who had sometimes been formally appointed to the roles. Olive Woolley Kimball, president of her local Arizona Relief Society, often sat up with the sick and dying and made countless burial outfits, but it was not until October 1901, over six months after she became ward Relief Society president, that she assisted in the washing and dressing of a corpse. Though Kimball typically wrote in a straightforward manner and with little overt emotion or commentary, this event had a strong impact on her: "Before breakfast I went and took the clothes to the Bishops and helped dress their boy first time in my life that I ever helped dress a corpse but we got it done

⁶²Cox, *Autobiography*, 112. A slightly later account from the 1940s shows that even older, experienced women felt ambivalent about these duties, although they also saw them as bonding experiences. Pauline A. Mathis, South Ward Relief Society, St. George Stake, wrote: "In this kind of service, trying to relieve the sick and bereaved, facing the serious side of life so much of the time, we girls grew very close. I learned to appreciate the keen sense of humor, both Eola and Fern had. We always went to the mortuary to dress the female and children members, and one morning while dressing a sister, in the dead silence a chicken squaked [sic] outside the mortuary window, Eola flinched and said, 'Oh, what's that?' She was so frightened, but after we decided what it was we enjoyed a good laugh." Dewsnup and Larson, *Relief Society Memoirs*, 188.

alright and then I went home got my breakfast washed and dressed baby, got myself ready and then went to the funeral.”⁶³ No doubt because of the inevitable intensity of the experience, most women who formally or informally managed these death experiences were, like Kimball, middle-aged or older and of calm, steady temperament.⁶⁴

On the surface, these death rituals were simply practical. One of the reasons that women sat up with the dying was the possibility of an unexpected rallying or of an unusual happening at the moment of death. Similarly, sitting up with the body had the practical purposes of watching for signs of life. People feared being buried alive, a fear legitimated by enough instances (and even more reports) about a “dead” loved one who revived.⁶⁵ Another practical consideration was the condition of the corpse. In warm weather, watchers might change bottles of ice packed around the body to slow its decay and to protect it from insects and rodents.⁶⁶

There were also psychological aspects to the rituals—people

⁶³Olive Woolley Kimball, Journals, 1884–1903, October 18, 1901, LDS Church History Library.

⁶⁴For instance, Patty Sessions who was a midwife, also washed and dressed corpses for burial. Smart, *Mormon Midwife*, 22. She was in her late thirties when she joined the Church. Midwife Susannah Fowler, Diary, March 25, 1900, recorded in her late thirties that she helped to prepare the dead for burial. The short, straightforward entries in the diaries of all three women—Kimball, Sessions, and Fowler—demonstrate that other women looked to them as experts and leaders in times of trouble because of their pragmatic, level-headed personalities.

⁶⁵An obituary notes that Elizabeth Timpson was apparently dead about fifteen minutes, reviving only when the family was about to begin preparing her body for burial. Sadly, Timpson did die shortly afterward. “In Memoriam: Elizabeth Timpson,” *Woman’s Exponent* 27, nos. 18 & 19 (February 15 & March 1, 1899): 110–11. Harriet O. Lee recorded an extended description of her experiences in the spirit world when she appeared to be dead for forty-eight hours. She awoke to find a coffin in her room and funeral preparations underway. She lived for many decades after this incident. Harriet O. Lee, “A Remarkable Vision,” [recorded 1901], LDS Church History Library. One family delayed their mother’s burial for four days because she feared being buried alive. M. E. Bond, “Extracts: Letters to Mrs. H. M. Whitney,” *Woman’s Exponent* 11, no. 19 (March 1883): 151.

⁶⁶Juliaetta Bateman Jensen, *Little Gold Pieces*, 143, describes how her

wanted their loved ones to look their best for their burial. An endowed person would be clothed in white temple apparel. Even those who were not endowed were customarily clothed in white.⁶⁷ As reported in the spring 1901 edition of the *Woman's Exponent*, a publication associated with the Relief Society, "Elder Arnold Giaque" of the Sixth Ward in Salt Lake City praised the Relief Society sisters for "the magnitude of the work which had been done by the sisters. When the angel of death enters into a family, they are ministers of peace to cheer and comfort the bereaved, to clothe our dear ones who are called home in suitable robes. 'I have received of their kindness at a time of this kind. I appreciate it more than I can express.'"⁶⁸ As a vital part of this work of comforting, women strove to make the dead attractive to their relatives. In accounts of burials, the bereaved record vivid memories of the last glimpses of their loved ones in their coffins. These descriptions functioned as memory snapshots for the mourners. Jean Brown Foncesbeck in a 1917 article recorded such a moment about her grandmother: "I shall never forget how beautiful she looked on her burial day. She was robed all in the purest white with a shimmering, gauzy veil like a halo about her head." Relatives noticed how lovely and calm she looked. A friend exclaimed: "How beautiful she is! She looks like a bride."⁶⁹ Foncesbeck leaves the reader with the image of her grandmother as a bride a second time to her husband, whom she would soon meet in the higher realm.⁷⁰ Such descriptions obviously comforted family members.

father obtained ice to delay the deterioration of bodies. Relief Society women in southern Utah also used ice. Dewsnap and Larson, *Relief Society Memoirs*, 188.

⁶⁷E. Gordon Erickson, "A Sociological Study of Funeral Customs and Legal Burial Requirements in Utah" (M.S. thesis, University of Utah, 1939), 19–20.

⁶⁸"Sixth Ward Anniversary," *Woman's Exponent* 29, nos. 22 & 23 (April 1 & May 1, 1901): 100.

⁶⁹Jean Brown Foncesbeck, "Grandmother Middleton," *Young Woman's Journal* 28, no. 3 (1917): 142. Similarly, in an obituary of Louisa Larsen, her husband noted: "She was beautiful even in death and she was laid away neatly in a nice white coffin, and the children will hold this in dear remembrance." Lauritz Larsen, "Obituary," *Woman's Exponent* 21, no. 11 (December 1, 1892): 88.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

But such details were not only comforting observances of the community's conventions but also, apparently, set in motion vital religious consequences. Writings of this period, though not articulated as formal doctrine, seem to communicate the expectation that the deceased would enter the afterlife garbed in his or her burial apparel and that omitting customary rituals would impact the deceased spirit's reception in the afterlife. In an article in the *Young Woman's Journal*, Mary B. Crandal of Springville, Utah, described a dream about her youngest daughter, Eliza.⁷¹ In the mother's dream, Eliza, robed in beautiful white garments and holding a bouquet of flowers, ascended toward heaven as Crandal begged God to spare her daughter. Crandal interpreted the dream as predicting her daughter's death and, in fact, teenaged Eliza died one year later. Crandal averred that the dream had been a true prophecy since the Relief Society women, without any suggestions from Crandal, made Eliza a white cashmere burial dress that looked exactly like the clothing in which Eliza had been attired in Crandal's dream.

Another motivation for providing proper cleanliness, clothing, and laying out of the deceased was the possibility that the deceased might, when the caregivers themselves died, reproach them with neglect. At a meeting of the Granite Stake Relief Society in Salt Lake City in 1904, members were encouraged to give all dead meticulous care to avoid such postmortal rebukes: "The topics touched on were in relation to our traveling sister missionaries, the special missionary work and the Temple work, also that the dead should be laid away in a proper manner, that the poor as well as the rich should be clothed in the best material, that they should have no cause to reproach us when we meet them, that the sick, the poor and needy are tenderly cared for."⁷² Such explanations are perhaps best explained as ways to enforce appropriate observances of conventions regarding the dead, though they also suggest anxiety about a loved one's transition to the spirit world if he or she was not properly clothed.

This anxiety resurfaces repeatedly in women's writings of this era. Rhoda Smith Allred of Lewiston, Utah, expressed the dual anxiety about handling the dead and the proper preparation of the dead

⁷¹Mary B. Crandal, "A Dream and Its Fulfillment," *Young Woman's Journal* 7, no. 3 (1895): 127-31.

⁷²"R. S. Reports: Granite Stake," *Woman's Exponent* 32, no. 10 (March 1904): 77.

when she and a neighbor attended a dying neighbor, then prepared her body for burial. "My neighbor lady and myself fixed her for burial and put her in the casket and carried it out of doors. When we got to the door two of the handles came off. There wasn't a man brave enough to take the lid off so I did it myself and straightened her in place and put the lid back on."⁷³ Allred's characterization of the action as "brave" confesses her own fear but also her powerful motivation to open the coffin and be sure that the corpse presented a seemingly appearance.

Fears about the proper arrangement of the dead even manifested in the dreaming unconscious of one woman. In 1887, Elizabeth Ramsay Fraser was deeply disturbed by a dream in which Ruth Hunt Fraser's body (apparently her deceased sister wife) would be moved to another burial spot. Some of her anxiety stemmed from the dedicatory blessing that had been given at the grave ten years earlier. This blessing promised that "the body of Ruth Hunt Fraser was to rest there untill the morning of the resurrection unless removed by friends and I dreamed that I had not one friend in Richfield."⁷⁴ Because of this warning, in her dream she feared that the blessing's promise would be invalidated and would not let anyone touch the grave until she got Ruth Hunt Fraser's father to accompany her to the graveyard.

An even keener anxiety surfaced when Fraser dreamed that they opened the coffin and viewed Ruth Hunt Fraser's body: "I smoothed my hand over her forehead and hair and found that she was warm and had no vail nor apron on I run to town and got a vail and apron from Martha [Horne?] and put them on her and We had such a time to get the coffin lid to stay on after we had taken it off and when it was shoved off to eather side I could see the Robe and under clothing all drawn up and seen her bare feet and legs and I fixed them several times befor I could get them to lay all right but I replaced [with?] new what was lacking and left her laying in peace and in good order[.]"⁷⁵ Fraser's report of her dream expresses no fear of the corpse, only concern about the seemliness of the body's appearance. Fraser's anxiety

⁷³Rhoda Luann B. Smith Allred, Oral History, 7, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

⁷⁴Fraser, Diary, August 23, 1887.

⁷⁵Fraser, Diary, August 23, 1887. Mary Harding's husband, George, shielded her from a similar but real-life situation when her brother's body

focuses on the general disarray of Ruth Hunt Fraser's burial clothing and the two missing items. She struggled to cover the bared legs and finally successfully arranged the apparel, leaving the corpse lying "in peace and in good order."

It was critical in Fraser's dream that Ruth Hunt Fraser be attired properly in a temple veil and apron, perhaps signifying her post-mortal status as someone who had received the temple ordinances essential to salvation.⁷⁶ As David Buerger shows, early Latter-day Saints believed that the pattern of temple garments was revealed from heaven and that authoritative heavenly messengers such as Moroni, Peter, James, John, and Jesus wore such garments when they visited Joseph Smith and other early Church leaders.⁷⁷ Specific items of clothing associated with the temple endowment were important in ceremonies during which faithful members were given names, signs, and tokens that would allow them to reach the highest state of exaltation in the afterlife. This apparel thus was part of a constellation of knowledge and behaviors that helped propel the initiate to the highest rank of eternal life—and Church leaders directed that only those who had gone through the proper temple ceremonies should be buried in them.⁷⁸ Fraser was determined that her loved one would be dressed for the afterlife in raiment that symbolized her high spiritual state.

In the end, this coalescence of hope and fear also demonstrates Fraser's potential agency as she properly dressed this particular corpse. Hope is seen in the promise of the resurrection as symbolized

was moved to another burial place. Still, Harding suffered anxiety even after she found out about it—her feelings had not been totally spared. Nonetheless, she was assured that the body was indeed that of her brother. George "with the help of other men attended to this without my knowledge of the time it was to be accomplished for he thought it would grieve me too much if I knew they were doing it. After the body had been reburied he told me about it. I asked him if he were positive he had taken up the right body. When he told me the foot bones had been separated from the leg bones I knew he had made no mistake and was comforted." Mary Jones Harding, "Diary and Reminiscence," 99, LDS Church History Library.

⁷⁶Erickson, "A Sociological Study of Funeral Customs," 19–20, confirms that temple-endowed Mormons were customarily buried in their temple clothes.

⁷⁷Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness*, 142–45, 150.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 39, 78, 82–83, 130.

by the still preserved corpse.⁷⁹ More importantly, at these times of psychological and emotional confusion—even danger—signified by the disarranged clothes that could be straightened only by great effort, Elizabeth Ramsay Fraser and Rhoda Smith Allred stepped in. Allred literally smoothed down the clothes, as did Fraser in her dream. In the process, both women clarified and smoothed this transitional moment—Allred literally and Fraser in her dream world. They were the last humans to touch and ready these cherished bodies as the spirits made their transition to the spirit world; they also readied the bodies for their resurrection in glory. It seems likely that Fraser’s belief community shared the seriousness, which manifested itself in this dream, of observing the proper rites connected to death for all corpses. These women held the power to ease these transitions for the dying and the grieving by assuring that the proper rituals had been observed.

The power of women to ease the transition of death is the theme of a 1917 article in the *Relief Society Magazine* by Annie D. S. Palmer. Titled “A Morning Reverie,” it recounts a detailed dream. Palmer had awakened, thinking about her outstanding local Relief Society president, Tena Jensen, and the many faithful Relief Society members who

⁷⁹Oliver Boardman Huntington explicates the idea that apparently miraculously preserved bodies symbolized the promise of the final resurrection. Huntington was the brother of Zina D. H. Young, who was a plural wife in turn of both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young and Relief Society general president after Eliza R. Snow’s death. He was present in Nauvoo when the city cemetery was moved to the outskirts of the settlement. One of the corpses that needed to be moved was Zina Baker Huntington, his mother, who had died over three years before in 1839, apparently of malaria, when Oliver was almost sixteen. In an article for the *Young Woman’s Journal*, Oliver, many years later, describes that his mother’s body, when examined, was miraculously preserved, “full and plump as ever in life,” though the coffin itself was in a state of decay. Huntington took the body’s remarkable preservation as a promise of the final resurrection of the faithful: “[It?] was a strange sight to see [our?] mother again in perfect form [and?] feature, giving us a foretaste [of?] the resurrection of the dead, as [spoken?] of by Isaiah and John [the?] Revelator.” The family made sure that the body was laid away again in proper order, even putting between the feet two toes that had broken off during the investigation of the corpse before reluctantly and reverently reburying her. O[liver] B[oardman] Huntington, “Resurrection of My Mother,” *Young Woman’s Journal* 5, no. 7 (1894): 347.

were serving their communities. Thinking thus, Palmer dreams (perhaps a waking dream or directed imagination—the description is unclear): “I dreamed, and in my mind hurried: and, with almost the quickness of thought, I was carried some seventy-five or a hundred years into the sunlight of future joy.”⁸⁰ Here, Palmer sees Jensen engaged in the same kind of duties that she had as an earthly Relief Society president and follows her on her rounds. Everywhere the president is greeted with great happiness:

As we drew near to another mansion, a grim, gaunt figure approached whom I knew as Death. From the splendid house came two sisters hurrying down the path and laughing as they ran. They, too, clasped Sister Jensen in fond embrace.

“We feared yon apparition once,” said the younger woman, “and well we might. Do you remember the night he carried sister away? I shudder even now as I think of the cruel poverty, and the agonizing pain. But you comforted sister for the lonely journey and cared for me when she was gone. He has no power here; we laugh at his weakness. ‘Oh grave, where is thy victory; oh death, where is thy sting?’”⁸¹

Further cementing the idea that these duties were primordially and essentially women’s, Tena Jensen assures Palmer: “There is so much joy in it! I often wonder why we ever thought it hard when on the earth. I am going now to meet a sweet old sister who is dreading to die. The dear old soul has suffered so much and is so weary of life—oh, she will be so glad when it is over!”⁸² In short, a Relief Society worker in the spirit world prepares to welcome a woman who is, presumably, being ushered out of mortality by Relief Society sisters on that side of the veil. As this story tells, Relief Society women help those transitioning from one phase of life to the next, abolish the fear of death and, in essence, conquer death. Death, who is significantly gendered as male, can only lurk around the edges of a female-centered celebration.⁸³ As the two sisters recollect, he is the central, menacing actor for those making the transition to the spirit world without the powerful help of Relief Society women. In their presence, he is banished to

⁸⁰Annie D. S. Palmer, “A Morning Reverie,” *Relief Society Magazine* 4, no. 3 (March 1917): 138.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 138–39.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 139.

⁸³Death is gendered as male throughout Mormon women’s literature of this period. See Hannah T. King, “Autumn, 1883,” *Woman’s Exponent* 12,

the periphery—becoming only a brief moment in an increasingly happy, divine, and eternal life.

Palmer's dream-story cements the strong connection between the physical work of cleaning and clothing bodies and the seemingly more psychological and spiritual work of comforting the dying and their loved ones. Death rituals transcended comforting the living and respecting the dead, significant though those roles were. In their work, Relief Society women attempted to ease fears and anxieties surrounding birth and death. That they continued in these roles from generation to generation shows that these struggles were never fully won. When Relief Society women were successful, however, it was because they and their community believed that these rituals assisted loved ones in moving from mortality to the postmortal world and, ultimately, to the final resurrection.

CONCLUSION: AT THE GATES OF MORTALITY

In the lived religion of Mormonism during the 1870s to the 1920s, women stood at the gates of mortality, usually being the first human beings to ease the passage of spirit children into earthly life and welcome them. At the same time, they were the last humans to ease the passage of the, ideally, matured human back into the spirit realm. Both times of transition were made easier by the comfort and rituals offered by women in the Relief Society—comfort and rituals that had deep religious meaning for participants and recipients. In this work, Relief Society women lived and even helped to create some theological realities of their faith.

Mirroring the life and work of their divine Heavenly Mother, women, assisted by other women, became the literal gates into mortality as they provided spirit children with the bodies that served as passports into earthly existence. In assisting these women in child-birth and, more generally, their community members in death, Relief Society women mirrored some of the most prominent characteristics

no. 9 (October 1, 1883): 65; Millicent, "Nellie's Child," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 24 (May 15, 1880): 185; Mrs. Deborah Billings, "Lines in Memory of Sister M. J. Tanner. . .," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 20 (March 15, 1890): 157. This gendering of death as male was also common in popular nineteenth-century American literature. See, for instance, Habington, "Dead Leaves," in *The Language of Flowers*, edited by Henrietta Dumont (Philadelphia: H. C. Peck & Theo. Bliss, 1852), 218.

of the Mother in Heaven. They lingered at the gates of mortality, welcoming and bidding farewell to the faithful at two of the more critical junctures of the plan of salvation—those times when the earthly and the divine briefly connected—so that those living within the plan could successfully advance to the next phase of existence.

WALKING ON WATER: NINETEENTH-CENTURY PROPHETS AND A LEGEND OF RELIGIOUS IMPOSTURE

Stanley J. Thayne

“THE BIBLICAL STATEMENT FROM JOHN 4:44, ‘A prophet hath no honor in his own country’, is certainly true of Joseph Smith.”¹ So spoke Charles J. Decker, town historian of Afton, New York, during a lecture sponsored by the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley in 1977, nearly 150 years after Smith had left the area. Like most of the prophet-leaders who rose out of the millennial fervor of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Joseph Smith faced frequent persecution and was regarded by most of the general population as a fraud.² Naturally, in reaction to his prophetic claims, a wealth of folklore developed, depicting the Prophet as a religious impostor who would stage miraculous displays of divine power to prove his calling.

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¹Charles J. Decker, “Legends and Local Stories about Joseph Smith, the Mormon,” paper delivered at the Church History Seminar sponsored by the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley, November 19, 1977, photocopy in my possession, courtesy of Decker.

²See J. Taylor Hollist, “Walking-on-Water Stories and Other Susquehanna River Folk Tales about Joseph Smith,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 6,

One of the most popular forms of such lore is a walking-on-water legend, which states that Smith staged a public attempt to walk on water to prove the validity of his calling as a prophet.³ A typical version of this story was published in the *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Chenango County, N.Y. for 1869–70*:

To convince the unbelievers that he did possess supernatural powers he [Joseph Smith] announced that he would walk upon the water. The performance was to take place in the evening, and to the astonishment of unbelievers he did walk upon the water where it was known to be several feet deep, sinking only a few inches below the surface. This proving to be a success, a second trial was announced which bid fair to be as successful as the first, but when he had proceeded some distance into the river he suddenly went down, greatly to the disgust of himself and proselytes, but to the great amusement of the unbelievers. It appeared on examination that plank were laid in the river a few inches below the surface, and some wicked boys had removed a plank which

no. 1 (Spring 2005): 52. I express sincere appreciation to both Charles Decker and Taylor Hollist for their valuable assistance and eager sharing of documents and research in this project.

³In the language of the academic discipline of folklore, the water-walking story is best classified as a *legend*, which is defined as “a monoepisodic, localized, and historicized traditional narrative told as believable in a conversational mode” which is “typically . . . said to [have occurred] in a specific place and time with named characters.” Timothy R. Tangherlini, “Legend,” in *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Jan Harold Brunvand (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 437. This definition contrasts to that of a *tale*, which is not told as true or as believed by the teller. This definition of “legend” fits the walking-on-water story nicely: It is always identified with a certain location, and the performer is usually an identified individual. Treating the story as legend can account for many of the puzzling aspects of the accounts, such as how it has been attached to different individuals and different places, and how it has become so widespread. A hallmark of legends is oral transmission. Generally, if a legend or tale begins to be printed and published, “folklorists tend to exclude [it] as spurious or contaminated.” Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1968), 2. Printed and published accounts of the water-walking legend, however, read more like transcriptions of an oral narrative than like literature. They therefore act as a representation of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century folklore—an oral legend of the past fossilized in print.

caused the prophet to go down like any other mortal.⁴

Over time several variations on this theme developed and the legend became associated with nearly every location in which Smith had lived and even some places he never had.

The walking-on-water legend probably had its genesis before Smith's involvement in the Susquehanna area, however. In fact, it may have been hatched before Smith was even born. It had previously been associated with Jemima Wilkinson, another prophet from the New York Finger Lakes district who pre-dates Joseph Smith by about fifty years.⁵ I have also found that the legend moved beyond the Susquehanna area and followed Smith to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, where, reportedly, even Abraham Lincoln attended a demonstration. One oral account even describes a demonstration by Smith on the Great Salt Lake in Utah—a particular feat since Smith was martyred before the Saints migrated to the Great Salt Lake Valley.⁶

Not only did the legends follow Smith beyond the Susquehanna Valley, but the story was subsequently attached to other religious leaders. John Wroe, a Yorkshire prophet and successor of Joanna Southcott and John Turner, had at least two versions of the legend leveled against him: one that he attempted to walk on the water, and the other that he attempted to part the waters of the River Aire and walk across dryshod.⁷ A version of the legend very similar to the Jemima Wilkinson stories was told about James Fisher, a late nineteenth-century religious leader, dubbed the "Nunawading Messiah," who led a mille-

⁴*Gazetteer and Business Directory of Chenango County, N.Y. for 1869–70* (Syracuse: Hamilton Child, 1869), 82–83.

⁵Fawn M. Brodie mentions both tales in *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*, 2d ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995 printing), 83–85. Several variants associated with both figures appear on the website SaintsWithoutHalos.com.

⁶When the legend-teller was informed that this was not possible since Smith was martyred before the Saints migrated to Utah, the man replied, "That can't be true because that story has been in my family so long it has to be true." Doyle Riley, "Mormon Folklore: The Dock," Wilson, North Carolina, July 1980, collected by Larry A. Pond, 4.9.1.3.2, William A. Wilson Folklore Archives, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

⁷Edward Green, *Prophet John Wroe: Virgins, Scandals and Visions* (Gloucestershire, England: Sutton Publishing, 2005), 56.

narian sect in Australia.⁸ The tale has also been attached to a “Protestant revivalist charlatan in Virginia” in 1895, a quasi-historical Phoenician woman named Beth-Marion, and a “Hindu Holy man” named Rao in Bombay in 1966.⁹ Doubtless the tale has been connected to others.¹⁰

Folklorist Timothy R. Tangherlini explains that “legend is characteristically a highly localized narrative. . . . Because legend narrators wish their accounts to be believable, they are further inclined to situate the account in the immediate geographical area.” He further points out that “a legend told in one area about events linked to a specific place can be found in other areas closely linked to entirely different places.” This characteristic of legend explains, as I will demonstrate, why the walking-on-water tale seemed to follow Joseph Smith, why the purported locations for Jemima Wilkinson’s demonstration were so widespread, and how similar versions were attached to individuals who lived on distant parts of the globe. “Just as place names and topographic features of a story are varied to fit the tradition participants’ physical environment,” Tangherlini continues, “so, too, are proper names and historical referents varied to fit the tradition participants’ historical environment.” Thus, “identical stories with different named individuals appear in disparate traditions,” explaining the identification of the legend with both Jemima Wilkinson and Joseph Smith, as well as John Wroe, James Fisher, and others.¹¹ The formation and distribution of these stories seems to have been the natural

⁸Guy Featherstone, “The Nunawading Messiah: James Fisher and Popular Millenarianism in Nineteenth-Century Melbourne,” *Journal of Religious History* 26, no. 1 (February 2002): 58.

⁹The Beth-Marion legend is from the *Urantia Book*, a 2,097-page book of scripture, veiled in authorial mystery, that emerged from Chicago between 1924 and its publication date in 1955; 11th printing (Chicago: Urantia Foundation, 1993). The “Protestant revivalist” version is from a Mormon missionary’s journal. Barre Toelken, “Traditional Water Narratives in Utah,” *Western Folklore* 50, no. 2 (April 1991): 198. The 1966 “Hindu holy man” version is often retold in popular Christian writings, generally citing John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), 239; and *Tabletalk*, April 1990, 10.

¹⁰See, for example, “Priest Drowns in Bid to Walk on Water,” *Indian Skeptic* 7, no. 12 (April 1995): 30.

¹¹Tangherlini, “Legend,” 437.

public folk reaction to prophetic claims, religious innovation, millenarian fervor, and sectarian proselytizing.

MIRACLE AND IMPOSTURE

The water-walking legend has, of course, a biblical precedent, portraying these prophet-figures as imitators attempting to perform—or at least appearing to perform—a miracle similar to Jesus's miracle recorded in the New Testament (Matt. 14:25–31; Luke 6:47–51; John 6:16–21).¹² The ability to walk on water is a symbol of divine or supernatural power in several traditions, including Greek mythology and some sects of Buddhism.¹³ In the Christian tradition, Jesus's miracle is a sign of His divine status as the Messiah—hence the declaration of the apostles who witnessed the miracle: “Of a truth thou art the Son of God” (Matt. 14:33).

Though some nineteenth-century German rationalists had begun to doubt the reality of this miracle—ascribing Jesus's feat to walking on a platform floating just below the water's surface, superb wa-

¹²Job 9:8 ascribes to God, among other powers, the ability to “tread . . . upon the waves of the sea.”

¹³In Greek mythology, Poseidon gave Orion the power to walk on water. Hesiod, *The Astronomy Frag* 4; and Apollodrus, *The Library* 1.25; quoted in *Encyclopedia: Greek Gods, Spirits, Monsters*, http://www.theoi.com/Encyc_O.html (accessed June 7, 2006). Ancient Buddhist legends from India tell of the Mahasiddha, enlightened Buddhist disciples who, through meditative practices known as *sadhanas*, can achieve spiritual powers that will allow them, among other things, to walk on water. Keith Dowman, trans., *Masters of Enchantment: The Lives and Legends of the Mahasiddhas* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 1989), 14–15. Also nineteenth-century India reportedly had a “charm to walk on the water” with instructions to “wet a cloth in the blood of the snake which has a mouth at both ends; hold it in your mouth, and walk on the water.” W. H. D. Rouse, “Folklore Items from Northern India Notes and Queries, Vol. IV,” *Folklore* 6, no. 4 (December 1895): 411. In the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Khuba movement of northern Thailand, certain Buddhist priests, known as *ton bun*, could possess supernatural powers such as walking on water. Kwaenchewan Buadaeng, “Khuba Movements and the Karen in Northern Thailand: Negotiating Space and Identity,” Paper presented at the international workshop “Cultural Diversity and Conservation in the Making of Mainland Southeast Asia and Southwestern China: Regional Dynamics in the Past and Present,” Luang Prabang, Lao P.D.R., February 14–21, 2002.

ter-treading abilities, or simply a misinterpretation of the text¹⁴—most nineteenth-century Christians seemed to accept the reality of the miracle as a proof by which, as Adam Clarke's popular nineteenth-century New Testament commentary put it, "Jesus showed forth his Godhead."¹⁵ Peter's attempt to walk on the water, though it ultimately failed, was viewed as a demonstration of the power of faith—but, as Clarke emphasized, Peter did so only at the Lord's command. As for the rest of us, "we must take care never to put Christ's power to the proof for the gratification of a vain curiosity; or even for the strengthening of our faith, when the *ordinary* means for doing

¹⁴Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2001), 40, summarizes the positions of several authors on this point: Karl Friedrich Bahrdt (1741–92) suggested that "Jesus walked toward the disciples over the surface of a great floating raft; while they, not being able to see the raft, had to suppose a miracle." Bahrdt also points out that "when Peter tried to walk on the water he failed miserably." Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus (b. 1761) believes, Schweitzer states, that "walking on the water was a vision of the disciples" and offers a more rationalistic possibility: "Jesus walked along the shore, and in the mist was taken for a ghost by the alarmed and excited occupants of the boat. When Jesus called to them, Peter threw himself in the water, and was drawn to the shore by Jesus just after he was sinking." Quoted in *ibid.*, 50. Christoph Friedrich von Ammon "explains the walking on the sea by claiming for Jesus an acquaintance with 'the art of treading water.'" Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, 98. As David Friedrich Strauss points out, Paulus argued that "the text does not state that Jesus walked on the water; and that the miracle is nothing but a philological mistake." He suggested that the Greek phrase [from John 6:19], translated as "walking on the sea" (King James Version) is analogous with the Septuagint's phrase, in Exodus 14:2, translated as "encamp by the sea" (but literally reading "encamp *on* the sea"), and "signifies to walk, as the other to encamp, over the sea, that is, on the elevated sea-shore." David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 500. Such attempts try to provide historicity for the account but at the same time give a rationalistic explanation, sometimes by attributing deception to Jesus, but usually by suggesting the disciples' misperception.

¹⁵Adam Clarke, ed., *The New Testament of our Lord . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes* (New York: G. Lane & C.B. Tippet, 1848), 160.

that are within our reach.”¹⁶

Other preachers of the time also seemed to make the distinction between Peter’s unique situation—having been commanded by the Lord, in His presence—and that of any other individual. Charles Grandison Finney expressed his explicit belief in the literalness of Christ’s miracle but also implied that such a feat is not possible for mere mortals. “If you were to believe that you can walk on the water,” states Finney, “and should leap overboard, would your belief save you? Dying sinner, all those refuges of lies will surely deceive and destroy you.”¹⁷ In the typical nineteenth-century Christian view, the New Testament narrative demonstrated a one-time miracle possible only to Jesus and, at his command, to His apostle, who even then ultimately failed.

Thus, any modern attempt was seen as evidence of imposture. Stories that portrayed self-proclaimed prophets attempting such a feat served first of all to highlight what the teller saw as the audacity, if not blasphemy, of such individuals, and their failure and subsequent exposure reassured those who chose not to accept the authority of modern prophets. Painting a prophet as an impostor precluded any obligation to follow, and relieved one of the difficulties discipleship might otherwise incur. The tumult of claims from many religious groups, each vying for converts, created an ambiguity and anxiety that made such weeding out desirable. “The problem of distinguishing true from false prophets was a perennial one,” states historian Susan Juster. “Millenarians knew that one of the signs of the coming apocalypse as foretold in Revelation was a proliferation of false prophets, and they were acutely aware of the possibilities for fraud and deception.”¹⁸ It thus became necessary to separate the wheat from the tares—the true prophets from the impostors. Walking-on-water narratives served as an oral litmus test in this process of elim-

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 160. Clarke is somewhat critical of Peter’s doubt: “Lord, if it be thou,” and his request for a sign, “bid me come unto thee on the water.” “A weak faith,” Clarke comments, “is always wishing for signs and miracles.”

¹⁷Charles G. Finney, “On Refuges of Lies,” *The Oberlin Evangelist*, September 29, 1858, Gospel Truth Ministries website, http://www.gospeltruth.net/1858OE/580929_refuges_of_lies.htm (accessed June 12, 2006).

¹⁸Susan Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 18.

ination—a test the protagonist always lost.

This “imposture thesis” was nothing new.¹⁹ Part of the heritage of the Protestant Reformation, as historian Peter Harrison has illustrated, was the view that “the age of miracles had long ended.”²⁰ In the typical Protestant view, miracle was solely a historical phenomenon that had served the valid function of “establishing the divine mission of Christ” and hence “providing evidential support for the propositional claims of genuine Christianity.” Thus “the suggestion that miracles were still being performed counted as evidence only of human credulity” and “ecclesiastical imposture.”²¹ Such skepticism only increased during the eighteenth century as Enlightenment thinkers and natural philosophers were prone to view any contemporary claims of miracles as deception devised for political or economic gain. “The ‘imposture thesis,’” explains historian Leigh Eric Schmidt, “posited two classes of people, priests and dupes, those in the know about these tricks and those who were hoodwinked by them.”²² Thus, as historian J. Spencer Fluhman points out, nineteenth-century skeptics “found ready-made conceptual tools when they plunged headlong into this long-standing cultural conversation about religious le-

¹⁹Frank E. Manuel, *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), 47–53, quoted in J. Spencer Fluhman, “Anti-Mormonism and the Question of Religious Authenticity in Antebellum America,” *Journal of Religion and Society* 7 (2005): 1.

²⁰Peter Harrison, “Miracles, Early Modern Science, and Rational Religion,” *Church History* 75, no. 3 (September 2006): 500. Harrison summarizes John Calvin’s argument that “miracles had been wrought by Christ and the apostles to confirm the truth of the gospel, and that this had been their sole function. Having accomplished this purpose in the first centuries of the Christian era, miracles were no longer necessary.” There were, of course, exceptions to this generalized view, as the performance of miracle and folk-magic were considered by many Christians during the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries to be legitimate practices—a belief which experienced a significant surge in parts of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century New England. See also D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998).

²¹Harrison, “Miracles, Early Modern Science, and Rational Religion,” 500–501.

²²Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 85.

gitimacy.”²³ The water-walking narrative was just another form of the old urge to expose corruption—a formula used previously to expose corrupt priests that was now applied to nineteenth-century millenarian enthusiasts and prophets.

JEMIMA WILKINSON

Though it is impossible to know where, when, and with whom the legend began, the North American genre of water-walking legend seems to have first been connected with Jemima Wilkinson (1752–1819). Wilkinson was born in Cumberland, Rhode Island, on November 29, 1752. Youthful experiences with the Quaker Society of Friends and the New Lights “conditioned her,” according to biographer Herbert Wisbey, “to accept the premise that God communicated His will directly to the human spirit.”²⁴ In 1776, at age twenty-three, Wilkinson became ill with a “fatal Fever”—presumably “Columbus fever,” or “the Typhus.”²⁵ During the illness she experienced spells of unconsciousness and a vision in which she was instructed by “too [sic] Archangels.” She and her followers believed that during this illness she died and was resurrected with a new spirit, which she called “the Publick Universal Friend.” This title was generally interpreted as her belief that she was a second Christ—that the spirit of Christ was reincarnated into her body after the death she experienced during her illness.²⁶

Naturally, this claim was received with great skepticism by most. That skepticism soon produced stories to illustrate what most believed to be imposture; hence the water-walking legend. Wisbey has found that the legend “is always told in reference to a specific location, which varies, of course, with the storyteller.” He has heard the legend attached to at least ten different locations where the performance is supposed to have taken place: “Sneech Pond and other bodies of water in Cumberland and Smithfield, Worden Pond in South Kingston, Yawgoog Pond in Exeter, the Taunton River near Swansea, the Housatonic River near New Milford, the Schuylkill near Philadel-

²³J. Spencer Fluhman, “Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in America” (Phd. diss. University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2006), 28.

²⁴Herbert A. Wisbey, *Pioneer Prophetess: Jemima Wilkinson, the Publick Universal Friend* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964), 8.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 11.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 12–14.

phia, and various sites on Seneca and Keuka Lakes.” He also points out that “the story has several variants, although not as many as locations.”²⁷

In most versions, Wilkinson does not actually walk out on the water but stops on the shore for a discourse. An 1821 memoir, which is missing many of the elements that become standard in the later versions, can possibly be viewed as the seed from which the later legends sprang. The memoir states that skeptics demanded a sign of Wilkinson, stating that “Jesus Christ walked on the water, and if she was charged with a divine mission from Heaven, it was expected she could do the same.” Some of her believers also wanted the reassurance of such a display of power. So she “appointed a time at which she would meet her friends on the margin of the Taunton river, in the town of Swanzey, and convince them of the reality of what she had taught them to believe, by walking on the water.” However, after beginning with an “eloquent and fervent prayer” and a discourse on faith, “she told them that if they had faith to believe that she could perform the work of the Lord, they might rest satisfied, . . . and as to those who did not believe, they are ‘an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given.’”²⁸

In this version, told by those sympathetic with Wilkinson’s movement, those who demand the sign come out as the dupes while Wilkinson emerges as a woman of surprising sagacity. However, over time the legend began to be told in a somewhat lighter fashion, presenting Wilkinson as cunning, if not deceptive. Wisbey points out that the authenticity of the legend “was strongly denied by Jemima’s close friends and followers, who always insisted that the Universal Friend never claimed that her call to preach gave her any divine powers.” He further suggests that, if the tale has “any basis in fact, it might be from a sermon in which she attempted to quiet the critics who challenged her assumption of the role of a preacher by demanding that she show some sign of her divinity. Taking her text from Matthew 12:39, she discoursed in great detail on the statement, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign,’ concluding with the last of her text,

²⁷Ibid., 174.

²⁸David Hudson, *Memoir of Jemima Wilkinson*, 2d. ed. (1944; rpt., New York: AMS Press, 1972), 184–86.

‘and there shall be no sign given to it.’”²⁹

Wilkinson seems to have denied the veracity of the tales. In 1869 a writer reported, “As to the miracles which it is pretended she performed it is not surprising that she stoutly denied them in her life time.” A man named Hudson recalls Wilkinson saying that “the servants of the devil have accused me of all manner of wickedness. . . . They have accused me of attempting to walk upon the water . . . which thing [is] false.”³⁰

Despite her refutations, the legend continued to be told and re-told. It was published in 1829 in the *Western Palladium* as part of an article under the heading “Jemima Wilkinson”:

This petticoated mis-leader of a band of lunatics from Rhode Island purchased a large and beautiful farm near Seneca Lake, N.Y. which is now in possession of one of her disciples called Aunt Esther: it is not far from Penn-Yan, (or Pennsylvania and Yankee town.). . . A late traveller relates one of Jemima’s miracles, which is quite as convincing as those of the prince bishop Bohmlee. She announced her intention of walking across Seneca Lake, and alighting from her carriage, walked to the water on the white handkerchiefs strewed in the road by her followers; she stopped ankle deep into the water, and then turning to the multitude, inquired whether they had the faith that she could not; on receiving an affirmative answer she returned to her carriage, declaring that as they believed in [her] power, it was unnecessary to display it.³¹

This version of the legend became the most commonly told. It was reprinted in similar form by Thomas Hamilton in his travel narrative *Men and Manners in America*, first published in 1833. Hamilton quotes a “Northern Tourist” and locates the account on Seneca Lake “near Rapelyeas ferry.” He adds to the already printed account the presence of a platform—still standing in 1830—which “Jemima constructed to

²⁹Wisbey, *Pioneer Prophetess*, 175–76.

³⁰Israel Wilkinson, *Memoirs of the Wilkinson Family in America* (Jacksonville, Ill.: Davis & Penniman, 1869).

³¹“Jemima Wilkinson,” *Western Palladium* (New Lisbon, Ohio) 30, no. 10 (September 5, 1829); as cited and transcribed by Dale R. Broadhurst at Uncle Dale’s Old Mormon News Articles, <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/OH/mischoio.htm#090529> (accessed December 6, 2009). Broadhurst suggests that “elements of Wilkinson’s offer to walk on the water seem to have later become mixed up with the story of Joseph Smith, jr.”

try the faith of her followers,” and on which she stood to announce “her intention of walking across the lake on the water.” Hamilton adds that, according to Wilkinson, if her followers did not have faith, she would not be able to perform the miracle.³² The rest of the account reads basically like the *Western Palladium* account.

Wisbey relates other versions. In one, after Wilkinson asks the gathered crowd if they have faith, they demand proof and she rebukes them, replying, “Without thy faith I cannot do it.” Another—which Wisbey describes as having a “synthetic flavor”—depicts Wilkinson “actually walking on the water supported by a platform built just below the surface. Of course, someone removed several boards, and she tumbled in[,] to the discomfort of the faithful and the delight of the skeptics.”³³ This last version is very similar to the legends that would soon be told about the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic another version of the legend surfaced in Yorkshire, England, attached to nineteenth-century millenarian prophet John Wroe (1782–1863).

JOHN WROE

Later dubbed “Prophet Wroe,” John Wroe was born in Bowling, Yorkshire, in the parish of Bradford. According to his autobiography, he had a difficult childhood, “much despised and abused” by his father, dominated by his brother, and suffering near deafness after being thrown into an ice-covered pond.³⁴ He struggled at school and also struggled to get along with his father as he worked in the family’s worsted wool manufacturing business in early adulthood. Eventually he set up his own wool-combing business but continued to struggle financially, eventually going bankrupt.³⁵ He was attacked by fever in 1819 and afterward experienced a series of visionary trances in which he received several revelations. About this same

³²Thomas Hamilton, *Men and Manners in America* (1833; rpt., New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 361. This volume, recounting Hamilton’s 1830 travels, was published simultaneously in a volume printed by William Blackwood, Edinburgh, and T. Cadell, London.

³³Wisbey, *Pioneer Prophetess*, 175.

³⁴John Wroe, *The Life and Journal of John Wroe . . .* (Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire, England: E. Lees, 1900), 1.

³⁵S. Baring-Gould, *Yorkshire Oddities: Incidents and Strange Events* (1874; rpt., Otley, West Yorkshire: Smith Settle, 1987), 19–20.

time he had begun attending Southcottian meetings. In 1821, shortly after the death of George Turner, the leader of a congregation of Southcottian saints, Wroe gained leadership of a large segment of the congregation. He eventually applied the name “Christian Israelites” to his congregation—a sect that still exists in parts of England and Australia—and enjoyed considerable success, albeit at the price of great persecution.³⁶

In 1824 Wroe announced that he would be publicly baptized in the River Aire, near Apperly Bridge, accompanied by singers. Pamphlets announcing the event were distributed throughout the district.³⁷ The event is listed in nearly every local history that mentions the Prophet and is the event with which the water-walking legend is almost always associated, when it is mentioned at all.³⁸ *The Life and Journal of John Wroe*, which began as an autobiography and was completed by his followers, describes the baptism but, of course, has no mention of any attempt to walk on or part the river. But a local newspaper, the *Leeds Times*, picked up on the event and, embellishing it no doubt, printed it in 1857.³⁹ This account was repeated, “virtually word for word”⁴⁰ by William Cudworth in his appropriately titled *Round about Bradford: A Series of Sketches (Descriptive and Semi-Historical)*, and again, in slightly different fashion, in his *Histories of Bolton and Bowling* (1891).

Biographer Edward Green points out that “there are two versions of the supposed nature of the miracle that the crowd was expecting Wroe to perform that day. The first and more widely held view was that Wroe would divide the waters of the Aire and walk across the dry riverbed, as Moses had done with the Red Sea. Oth-

³⁶Featherstone, “The Nunawading Messiah,” 46–47.

³⁷The text of the pamphlet is available at “Folklore,” Christian Israelite Church History, <http://www.cichurchhistory.com/folk.html> (accessed June 2, 2002). The event was announced to occur on Sunday, February 24, 1824, near Idle Thorpe.

³⁸Not every local history that provides a sketch of the event mentions the water-walking part of the baptism, which suggests that it was probably a legend that grew up over time.

³⁹Green, *Prophet John Wroe*, 56.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 56.

ers were expecting him to walk on the rapidly flowing waters.”⁴¹ Cudworth’s first printing of the legend seems to contain elements of both variants, as his description could be interpreted to suggest walking on the water at first but ends with the suggestion that Wroe tried to divide the waters: “The credentials of John’s seership were to be manifest by God enabling him to walk across water dryshod. . . . The river Aire persisted in flowing in its usual course, refusing to be divided, and, when the poor prophet launched his frail and trembling frame upon its waters, they proved as treacherous as ever, and John got a ducking.”⁴² When Cudworth printed the legend again, the walking *on* water variant had won out: “In the year 1824, he gave out that he intended to demonstrate his superhuman powers by walking on the water without wetting his clothes, and at Apperly Bridge actually assembled his ‘disciples’ for the purpose of seeing the accomplishment of the miracle. The crowd being ready, John stalked about gravely, and then, turning round to his expectant followers, announced ‘that his time had not yet come,’ and that the miracle would be postponed until a future day, due notice of which would be given.”⁴³ This version was again slightly modified and attached to a disciple of Wroe in “an old edition of the *Penny Post*,” but this time the location of the event was downgraded from the River Aire to a “canal which flowed past his house.”⁴⁴

The legend has persisted in the Bradford area. *This Is Bradford News* recently published “The Man Who Said He Could Walk on Water” in its “Past Times” section.⁴⁵ Variations of the legend still float around on internet websites. *Yorksvieiw*, “a website dedicated to the

⁴¹Ibid., 56.

⁴²William Cudworth, *Round about Bradford: A Series of Sketches (Descriptive and Semi-Historical)* (Bradford, England: Thomas Brear, 1876), 389.

⁴³William Cudworth, *Histories of Bolton and Bowling* (Bradford, England: Thomas Brear and Co., 1891), 844.

⁴⁴Green, *Prophet John Wroe*, 57–58.

⁴⁵Jim Appleby, “The Man Who Said He Could Walk on Water,” *This Is Bradford News*, August 18, 2003; *Telegraph and Argus*, “Bradford District,” http://www.thisisbradford.co.uk/bradford_district/bradford/news/jim141.html (accessed April 20, 2006).

County of Yorkshire,” recounts the legend in “Apperley Bridge.”⁴⁶ The legend even surfaced on the website of “Apperley Dell UK Computers.”⁴⁷

Wroe’s Christian Israelite Church still exists today, and members have established a website “as a platform from which to seek to set-right many of the myths and fallacies in the folklore which numerous historians seem to present in the literature as fact!”⁴⁸ In the “Folklore” section, the Church identifies the legend as “personal bias and gossip” produced by newspaper journalists to increase sales. They offer a rebuttal to the legend, pointing out that though “this event was advertised through fliers and stated that John Wroe was to be baptized in the River Aire,” local newspapers sensationalized the event with the dubious assertion “that John Wroe was going to part the waters, as Moses did, or walk on water as Jesus did.” The Church pointed out this discrepancy to *Yorksview*, which had published both the pamphlet and the water-walking/-parting legend on its website; *Yorksview* removed the pamphlet.⁴⁹ Thus, the legend persists despite the efforts of the faithful to defend the reputation of their religion’s founder.

JAMES FISHER

John Wroe spent his last years proselytizing in western Australia, which is where another variant of the water-walking legend surfaced, this time attached to a sort of successor of Wroe known as the “Nunawading Messiah.” James Cowley Morgan Fisher (1832–1913), who would become a millenarian prophet and lead a congregation of faithful followers, was born in Bristol, England. He shortly after moved with his parents to Adelaide, Australia, where he spent his early childhood. He ran away at age fourteen to work for several years as a sailor and then in the goldfields. After achieving some success in the goldfields, he purchased land in the parish of Nunawading. His

⁴⁶“Apperley Bridge,” *Yorksview*, <http://www.yorksview.co.uk/> (accessed April 20, 2006).

⁴⁷Apperley Dell UK Computers, Laptops, Notebooks and Handhelds website, <http://www.online-uk-pc-shops.co.uk/Apperley.htm> (accessed April 20, 2006).

⁴⁸“Christian Israelite Church History,” <http://www.cichurchhistory.com/Default.htm> (accessed April 20, 2006).

⁴⁹“Folklore,” at the Christian Israelite Church History website, <http://www.cichurchhistory.com/folk.html> (accessed April 20, 2006).

first wife died in 1855, followed by their two children shortly thereafter. In 1858 he married Emma Pickis Kefford, who introduced him to the Church of the Firstborn, which had been established by her mother.⁵⁰

By 1860–61, Fisher had gained leadership of the Church of the Firstborn.⁵¹ Legend has grown up around his rise to leadership. One defected member recounted that Fisher claimed to have received a revelation that Shiloh—the Messiah who had purportedly been conceived by the English (virgin) prophet Joanna Southcott (1750–1814), who unfortunately had died childless—had actually been born but was taken up into heaven. “Fisher was told that the spirit of the son, that was Messiah, had descended from heaven upon some cabbages in his garden. He was to eat the cabbages and then he would have the spirit.”⁵² Whatever his claims were based on, Fisher had become the leader of a band of faithful followers, eventually known as “the Fisherites, some fifty men and women of eccentric habit and cast-iron virtue . . . [who] gathered in Nunawading from miles around.”⁵³

Legendary descriptions of Fisher developed over time. Local historian Ivan Southall wrote, “James Cowley Morgan Fisher was a magnificent specimen over six feet tall, with the features of a Greek god, the shoulders of a giant, and a flowing mane of white hair. His beard, too, was long and white, and his eyes were pools of power.”⁵⁴ For a man of such legendary proportions, it was natural that the water-walking legend would also be attached to him.

The variant attached to Fisher is more in line with the Jemima Wilkinson legend, suggesting that he was testing the faith of his fol-

⁵⁰Featherstone, “Nunawading Messiah,” 42–44; I have relied heavily on Featherstone for biographical information on Fisher. See also Niall Brennan, *A History of Nunawading* (Melbourne, Australia: Hawethorne Press, 1972), 81.

⁵¹Brennan, *A History of Nunawading*, 81, gives the year 1860, whereas Featherstone, “The Nunawading Messiah,” 44, gives 1861.

⁵²Featherstone, “The Nunawading Messiah,” 44.

⁵³Ivan Southall, *A Tale of Box Hill: Day of the Forest* (Melbourne, Australia: Box Hill City Council, 1957), 64. Southall further describes the gathering: “They walked from the city west, from the railway terminus at Hawthorn, and from the mountains in the east to worship God in the open air and to pay homage to their Messiah.”

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 64.

lowers. The legend seems to have first been preserved in the “Notes” of Dudley Boyle, “grandson of David Boyle who had fallen out with Fisher sometime before the events of 1871.”⁵⁵ It has been treated as legend by most secondary authors. Southall writes:

Legend said that Fisher took his people to Blackburn Lake to pray while he worked a miracle. “Do you believe?” he boomed from the shore. “Have you the faith that I can walk upon the water?”

“Halleluiah,” they cried. “We believe.”

Fisher raised his eyes to heaven. “Then I have no need to do it.”⁵⁶

Other authors have located the event on artificial Blackburn Lake, constructed in 1889. The elements are the same in the few accounts I have gathered—Fisher’s booming voice, the gathered crowd expressing its faith, and his response that their faith precluded any need for him to perform the miracle.

Most authors who have recounted the legend treat it as just that—a story “circulated in order to make Fisher appear ridiculous and a figure of fun.”⁵⁷ Guy Featherstone points out that the account was “detailed by hostile sources,” and Southall states, “Such is the stuff of legend because, strangely, the hearts of many seek to discredit the hearts of good men.”⁵⁸

JOSEPH SMITH

If the water-walking legend began with Jemima Wilkinson, it greatly expanded after becoming associated with Joseph Smith (1805–1844).⁵⁹ Perhaps due to the greater success of Smith’s movement, and thus greater opposition and persecution, the legend became more prolific, varied, and geographically distributed than in the case of Wilkinson or any subsequent figure.

A typical instinct of legend purveyors is to provide validating formulas, such as the names of individuals involved, a specific loca-

⁵⁵Featherstone, “Nunawading Messiah,” 58.

⁵⁶Southall, *A Tale of Box Hill*, 64–65.

⁵⁷Featherstone, “Nunawading Messiah,” 58.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 58; Southall, *A Tale of Box Hill*, 65.

⁵⁹The best biographical treatment of Smith is Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005). See also Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945).

tion and time, and the names of those who witnessed the event. Though location was present in several Wilkinson tales, these validating formulas became much more prevalent and specific in Smith's legends. Other prominent Mormon leaders were implicated, such as Brigham Young and Sidney Rigdon, and specific witnesses were identified, often a distant relative of the teller or one of the teller's friends. Some of the accounts are actually reminiscent affidavits of men who claimed, over fifty years after the "fact," to have witnessed the event as children. The earliest printed accounts do not even identify the water-walker as Smith but as some "Mormon preacher."⁶⁰ Eventually, however, the legend morphed to center upon Smith, a focus it maintained thereafter.

Though the legend has been passed on primarily through oral transmission, printed versions of the legend appeared in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century newspaper articles, county histories, and anti-Mormon pamphlets. Legends by definition are anonymous, and it is therefore impossible to determine when and where the legend originated or even when it was first put into print. The earliest printed accounts uncovered to date locate the incident in New York, making it plausible that the legend—insofar as it is associated with Smith—originated in New York and then spread from there.⁶¹ But several affidavits make Kirtland, Ohio, another likely site of provenance. Mormon historian Mark L. Staker suggested that the legend possibly grew out of events that occurred in Kirtland before Smith even arrived in the area. (See the discussion in the *Ohio* section below.) Wherever and however the legend began, accounts quickly spread in pamphlets, newspapers, and by word of mouth, making their way across the country and the Atlantic. Versions of the legend emerged for nearly every place Smith ever lived, and even for some places where he never set foot.

New York

Joseph Smith moved to South Bainbridge (now Afton) in Chen-

⁶⁰"Tragical Event," *Evening and Morning Star* 2, no. 19 (April 1834): 151.

⁶¹Stanley J. Thayne, "A Mormon Missionary's Response to the Joseph Smith Water-walking Folklore of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania," *Susquehanna County Historical Society Journal of Genealogy & Local History* 16, no. 1 (May 2005): 3–8; and Hollist, "Walking-on-Water Stories."

ango County, New York, in 1825 to work for Josiah Stowell, who was searching for a lost Spanish silver mine.⁶² Smith had various responsibilities, including attempts at locating these mines and hidden treasures through the use of a seer stone. This locality is one of the areas the walking-on-water incident is supposed to have taken place.⁶³

The earliest extant printed version of the water-walking legend is an 1834 article titled “Tragical Event” printed in the Philadelphia *Saturday Courier*, April 19, 1834. Complicating the issue of provenance, the “tragical story” was “given by the editor of the *Independent Messenger*,” which suggests it may have been printed previously. Latter-day Saints of the time took notice of the *Saturday Courier* article, and it was reproduced and refuted in two LDS periodicals, the *Evening and the Morning Star* and *Messenger and Advocate*. Interestingly, this account does not identify the protagonist of the tale as Joseph Smith but as a “Mormon preacher.” Also, the account states that the preacher “perished” when he fell in, further precluding the possibility of its association with Smith specifically. The story is based upon “the authority of a gentleman from the western part of the state of New York.” A hint of skepticism—or at least caution—is voiced by the editor, who states, “We shall expect to see it authenticated by the western papers if it be true.”

The location of this account is identified as a “town where the delusion had made numerous converts”—presumably Colesville, New York, or nearby.⁶⁴ The site of the exhibition is a pond that “was extremely shallow; a thin sheet of water covering a common swamp mire” that was “found to be of a consistency nearly strong enough, ex-

⁶²Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 48–52; and Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 4:3.

⁶³A folklore student at Brigham Young University collected a variant from Etna, New York, in 1946, that placed the legend in Palmyra, New York, which is where Smith resided before (and periodically after) his move to South Bainbridge, where the New York legend seems to have originated. Mr. Carberry, “Historical Legend,” Etna, New York, 1946, collected by Laura M. Creer, 4.19.1.3.1, William A. Wilson Folklore Archives, Perry Special Collections.

⁶⁴The first LDS branch was organized in Colesville, New York, in 1830. Colesville contained significantly more members of the Church than surrounding areas, due primarily to the Joseph Knight family. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 114.

cept within a small central space, to sustain the weight of a man.”⁶⁵ It was at this small central space in the middle that the “line of plank” was laid and “a few wicked Lamanites” sawed through it, causing the Mormon preacher to fall in and drown, a “victim to his imposture.”⁶⁶

By 1869 the legend appeared in local New York literature. In that year, the *Business Directory of Chenango County, N.Y.* printed the version of the legend quoted in the introduction above that seems to have become a standard for subsequent publications and probably set the tone for much of the later oral tradition. The legend was printed again in 1880 in nearly identical form in a *History of Chenango and Madison Counties*.⁶⁷ In these accounts, the site has water known to be several feet deep. Joseph was successful on his first attempt; but when he attempted a repeat performance, his structure had been rigged by some “wicked boys [who] had removed a plank” and he fell in.

Sometime just prior to 1880, journalist Frederic G. Mather ventured into the Susquehanna region and interviewed locals to gather information on Mormonism. In 1880 he published two articles on Mormonism, one in the *Binghamton Daily Republican*, and one in *Lippincott's Magazine*.⁶⁸ In both he mentions the water-walking legend. He gathered his information, as he states, “from very credible eye witnesses, who are now among the aged, and honored, and trusted of their townships” and who “were among the youth at the time of Joe Smith's earlier adventures.” In his *Binghamton Daily Republican* ar-

⁶⁵Perch or Pickerel Pond, near Colesville, New York, is one location that locals rumor to be the site of the water-walking incident. Hollist, “Walking on Water Stories,” 40.

⁶⁶“Tragical Event,” *Evening and Morning Star* 2, no. 19 (April 1834): 151. “Lamanite” is a Book of Mormon ethnic term used facetiously in this account to represent a trickster.

⁶⁷*Gazetteer and Business Directory of Chenango County, N.Y. for 1869–70*, 82–83; James Smith, *History of Chenango and Madison Counties, New York with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Some of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Syracuse, N.Y.: D. Mason & Co., 1880), 154. A comparison of the two accounts shows that of the 148 words Smith used in his account, 113 were the exact words used in the 1869 *Gazetteer*, with the same sentence constructions. The variants are mostly synonyms, and an extra sentence at the end.

⁶⁸Frederic G. Mather, “The Early Mormons: Joe Smith Operates at Susquehanna,” *Binghamton Daily Republican*, July 29, 1880; Mather, “Early Days of Mormonism,” *Lippincott's Magazine* 26 (August 1880): 198–211.

ticle, he identifies George Collington and Mrs. Harriet Marsh as citizens of the Harpursville area who told him of the legend. (Names and places are, of course, credibility-building details often used in the legend process.) Mather presumes, based on the accusations of others, that Collington may have been the one guilty of “taking up the Prophet’s bridge and letting him souse in the river.”⁶⁹

George Collington was a major purveyor of the legend in the New York area and is also the source of an account that was printed in 1885 in H. P. Smith’s *History of Broome County*. Smith recounts the usual description of the story, as told to him by Collington, and then quips, “If Mr. Collington knows who did the deed, he declines to tell; but he smiles.”⁷⁰

In 1899 Lu B. Cake published *Peepstone Joe and the Peck Manuscript*, in which he quotes the walking-on-water legend from the 1869 *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Chenango County, N.Y.* Cake embellishes the tale with his own humorous flourishes, personifying the river as “one of God’s honest creations” which “is rippling and chuckling with laughter over Joe’s spectacular ducking, . . . [as] are the people, unto this day.”⁷¹ Cake alluded to the legend once again in his 1912 *Susquehanna Stories*, by stating that “down the river [from Afton] is Mormon Ducking Stool; where Joe pretended to walk on water and was ducked.”⁷²

An account of the legend was printed in 1900 in the *Oneonta Herald*, which identifies the local Cornwall boys as those who discovered the planks and who sawed one of them. In this account, after Smith falls into the water he tells his watchers that “their faith had weakened and that his alone was not sufficient to support him on the water.”⁷³

Continued recitals of the legend into the twentieth century may be an indication of hostile feelings that locals still harbored toward

⁶⁹Mather, “The Early Mormons.”

⁷⁰H. P. Smith, *History of Broome County* (Syracuse, N.Y.: D. Mason, 1885), 332.

⁷¹Lu B. Cake, *Peepstone Joe and the Peck Manuscript* (New York: L. B. Cake, 1899), 12–14; see also Hollist, “Walking-on-Water Stories,” 35.

⁷²Lu. B. Cake, *Susquehanna Stories with Illustrations, Traditions and Prodigies* (Afton, N.Y.: Enterprise Press, 1912), n.p.; reproduced by Austin Fife, FMC III 131, Fife Folklore Archives.

⁷³Harvey Baker, “The Early Days of Mormonism,” *Oneonta Herald*, January 18, 1900. The weakened-faith excuse is a common element with

Smith and Mormonism. A 1901 article in the *Afton Enterprise* identifies Mormonism as “an evil that threatens the nation and home,” citing the water-walking legend to illustrate that, though Mormonism had gained strength and success, it was perceived by the general population as “very ludicrous.”⁷⁴

In 1929, Afton, New York, resident Bert Lord applied to the Division of Archives and History of the State Education Department to have a sign erected to identify the location of Joseph Smith’s water-walking attempt, calling the legend a “fact” that had been “handed down by tradition.” The request was granted; and “between the highway and the river near the Broome & Chenango County lines,” a sign was placed which read, “Joseph Smith, Founder of Mormonism, Endeavored in 1827 to Walk on Water Nearby. The Venture Was Not a Success.”⁷⁵ The placement of this historical marker—though it did not last long after some “Mormon Elders going thru” saw it⁷⁶—indicates the strong oral tradition of transmitting the water-walking legend that continued well into the twentieth century and even to the present in the Susquehanna region. Local historian John Goodell refers to the water-walking legend as the “most often repeated” of a “body of legends and memories” about Joseph Smith.⁷⁷

The legend continued to appear in New York newspapers, often

variants in several versions of the legend. The Cornwalls were a prominent family in South Bainbridge (now Afton), New York. They owned a large farm on the east side of the Susquehanna River. Small Cornell Creek flows through this property. Hollist, “Walking on Water Stories,” 40, 51 note 21.

⁷⁴“An Evil That Threatens the Nation and Home,” *Afton Enterprise*, November 7, 1901.

⁷⁵“Afton Gets Plaques for Points As Named,” *Norwich Sun*, December 14, 1932; Hollist, “Walking-on-Water Stories,” 39; and Decker, “Legends and Local Stories about Joseph Smith,” 4.

⁷⁶Hollist’s article is the most comprehensive research on this sign and its removal. A similar sign near Cornell Creek incorrectly identified the spot as the place where “Joseph Smith in 1827 Dug for and Claimed to Find Some of the Plates of the Mormon Bible one-half Mile up This Creek.” This sign is currently housed in the Afton Historical Society Museum.

⁷⁷John Goodell, “Joseph Smith in Susquehanna Country: Mormon Beginnings,” in *Notes and Sketches from along the Susquehanna: Essays in Celebration of American Methodism’s Bicentennial* (Rutland, Vt.: Academy Books, 1984), 44.

reproducing the 1869 version and sometimes associating the legend with other areas, such as Ohio.⁷⁸ It became the subject of local lectures and publications and was even reproduced as a historical sketch, titled "'Wicked' Boys Foil a Prophet," on a card advertising the Seymour Funeral Home, in Oxford, New York.⁷⁹

In April 1946, folklorists Austin and Alta Fife, traveling in the Susquehanna Valley of New York and Pennsylvania, collected oral accounts of the legend in the New York towns of Afton, Nineveh, and Bainbridge, and in Susquehanna, Pennsylvania. Austin Fife concluded: "It is apparent that almost everyone who has lived for any time in the communities between Bainbridge and Susquehanna is familiar with the story of Joseph Smith's attempt to walk on the water, and of the practical joke that was played on him. Evidently there are several different locations on the Susquehanna River where this is supposed to have taken place, and the grandparents of more than one local inhabitant are said to be among the boys who removed the plank."⁸⁰

Many New York locals treat the legend as a given fact, locating the event, by tradition, at "Perch or Pickerel Pond" in Colesville, "on the Susquehanna River near the residence of the faithful Joe Knight," or "on the Cornwell [sic] farm on the East Side south of Afton."⁸¹ But some locals are skeptical. For example, John Goodell stated that "the

⁷⁸"Afton's Part Interesting in Founding Mormonism," *Binghamton Sun*, February 19, 1933; "Balked Effort to Walk on Water," *New York Times*, March 24, 1904.

⁷⁹In 1957, emeritus Columbia professor Carlton J. H. Hayes spoke at Afton's centennial celebration and mentioned the water-walking legend. Hayes, *Story of Afton: A New York Town on the Susquehanna* (Deposit, N.Y.: Valley Offset, 1961), 16. Decker's speech, "Legends and Local Stories," followed in 1977. I obtained a photocopy of the Seymour Funeral Home advertisement courtesy of Decker. The advertisement, printed on a card, does not have a date, but the wording is very similar to the 1869 *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Chenango County*.

⁸⁰Austin E. Fife, Afton, New York, April 14, 1946, FMC I 167, Fife Folklore Archives, Merrill Library, Utah State University, Logan.

⁸¹Nan Hill, "The Beginning of Mormonism," quoted in Hollist, "Walking-on-Water Stories," 50; Decker, "Legends and Local Stories," 5; based on Harvey Baker, "The Early Days of Mormonism," *Oneonta Herald*, January 18, 1900. Hollist states that, according to Decker, "Hill's paper was probably written in the 1920s."

story has too much of the character of Yankee humor in which the know-it-all outsider is done in by the supposedly inferior locals.”⁸²

England

The legend made its way across the Atlantic to Preston, England, by 1838. The *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* states: “Immediately after Elders Kimball and Hyde left Preston, on or about the 15th of April [1838], one [Richard] Livesey (a Methodist priest, who had previously spent some years in America . . .) came out with a pamphlet, made up of forged letters, apostate lies, and ‘walk on the water’ stories, he found in old American papers, which he picked up while in America.”⁸³ Livesey appears to have printed several pamphlets on Mormonism, the best-known of which is *An Exposure of Mormonism*, which is often credited as the first anti-Mormon tract in England.⁸⁴ Though this pamphlet does not mention the walking-on-water legend, another undated pamphlet, titled *More Trickery of Mormonism*, which appears to have come from the same period, does and is therefore most likely one of the Livesey pamphlets referred to in *History of the Church*. This version is unique because it is one of the few that does not mention the use of planks but rather states that Smith placed “2 ropes under the water drawn from bank to bank” and that “some wag cut the ropes during the pretended miracle.” In this account the protagonist did not drown but it does suggest

⁸²Goodell, “Joseph Smith in Susquehanna Country,” 45, quoted in Hollist, “Walking-on-Water Stories,” 51.

⁸³Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev. (6 vols., 1902–12, Vol. 7, 1932; rpt., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978 printing), 3:22. This source adds that Livesey “said he heard nothing about the Saints in America” and “stopped the circulation of his own pamphlet by stating to a public congregation, that he accidentally found the contents of his pamphlet in old papers in his trunk.”

⁸⁴Richard Livesey, *An Exposure to Mormonism, Being a Statement of Facts Relating to the Self-Styled “Latter Day Saints,” and the Origin of the Book of Mormon* (Preston, England: J. Livesey, 1838). “A Lover of Truth” printed another pamphlet about the same time: *Remarks on the Doctrines, Practices, &c. of the Latter-Day Saints: Setting Forth the Marvellous Things Connected with This New Light from America* (Preston, England), but this writer is very likely Richard Livesey.

that “had it not been for the timely interposition of a party who had stationed themselves favourably for the purpose, Joe Smith would at this moment been in the land of spirits.”⁸⁵ Livesey does not identify a specific location other than a river.

Ohio

It is very possible that the water-walking legend actually originated in Ohio. Early missionary success in Kirtland, Ohio—including the conversion of Campbellite preacher Sidney Rigdon and most of his congregation—led Joseph Smith to headquarter the Church there from February 1831 to 1838. In October 1830, missionaries en route to Missouri had preached the new gospel in Ohio and had a significant number of converts; but they continued on to their mission field, leaving the infant congregations to themselves without any real leadership or guidance. When Smith arrived in February of 1831, he found many of the Saints in the area exhibiting ecstatic religious enthusiasm typical of frontier revivalism—barking, jumping up on stumps, preaching in unknown tongues, and making other displays of spiritual excitement. George A. Smith, who was not present until later, refers sarcastically to an ecstatic convert called “Black Pete” who plunged headlong into a river while trying to grasp an invisible parchment in the air.⁸⁶ Some have suggested that, if the walking-on-water legend contained any seed of truth, it may have been in association with such events along with rivers as customary baptismal sites.⁸⁷ The connection, however, seems tangential at best. Like those centered in

⁸⁵*More Trickery of Mormonism Brought to Light: Giving the Full Particulars of the Schemes and Practices of Joseph Smith, the Angelite* (N.p.: Ambler, printer, [ca. 1838], Lancashire Record Office), 4; this publication information is from Chad J. Flake and Larry Draper, *A Mormon Bibliography, 1830–1930* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2004), 4.

⁸⁶George A. Smith, November 15, 1864, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool and London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 11:4. For a careful analysis of Black Pete’s unexpectedly significant role in this earliest Kirtland period, see Mark Lyman Staker, *“Hearken, O Ye People”: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith’s Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2010).

⁸⁷Mark L. Staker, email to Stanley Thayne, November 6, 2006; see also Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 59–62.

New York, the versions associated with Ohio eventually found their way into print as newspaper articles, affidavits in anti-Mormon pamphlets, and in journals and autobiographies.

In 1888 an anti-Mormon publication titled *Naked Truths about Mormonism* printed six affidavits that mention the walking-on-water legend and identify the location as Ohio.⁸⁸ These affidavits were apparently collected by the publisher, Arthur B. Deming, whose father, Minor Deming, was sheriff in Hancock County, Illinois, which included the Mormon city of Nauvoo. Minor Deming was considered a friend of the Nauvoo Mormons and went to great lengths—even at the peril of his own life—to protect the Saints from mobocracy. In *Naked Truths*, Arthur Deming related memories of his childhood in Nauvoo with particular attention to the assassinations of Joseph and Hyrum Smith and the events leading up to them. He stated, “From childhood I have been friendly to [the Mormon people].” However, though he planned to “continue that friendship,” his attitude toward Mormonism changed after childhood and a current objective in his life was to thoroughly convince “all honest Mormons . . . that they have been most wickedly and cruelly deceived.”⁸⁹

It is not clear exactly when Deming’s attitude changed, but it may have been after he moderated a debate in Kirtland in 1884 between Clark Braden, a Disciple of Christ minister, and Edmund L. Kelley, presiding bishop of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. “Mr. Braden, the opponent of Mormonism,” Deming states, “was unable to satisfactorily prove some points he claimed, and he engaged a party to collect evidence to sustain his position. The party did not accomplish much and I undertook the business.” In 1888, he wrote: “I began in March, 1884, and have been engaged in it much of the time since.”⁹⁰

Four of Deming’s six affidavits that include the walking-on-water legend are second-hand, but two of the affidavits are by men who claim to have been eyewitnesses. Each of these affidavits is signed by witnesses (including but not limited to Deming), and several are

⁸⁸Arthur B. Deming, “Introduction,” *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1, no. 1 (January 1888):1/1.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

sworn to and subscribed before a justice of the peace.⁹¹ Textual evidence, such as the consistent spelling of “Jo Smith,” seems to suggest that one scribe (probably Deming) recorded each affidavit as it was told to him. This was either done in the presence of a justice of the peace and witnesses, or the affidavits were recorded previously and then were sworn to before the witnesses.

One affidavit, by a person “whose name is withheld for prudential reasons,” mentions the walking-on-water legend only cursorily: “Jo Smith claimed he could do anything Jesus Christ did. He refused to walk on the water in the day-time because Jesus walked in the night.” In another account, Joseph Harvey and Samuel Rogers swear that they heard a Mormon preacher “say in his sermon that . . . he saw him [Smith] walk on the water in Kirtland.” This version is unique since it attributes the tale’s distribution to a Mormon source who used the legend as a proof of Mormonism.⁹² A third affidavit, William Rockafellow’s, attributes the legend’s distribution to an apostate Mormon elder, Leonard Rich, who left the LDS Church after being instructed by Smith, as he claims, to kill Grandison Newell. Rockafellow “resided in Kirtland after the Mormons had mostly left.” His affidavit records various episodes that Rich told him after leaving the Church.⁹³

F. J. Goldsmith recounts a version of the legend told him by John A. Eddy. Eddy claimed that Goldsmith’s father and Grandison Newell hired him to watch the Mormons every night after Smith announced

⁹¹The justices of the peace are from Painesville and Willoughby, Ohio. One account (not sworn before a justice) is from Russell, Geauga County, Ohio.

⁹²Deming quotes this affidavit and positions it next to a reprinted *Times and Seasons* article that refers to the “walk on the water” story as an “old fabrication.” Deming, “The Mormons Both Affirm and Deny that Joseph Smith Walked on the Water: Editorial,” *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1, no. 1 (January 1888): 1/1. He juxtaposes these two statements to illustrate Mormon inconsistency—that “the Mormons both affirm and deny that Joseph Smith walked on the water.” However, only the *Times and Seasons* article represents an actual recorded Mormon statement, since the affidavit is two men remembering what they heard an unidentified Mormon “preacher” say some fifty years earlier.

⁹³William Rockafellow, “Statement,” *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1, no. 2 (April 1882): 2/6–7.

that “at such a time he would walk on the water.” According to Goldsmith, Eddy continued: “The night before the walking was to be, Jo Smith, [Sidney] Rigdon, Brigham Young, and William Aldrich worked half the night and drove forked stakes in the river in the form of a horseshoe” upon which they “placed green sycamore slabs which would sink in the water on the crotched stakes.” Eddy also claims to be the one who then “removed one of the slabs near the center.”⁹⁴

Joel Miller, another “eyewitness,” was born in Peekskill, New York, in 1814, and moved to Willoughby, Ohio, with his parents in 1825. He would have been fifteen when the missionaries en route to the Indians in Missouri, the first Latter-day Saints in Kirtland, arrived in October-November 1830. He would have been twenty-four when the main body of the Saints left the area in 1838. After describing ecstatic elements in Mormon meetings, Miller claims that, at one point, his neighbors “informed us Jo Smith, on Sunday night, was going to walk on the water and urged our family to go.” Miller and his brother attended the performance with “Enos and Joel Smith, whose parents were Mormon.” The performance was preceded by “a meeting in the schoolhouse at the Flats in Kirtland.” After Smith and Rigdon spoke to the congregation, “all went to the river east and below the bridge.” There Smith donned a white robe and preached about faith as he walked on the water. “He was out of water except for his feet.” As usual, he was successful to a certain point and then went down.⁹⁵

The other purported eyewitness was J. M. Granger, who was born in Tioga County, New York, in 1820. He moved to Chester, Ohio, in 1829, about two years before the Latter-day Saints arrived in Kirtland. He would have been in his teens during the time the main body of the Latter-day Saints were in Ohio. He recalls “going to Kirtland one evening with a two horse wagon load of men and boys to see the Mormon prophet Jo Smith, walk on the water.” He also mentions the white robe and an address on faith. He claims to have been “seventy

⁹⁴F. J. Goldsmith, “Statement,” *ibid.*, 2/5. William Aldrich lived in Kirtland during 1836–38. Brigham Young first visited Kirtland in the fall of 1832 and moved there in the fall of 1833. Frequently absent on missions, he moved permanently from Kirtland in December 1837. Sidney Rigdon, originally from Mentor, was in Kirtland except for relatively brief trips, from 1831 until January 1838.

⁹⁵Joel Miller, “Statement,” *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1, no. 2 (April 1888): 2/6.

five to a hundred feet from him” during the performance.⁹⁶

The Kirtland affidavits mention the same major elements of accounts from other areas. The white robe (mentioned in three of the six accounts) is not an element of the previous water-walking accounts but is similar to allegations from southern New York that Joseph Smith (or another Mormon follower, in some accounts) dressed up in a white robe, posed as an angel on the river bank, and according to some accounts, performed baptisms while thus attired.⁹⁷ The horseshoe shape of the plank trail seems unique to the Kirtland tales, as is the explanation by Mormon followers that Smith’s personal faith had failed; but the public announcement is common in the New York accounts, as is the address on faith and the subsequent rebuke of the spectators’ lack of faith.

The 1888 Deming affidavits were reproduced sometime between 1908 and 1912 by Reverend Robert Burns Neal Grayson (1847–1925), general secretary and field agent for the American Anti-Mormon Association, in “Did Joseph Smith Walk on Water?”, a pamphlet in his *Sword of Laban Leaflets*. In this leaflet, Grayson creates a collage of affidavit accounts, filling in the gaps liberally with dialogue. He imaginatively suggests that the plot was hatched during a discussion between Brigham Young and Sidney Rigdon about what they could do to “increase faith in the miraculous power of the Prophet.”⁹⁸ A statement at the end of this sketch indicates that the section on water walking is a “sample chapter” of his “Hand Book for Anti-Mormon Polemics.”⁹⁹

In 1904 the *New York Times* reprinted a version of the legend that had first appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*. This telling, recounted by one C. H. Cartwell who remembered it from stories his grandmother had told him, locates the water-walking event at Mud Creek (where, conveniently, “the water is always muddy”) in Muskingum County,

⁹⁶J. M. Granger, Affidavit, *ibid.*, (January, 1888).

⁹⁷*More Trickery of Mormonism Brought to Light* (ca. 1838); M. M. Moss, ed., “Autobiography of a Pioneer Preacher [Jasper Jesse Moss],” *Christian Standard* 78, no. 3 (January 15, 1938): 10, 22–23. “An Angel Caught,” *Dayton Journal & Advertiser*, July 7, 1835, does not mention the water-walking legend but includes dressing in a robe to pretend to be an angel.

⁹⁸Robert Burns Neal Grayson, “Did Joseph Smith Walk on Water?” *Sword of Laban Leaflet*, series 2, no. 17 (ca. 1908–12): 3–4.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 4.

Ohio.¹⁰⁰ In 1938 the *Christian Standard* of Cincinnati, Ohio, published a version of the legend as part of a multi-part series, "Autobiography of a Pioneer Preacher." The pioneer preacher was Jasper Jesse Moss (1806–90), a schoolteacher and preacher for the Disciples of Christ in the Kirtland area during the 1830s. Incidentally, Moss was married to Cordelia Hutt, a niece of Eber D. Howe, editor and publisher of the preeminent anti-Mormon book *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio: Eber D. Howe, 1834).¹⁰¹ Moss was an ardent opponent of Mormonism and participated in debates against Mormon elders.¹⁰² The "Autobiography" was edited by his son M. M. Moss. Moss's version of the legend (as edited by his son after his death), appears under the heading "The 'Angel' Goes Under." When the Mormons held evening baptismal services, "an angel appeared on the bank of the stream opposite the group and walked out on the water and stood viewing the scene." The next day, a few individuals discovered "a two-inch plank" and sawed it "almost in two." On the next demonstration of this miracle, the plank gave way, and there was "a splash and a shriek as the angel's bright glory was extinguished beneath the waves."¹⁰³

In *Buckeye Disciples: A History of the Disciples of Christ in Ohio* (1952), Henry K. Shaw draws on the 1938 *Christian Standard* article to reproduce the water-walking legend.¹⁰⁴ According to Shaw, J. J. Moss and Isaac Moore "pretended to be interested so they could enter the

¹⁰⁰*New York Times*, March 24, 1904. I thank Nancy Mess, of Ithaca, New York, for pointing this article out to me.

¹⁰¹J. J. Moss, Letter to James T. Cobb, January 23, 1879, Theodore Albert Schroeder Papers, Box 2, fd. 1, Wisconsin State Historical Society Library, Madison, Wisconsin; typescript copy available at Spaulding Studies Library, <http://solomonspaulding.com/docs/Wil1878a.htm#1938> (accessed February 2, 2006).

¹⁰²A. S. Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve, Ohio* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Chase & Hall, 1875), 409.

¹⁰³Moss, "Autobiography of a Pioneer Preacher," 10, 22–23.

¹⁰⁴Henry K. Shaw, *Buckeye Disciples: A History of the Disciples of Christ in Ohio* (St. Louis, Mo.: Christian Board of Publication, 1952), claims that J. J. Moss recorded the event in his diary; however, he cites "Autobiography of a Pioneer Preacher," which is not Moss's diary and which Moss's son edited and published after J. J. Moss's death. Shaw also insinuates that it was Moss and Moore who found the planks, but "Autobiography of a Pioneer

inner circle of the movement to expose its weakness.”¹⁰⁵ Moss does insinuate this plan in some of his letters, but he also states that his plans were foiled.¹⁰⁶ He then began telling Ohio congregations “how Angels could be manufactured & strange wonders made to appear in the night,” in order to expose the Mormons.¹⁰⁷ But he later admitted, “I know nothing of how the Mormons manufactured Angels. I only know how it could be done.”¹⁰⁸ Moss did not mention the water-walking legend directly in any of his extant letters, only that “strange wonders . . . in the night” occurred. But sometime between his 1878–80 letters and his son’s 1938 biography, those “strange wonders” became a highly formulaic legend with all the classic elements of the other water-walking tales.

In neither version of Moss’s edited autobiography is Joseph Smith identified as the water-walking angel. Historian Mark Staker believes that Moss’s account “reflects in some ways a pre-1831 Kirtland” and thus may be describing events before Joseph Smith even came to Ohio. In his narrative, Moss had previously described a night-time Mormon sacrament service with similar “angel” visitations, but he “does not cast Joseph Smith as the main character in this story” either. In fact, Moss added, “It was getting near springtime [1831] and Joseph Smith sent these Mormons a revelation that their performances were of the devil and must cease. Accordingly they partook of the sacrament in the daytime, in the presence of all the people, and . . . the visits of the angels all came to an end.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, Moss sees Smith as an agent in stopping these activities, not as a participant or perpetrator. Further, based on dates of events such as Moss’s wedding and departure from Kirtland, which occurred around the time Joseph Smith arrived in the area, Staker concludes: “If anything, [Moss] reflects an early iteration of the story being told before Joseph even arrived in Kirtland [which] . . . suggests that it was already in cir-

Preacher” makes no such assertion.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 83–84.

¹⁰⁶J. J. Moss, Letter to J. T. Cobb, December 17, 1878, Schroeder Papers.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸Moss to Cobb, January 23, 1879.

¹⁰⁹Moss, “Autobiography of a Pioneer Preacher.”

culatation by Feb. 1831.”¹¹⁰

Pennsylvania

During Joseph Smith’s employment as a treasure-digger for Josiah Stowell, in southern New York, he spent some time in Susquehanna, Pennsylvania. Stowell’s digging company, which included Joseph and his father as members, boarded with the Isaac Hale family in Harmony (now Oakland), Pennsylvania, which is where Joseph met Emma Hale, whom he married in 1827. From 1827 to 1830 Joseph and Emma lived in a small cabin near the Susquehanna River. Years later the walking-on-water legend became associated with this area.

The water-walking legend was printed in Philadelphia early on (though these accounts were probably associated with the New York legends). An example is “Tragical Event,” which dates from 1834.¹¹¹ In 1835 John Ellis, a Christian minister in Salem, Pennsylvania, wrote a letter to the editor of *Christian Palladium* that mentions a Philadelphia paper, *Temple of Reason*, that “refers to the miracles wrought by the Mormons, their walking on the water, or rather getting drowned in it.”¹¹² While it is apparent that the legend was circulating through parts of Pennsylvania, it was not identified with Susquehanna County until the late nineteenth century and did not appear in print in that context until the early twentieth century.

In a “Prize Essay” printed in the *Montrose Democrat* in 1907, Margaret Hawes of Oakland (formerly Harmony), Pennsylvania, relates a version of the legend and identifies the location as Smith’s farm in Harmony “at the river bank.” Reportedly, Smith “fastened planks from the shore to the Island.” However, rather than the usual removed plank, in this version “a mischievous fellow partly cut the cords that held the planks and Joseph’s weight when he got into the middle of the river let him down.”¹¹³ The legend appeared again in 1919 in a *Montrose Independent Republican* article announcing that the old Joseph Smith home had burned down. In this version the prank was at-

¹¹⁰Mark L. Staker, email to Stanley Thayne, 2008.

¹¹¹“Tragical Event,” *Saturday Courier* (Philadelphia), April 19, 1834.

¹¹²Joseph Badger, Letter to the editor, *Christian Palladium* 4, no. 11 (October 1, 1835): 174. My thanks to J. Spencer Fluhman for pointing this source out to me.

¹¹³Margaret Hawes, “Prize Essay,” *Montrose Democrat*, January 31, 1907. Harmony Township, where Joseph Smith lived, was renamed Oak-

tributed to “small boys” and the structure was a “submerged bridge.” After Joseph fail to pull off the “miracle,” in this account, “he hied away to a haven of refuge where he remained in seclusion for some time” (an element that still shows up in some oral accounts).¹¹⁴ Famed psychologist B. F. Skinner, who grew up in the town of Susquehanna just across the river from Oakland between 1904 and 1922, recalled in his autobiography “scurrilous stories” about Smith, including the water-walking legend.¹¹⁵

Though the legend was surely being told orally in Susquehanna County for years before these versions made their way into print, it seems that the legend was not associated with Pennsylvania until sometime between the late 1880s and early 1900s. Emily Blackman’s 1873 *History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania* does not include the water-walking story, even though she has an appendix exclusively devoted to Joseph Smith and the time he spent in Susquehanna County, nor did R. M. Stocker include it in his 1887 *Centennial History*.¹¹⁶ Since the water-walking legend is the most prominent story about Joseph Smith in Susquehanna today, its omission seems improbable from Blackman’s and Stocker’s histories if people of the mid-to-late nineteenth century associated the tale with the Smith home site in Harmony. Also, as J. Taylor Hollist points out, “Frederick G. Mather interviewed four people in New York and five people in Pennsylvania for his 1880 *Binghamton Republican* article. The interviewees from New York mention the walking-on-water tale, but the Pennsylvanians do not.”¹¹⁷ After the 1880s, the stories became connected with the Joseph Smith home site in Harmony and eventually with the Aaronic Priesthood Restoration monument, placed there in 1960, which stands on the

land Township in 1853. In that same year, the town of Susquehanna Depot was established across the river, renamed Susquehanna in 1869.

¹¹⁴“Mormon’s Old Home Burns—Prophet Joseph Smith’s One Time Residence Destroyed,” *Independent Republican* (Montrose, Pa.) 64, no. 27 (July 4, 1919).

¹¹⁵B. F. Skinner, *Particulars of My Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 111.

¹¹⁶Emily C. Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania* (1873; rpt., Baltimore: Regional Publishing, 1970), 102–5, and Appendix 1, 577–82. See also Rhamanthus M. Stocker, *Centennial History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: R.T. Peck & Co., 1887).

¹¹⁷Hollist, “Walking-on-Water Stories,” 38.

bank of the Susquehanna River.¹¹⁸

The legend continued to be passed on as an oral tale in Susquehanna County. Most match the usual print story—that it was a series of planks, or platforms, somehow suspended just below the surface and that boys from town removed a plank.¹¹⁹ Others describe the device as a rope bridge; a local man floated down from above, using a reed for a snorkel, and cut the ropes as Joseph was crossing. (I have talked to several people who claimed that the sharp-knifed snorkler was their great-uncle or great-grandfather.) Still others say that it was a ladder, which simply broke as Joseph was crossing.¹²⁰ Susquehanna resident Eugene Price heard two versions with unique elements. In the first, the river simply washed part of the structure away; in the second, the water level dropped during the night and exposed both the structure and Smith's plot.¹²¹ Another far-fetched version is that there were "two men under the water with breathing tubes holding Joseph up on a board as he walked and the two men were discovered when they came up for air. The board on which Joseph Smith was

¹¹⁸The foundation of the Smith home is still visible on State Highway 171 near the McKune cemetery in Oakland Township. It is marked as a historical site and is accompanied by a bronze monument, placed there by the LDS Church in 1960, commemorating the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood on May 15, 1829. Joseph Smith—History, 1:68–72.

¹¹⁹In some print versions, the individual who removed the planks is named, but the more common description is mischievous local boys. One odd variation is a 1999 postcard written by a missionary who "learned a lot of Mormon History from locals" and claims that "Joseph Smith tried to walk in the water on the Susque river, but Mormon tricked him and pulled out the wood and he drowned." Postcard in my possession.

¹²⁰I heard the plank structure and the rope bridge version from locals. A Susquehanna resident who wishes to remain anonymous but whose family has lived in Susquehanna as far back as he can remember told me the ladder version. He heard the story from his grandmother, who was born in the 1890s. Interview, August 4, 2004.

¹²¹Eugene Price, interviewed by Stanley Thayne, August 3, 2004. The latter two versions are interesting variations because neither mentions the involvement of locals in rigging the structure; according to the third version, Smith never actually got to attempt to walk on the water.

standing was tipped, causing him to fall into the water.”¹²² Perhaps the most absurd version is that Smith was walking on chicken wire somehow stretched taut across the river.¹²³

Missouri

I have been able to locate only one printed account placing the legend in Missouri. This account by L. B. Coggins, printed in 1906 in the *Christian Standard* of Cincinnati, relates the legend as “a little incident which I recently heard from the lips of one who was an eye-witness . . . , Uncle Billie Jackson, of Higginsville, Mo.” In this version, Uncle Billie is coerced by a friend, Tom Parvin, to attend a Mormon gathering at “Smith Creek, about three miles south of Fairwest [Far West].” Though reluctant, Uncle Billie is persuaded by the sure attendance of a pretty Mormon girl and obliges Parvin. “Great crowds” show up for the event “from all over the country.” Encouraged by such an audience, Smith attempted to “prove his apostleship by walking to and fro across the surface of the water.” After a successful display, he announced a repeat exhibition later that afternoon. As expected, Parvin and Uncle Billie ventured into the water and, after discovering the hidden “slab,” “discovered that [they] could perform the same miracle” and sawed partway through the slab. The breaking slab sent Smith, attired “in royal robes,” swimming ashore and muttering, “The devil did that.” The author closes the sketch by assuring readers that “this is a true story” which “no doubt many of the readers of the *Standard* will [re]member.”¹²⁴

Illinois

While passing through Illinois in the spring of 1946, Austin and Alta Fife collected an oral variant of the legend that located it on the Mississippi River in Nauvoo, where Joseph Smith lived from 1839 un-

¹²²J. Taylor Hollist, telephone interview with Gary Robinson of Oneonta, N.Y., February 6, 2004. Robinson grew up in Susquehanna. Hollist, “Walking-on-Water Stories,” 41.

¹²³Nancy Mess told me this version. She has done extensive genealogical research in the Susquehanna Valley and has heard the story repeatedly from relatives along the Susquehanna River Valley from Oneonta, New York, to Oakland, Pennsylvania.

¹²⁴L. B. Coggins, “The Devil and Mormonism,” *Christian Standard* 42, no. 39 (September 29, 1906).

til his murder in 1844. The association of the legend with Nauvoo seems to have begun with the comedic performances and yarn-spinnings of frontier clown Dan Rice. Eventually known as “the ‘Daddy’ of all American Clowns,”¹²⁵ Rice apparently made his clowning debut either in Davenport, Iowa, or Galena, Illinois, in the fall of 1844.¹²⁶ Prior to that time, he had worked as a circus apprentice in strong-man routines and blackface minstrelsy. Rice worked several additional apprenticeships, particularly in the Iowa-Illinois area during the spring of 1843, when the Latter-day Saints were living in nearby Nauvoo. Naturally, Rice, alert to the local “history,” deftly incorporated Mormonism into his routine, claiming an apprenticeship in “humbugging” with the Mormon prophet “Joe Smith.”¹²⁷

To the historian, Rice’s life is more legend than fact. Elements of his actual life “peek . . . through his fables like glimpses through a river fog,” wrote biographer David Carlyon.¹²⁸ Though Carlyon understood Rice’s tale about his association with Smith to be a fabrication, some unwitting biographers were apparently duped by his yarn and accepted it as fact.¹²⁹ In her preface to *The Life of Dan Rice* (1901), biographer Maria Ward Brown states that Rice worked for some time “disseminating Mormon doctrines, with an especial commission from Joe Smith at \$50 per month.”¹³⁰ The 1935 *Dictionary of American Biography* likewise stated, rather matter-of-factly, that “for a few months [Rice] was an agent for Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet.”¹³¹

Biographer Don Carle Gillette, drawing on seven previously “attempted” biographies of Rice, accepts and retells the narrative of

¹²⁵R. E. Sherwood, *Here We Meet Again: Recollections of an Old Circus Clown* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1926), caption of illustration after p. 148.

¹²⁶James Ross Moore, “Rice, Dan,” in *American National Biography* (New York: Oxford, 1999), 18:406.

¹²⁷David Carlyon, *Dan Rice: The Most Famous Man You’ve Never Heard Of* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), 48–49.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 48.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, 49, points out that by this time “the water-walk story was [at least] fifteen years old, told on Smith in his Ohio days.”

¹³⁰Maria Ward Brown, *The Life of Dan Rice* (Long Branch, N.J.: Maria Ward Brown, 1901), vi.

¹³¹George Harvey Genzmer, “Rice, Dan,” in *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1935), 8:536; see also John

Rice's "apprenticeship" to Smith.¹³² According to this synthesized account, Smith attended one of Rice's "super Samson" strong-man performances and saw in Rice the "miracle man" he needed.¹³³ Smith's followers—whom Gillette refers to as "dupes"—were purportedly "grumbling audibly" and "Smith needed some new miracles to restore the faith . . . and reunite his crumbling ranks." Rice, unaware of Smith's designs, struck a deal to perform a strong-man routine disguised as a "poor wayfarer." Smith would present the routine, rather improbably, to his Saints as "the new miracles which the Spirit has empowered me to bring to you." Smith and Rice would split the proceeds from the "required deposit" ("a quarter apiece—a dime for children") that spectators were required to drop in the hewn-stone baptismal font. After being repeatedly swindled by Smith, however, Rice became disillusioned and began planning his escape from the community.¹³⁴

Rice's plan for his departure came to him during a lunch meeting he had in Nauvoo with a Methodist minister, Reverend Peter Cartwright, and "a legal representative" identified as none other than "Abe Lincoln" himself. During the conversation, Cartwright mentioned a rumor that Smith had announced he would walk on the wa-

Culhane, *The American Circus: An Illustrated History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990), 50. Earl Chapin May, *The Circus from Rome to Ringling* (New York: Dover, 1963), 61, refers to Rice's "shady association with Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet."

¹³²Don Carle Gillette, *He Made Lincoln Laugh: The Story of Dan Rice* (New York: Exposition Press, 1967), 65–73. In a prefaced "Warning Note," Gillette relates an anecdote about an 1893 interview in which Rice warned his seventh biographer of what "a perilous task" it was to try to reconstruct his life, spinning a yarn about all of the fantastic mishaps that had befallen the previous six in their failed attempts. One would think that Gillette would have taken the warning seriously enough to have been a little more skeptical of the fables Rice had palmed off on journalists and biographers as history.

¹³³Gillette's account varies somewhat from that of earlier Rice biographer Maria Ward Brown who, rather than posing Smith as the original schemer, gives Rice the credit for seeing in Nauvoo "an abundant field for his labors . . . where his apparent superhuman accomplishments might well make him famous." In Brown's account it was Rice who proposed that "he and Smith would make a pretty strong team professionally." Brown, *The Life of Dan Rice*, 81.

¹³⁴Gillette, *He Made Lincoln Laugh*, 65–70.

ter “at daybreak tomorrow,” to which Lincoln responded—smiling indulgently—“Walk on water? . . . That is a miracle I would be interested in seeing myself.” Rice admitted that he knew “something about that stunt,” having suggested it to Smith previously, and then was struck with the idea that he could turn it into “the miracle to end all of Joseph Smith’s miracles.”¹³⁵

Gillett provides a very detailed account of the next morning’s events. The town’s citizens were summoned by the “clashing of cymbals and blowing of trumpets,” and Smith led an elaborate procession from the temple to the “secret spot” on the river. “Arrayed in richly ornamented high-priest vestment[s],” he walked the runway, which was concealed by the “rippling muddy waters of the Mississippi” and, as Rice had arranged, went down on the twenty-ninth step with a “horrendous scream” into the “turbid current.” Meanwhile, “sitting peacefully in a skiff almost across the river, watching the fiasco with smiles of satisfaction, was wayfarer Dan Rice,” who then departed from the Mormon town.¹³⁶

Rice’s legend eventually made its way to Salt Lake City. Judge C. C. Goodwin, editor of the *Salt Lake Tribune*—the often-virulent non-Mormon newspaper—recounted the legend for *Munsey’s Magazine* in 1900. He allegedly had had a conversation “some years ago” with Rice, accepting Rice’s claim that he “knew Joe Smith intimately at Nauvoo.” According to Goodwin’s version, Smith told Rice, “Dan, the people are growing restless. We must give them a miracle. The river is muddy: you build, on the quiet, a platform, and anchor it about a foot below the surface of the water. I will walk on the water.” Rice “fixed the platform all right,” omitting a few planks “about twelve feet out from the shore.” Predictably, Smith “went down and the miracle was smashed to smithereens.” Goodwin admits that he “thought Rice was romancing” but states that he believes his story as much as he does those of the Mormon leaders, by which, of course, he means not at all!¹³⁷

MORMON RESPONSES

Though I have found no clear statement by Joseph Smith regard-

¹³⁵Ibid., 71.

¹³⁶Ibid., 71–73.

¹³⁷C. C. Goodwin, “The Truth about the Mormons,” *Munsey’s Magazine* 23 (June 1900): 312.

ing the water-walking legend, several early Latter-day Saints refuted the story. In 1834 Oliver Cowdery, editor of the *Evening and Morning Star*, reproached two other papers for printing an article—probably the first printed account of the legend—that was “not only foolish, but was false.”¹³⁸ In the Nauvoo *Times and Seasons*, an 1844 editorial announcing the candidacy of Joseph Smith for president refers to the “old fabrication of ‘walk on the water’” as a “story [that] has been put into requisition to blast our fame.”¹³⁹ And *History of the Church* refers to a series of anti-Mormon pamphlets as “forged letters, apostate lies, and ‘walk on the water’ stories.”¹⁴⁰ Lumping the water-walking stories together with forged letters and apostate lies strongly implies that early Latter-day Saints regarded the legend as untrue.

In 1832, Ira Ames, then a recent convert to Mormonism, recalls being ridiculed by his grandfather’s neighbors with “tales about ‘Jo Smith’ walking on the water, gold hunting &c &c.”¹⁴¹ Likewise, Warren Foote, a New York resident who was baptized into the LDS Church in 1834, recalls a version of the tale that he heard a Methodist minister relate “and chuckle over it, as though it was a splendid joke on ‘Joe Smith,’” stating “that [the] story was sufficient to burst up ‘Mormonism.’” Foote called the story a “foolish lie,” which of course did not break up Mormonism.¹⁴²

In 1844 Elder Parley P. Pratt published a satirical *Dialogue between Joseph Smith and the Devil*, in which the character representing Joseph Smith denies the water-walking stories “which have had an extensive circulation by means of your [the devil’s] editors and priests.” He further denies “the principle of man’s working miracles, either

¹³⁸Oliver Cowdery, *Evening and Morning Star* 2, no. 19 (April 1834): 151.

¹³⁹“Who Shall Be Our Next President?” *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 4 (February 15, 1844): 441.

¹⁴⁰*History of The Church*, 3:21; the pamphlets were those of Richard Livesey discussed earlier.

¹⁴¹Ira Ames (1804–69), *Autobiography* (1858) and *Journal*, August 6, 1832, 1858, MS 6055, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City. Ames reports that he was quite shaken up by the incident but was reassured of the truth of Mormonism after being visited three times by a “personage” in a dream that night.

¹⁴²Warren Foote (1817–46), *Autobiography*, typescript, Vol. 1, 3–4, Perry Special Collections.

real or pretended as a proof of his mission.”¹⁴³

Speaking in the Salt Lake Tabernacle in 1858, Apostle George A. Smith commented on the persecution inflicted on Joseph Smith: “Editors published their false statements, one of which, no doubt, will be remembered—a pretended miracle of walking on the water.”¹⁴⁴ In a similar address in Salt Lake City in 1873, Apostle George Q. Cannon stated that many people “demanded miraculous signs of Joseph Smith to convince them of the truth of his testimony” in a context denying that the Prophet ever complied with such requests.¹⁴⁵

J. W. Peterson, a member of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now Community of Christ) published a pamphlet in 1897 in which he related a version of the legend told him by a purported eyewitness who claimed that “her two brothers were among the rest that removed one of the planks.” Having heard “that old fib” before, and suspecting false testimony, Peterson cross-examined the woman: “I asked her if her brothers were younger or older than she and she said, ‘they were both younger.’ I then asked her how old she was and she said she was born in 1843. I informed her that Joseph Smith was killed in 1844, and suggested that her memory was excellent to remember things so young, and that her brothers, both younger, must have been young acrobats indeed.” Peterson went on to explain the implausibility of building a structure in the Mississippi and lamented that he continued to hear the legend repeated “in almost every neighborhood and upon no better authority.” Defending the Prophet’s status, he concluded: “Those who circulate such stories exhibit their ignorance of the teaching of Joseph Smith, for he taught that miracles were not to make believers. He could have had no object in view in attempting such a thing, nor did he either.”¹⁴⁶

Albert E. Stone, an RLDS caretaker and guide in the Kirtland Temple in 1905, recalled: “I was here in the House of the Lord when one Mrs. White[,] if my memory serves me, asked me if I had ever heard that Joe Smith tried to walk the water on the north side of the

¹⁴³Pratt’s *Dialogue* is found in Richard H. Cracroft and Neal E. Lambert, eds., *A Believing People: Literature of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 263.

¹⁴⁴George A. Smith, January 10, 1858, *Journal of Discourses*, 7:112.

¹⁴⁵George Q. Cannon, 1873, *Journal of Discourses*, 15:370–71.

¹⁴⁶J. W. Peterson, *Who Was Joseph Smith?: Was He a False Prophet?* (Independence: Ensign Publishing House, 1897), 9–10.

bridge which spans the East Branch of the sygrin [Chagrin] River in Kirtland." After she related the usual account to him, which involved driving in "ace stakes," claiming that her brother was involved in rigging the structure, Stone recorded his rebuttal in his journal:

It must first be remembered that the bed of the river on the north side of the Bridge is one solid ledge of rock, which would prevent any man from driving stakes, second that during ordinary seasons the water is not deep enough there to admit of two inch Plank being placed three inches below the surface. the third and rediculas part of the old Fable is that the year 1906 when the story was told the Lady? was 60 years old, her Brother who took such an active part in the Drama, was two years her Junior making him 58 years old in 1906. he having been born in the year 1848 or four years after Joseph Smith was killed. quite a smart boy to be able to perform such a Miracle as that[.] why he had done greater things than they were laying at the foot of the Prophet.

Feeling he had outwitted Mrs. White's slander, Stone recorded, "such things went to strengthen the Faith of the writer."¹⁴⁷

Though nineteenth-century Mormons resented the tales told to undercut their Prophet's integrity, they sometimes engaged in such tales themselves to cast aspersions on other ministers. Folklorist Barre Toelken points out that the same water-walking legend told about Joseph Smith shows up in early missionary journals, associating the legend with a "Protestant revivalist charlatan in Virginia."¹⁴⁸ For example, Robert Harris Fife, who served as a missionary in Virginia from 1894 to 1896, derisively referred in his journal to "Salvationists or Sanctified people as they call themselves" who made frequent tours on Virginia's seacoast, impressing the people with miracles which were, "of course," deception. His description of the event is ironically similar to several Joseph Smith variants: a previously con-

¹⁴⁷Elder Albert E. Stone, Autobiography, holograph, Community of Christ Archives, Independence, undated accession material #3691-#3694. Mark Lyman Staker, email to Stanley Thayne, November 6, 2006, points out: "Although the water was too shallow to fit such an experience in 1906, in 1831 the mill dams raised the water level to seven feet and Hanson's pond was deep enough to hide planks. It was also wide enough that someone could walk out in the middle and still be a distance from those watching. However, the details about the rocky river base are correct and it is unlikely [that] anyone could drive stakes into the base of the river."

¹⁴⁸Toelken, "Water Narratives," 198.

structed platform, a successful first attempt, the discovery and sabotage of the structure, and a failed second attempt—"a plunge, a douce [sic]"—followed by a near drowning. After mockingly comparing and contrasting the "old fellow" with Peter—"but lo," in this attempt, "no Christ was there to give him aid"—Fife laments, "'O ye of little faith, . . . ' Why did ye go beyond your walk-way which you had prepared to deceive the people."¹⁴⁹ Thus, some Mormon missionaries fought fire with fire—or water with water—exhibiting the same propensity for discrediting Protestant ministers by using the same imposture stories as those told about Joseph Smith.

CONCLUSION: LEGEND AS TRUTH AND AS SYMBOL

So what is the truth? What really did or did not happen? It is impossible to know for sure, but there are several possibilities. Perhaps there is some grain of truth to the legend. Perhaps some religious figure at one time, or multiple times, really did attempt such a performance and was foiled. Perhaps then the story was subsequently attached to other religious leaders. Or perhaps it was a natural tendency of many during the time, and at other times, to attempt such a feat (or imposition). Perhaps some other zealous proselyte—such as the accused Mormon preacher—attempted to perform such a miracle during a time of particular religious excitement, and it later became associated with the leader of the movement. Or maybe the legend morphed into being out of some other event, such as a baptism, a speech, or some display of religious enthusiasm. Or perhaps it was simply the creation of sensational journalism, comedy routines, and clever storytellers. It is simply impossible to tell.

"Truth," then, is a sticky issue in legend. Legend is fraught with ambiguity. As one folklorist put it, a legend "is believed to be true by some, false by others, or both or neither by most."¹⁵⁰ The "truth" or "falsity" of a legend, then, is primarily relative to who is telling the story and what he or she wants to believe about it. It is that ambiguity—the possibility of truth, the plausibility of some grain of truth, and the probability of falsehood—that distinguishes a legend from both historical fact and from fairy tale and which makes its analysis so debatable and often baffling.

¹⁴⁹Austin E. Fife, "Virginia Folkways from a Mormon Journal," *Western Folklore* 9, no. 4 (October 1950): 356.

¹⁵⁰Robert Georges, quoted in Degh, *Legend and Belief*, 43.

But despite such ambiguity, truth is an important factor in legend-telling. Elliot Oring argues that “the narration of a legend is, in a sense, the negotiation of the truth of these episodes. . . . At the core of the legend is an evaluation of its truth status. It might be that a particular narrative is regarded as false, or true, or false by some and true by others. . . . Whatever the opinion, . . . in a legend, the question of truth must be *entertained* even if that truth is ultimately rejected.”¹⁵¹

Biographer Fawn Brodie referred to the walking-on-water legends of Joseph Smith and Jemima Wilkinson as “equally apocryphal stor[ies],” but she suggests that they are “none the less symbolic.”¹⁵² Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley criticized Brodie for citing “a tale that is *known to be false* simply because it symbolizes her idea of Joseph Smith,” yet, in his criticism, Nibley also agreed that the legend is a symbol.¹⁵³ The walking-on-water legend symbolizes perception. Though in reality a purported incident either happened or it did not, since it is impossible to ultimately know and thus prove or disprove past events of legendary nature (such as the water-walking legends), a study of legend is more useful for understanding the teller and the teller’s society than to determine the reality or falsity of an actual historical incident. Thus, legend serves, psychologically, as a “symbolic representation of folk belief.”¹⁵⁴

Folklorist Lutz Röhrich referred to legend as a “cultural language of fear. . . . People . . . tell legends in order to ‘verbalize anxieties and fears and, by explaining these away, to free themselves from the oppressive power of their fears.’”¹⁵⁵ The water-walking legend reveals nineteenth-century fears and anxieties about religious change and distrust of religious innovators—an innate (or possibly inherited)

¹⁵¹Elliot Oring, “Folk Narratives,” in *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction*, edited by Elliot Oring (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1986), 125.

¹⁵²Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 83–84.

¹⁵³Hugh Nibley, *Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass: The Art of Telling Tales about Joseph Smith and Brigham Young*, edited by David J. Whittaker (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1991), 32; emphasis Nibley’s.

¹⁵⁴Tangherlini, “Legend,” 437, 439.

¹⁵⁵Lutz Röhrich, as quoted and summarized in Linda Degh, *Legend and Belief: Dialectics of a Folklore Genre* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 37; see also Lutz Röhrich, “The Quest for Meaning in Folk

desire to disqualify prophet-figures and thereby brush them off as frauds. Thus, legend-telling has been a sort of “self therapy” for those who have been confronted with the type of ambiguity modern prophets represent.¹⁵⁶

The water-walking legend is just one example of a body of legends that exposes prophet-figures as impostors through pretended “miracles” gone awry. Another legend, with a form similar to the water-walking legend, asserts that Joseph Smith had trained a dove to fly to his shoulder by putting birdseed in his ear and that he planned to mimic the New Testament sign of the Holy Ghost by having the dove descend upon him during worship services. But alas, after he repeatedly called for the sign during worship services, the voice of his plotting assistant, who had been stationed in the rafters to release the bird, called down that a cat had gone and eaten the “Holy Ghost.”¹⁵⁷ In a similar tale told on the other side of the Atlantic, Prophet John Wroe, who was supposed to be in the midst of a ten-to-twelve-day visionary trance, was seen by a neighbor who peeked through a window to be “sitting up eating beefsteak, pickled cabbage and oatcake.”¹⁵⁸ Other legends depict ministering angels being exposed as men in sheets,¹⁵⁹ bogus healings or exorcisms, swindlings, or other staged and foiled displays of divine power. Such legends were a natural folk reaction to modern prophets—a method of refutation that served as a reassurance for those who chose to disbelieve in a certain prophet or leader or in supernatural events altogether.

Ultimately, the walking-on-water legend stands as a symbol of belief and skepticism—representing, to believers, persecution of the truth and, to skeptics, exposure of fraud. Brodie and others regard it as a symbol that accurately represents a self-proclaimed prophet’s character, but to Latter-day Saints, Christian Israelites, Fisherites, and

Narrative Research,” in *The Brothers Grimm and Folktale*, edited by James M. McGlathery (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 8.

¹⁵⁶Röhrich, quoted in Degh, *Legend and Belief*, 37.

¹⁵⁷“A Mormon Miracle Knocked in the Head,” *Huron Reflector* (Norwalk, Ohio) 14, no. 4 (February 14, 1843); “Stephen H. Hart’s Statement,” and “Mrs. J. D. Barber’s Statement,” in *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1, no. 2 (April 1888): 3–4.

¹⁵⁸Green, *Prophet John Wroe*, 10.

¹⁵⁹“Capture of a Mormon Angel,” *Rockville [Indiana] Intelligencer* 1, no. 2 (July 18, 1835).

followers of the Universal Publick Friend—or any other religious group whose leader is thus portrayed—such tales are a symbol of the types of falsehood and slander that have been created to discredit their prophet by making him or her look like a fraud—or as one early Mormon editor put it, “the old fabrication of ‘walk on the water,’ . . . put into requisition to blast our fame.”¹⁶⁰ However one interprets the legend, it is a lingering echo of the hubbub that arose in reaction to the rise of prophets in the modern world.

¹⁶⁰*Times and Seasons* 5, no. 4 (February 15, 1844): 441; also in *History of the Church*, 6:217.

A CROSSROADS FOR MORMON WOMEN: AMY BROWN LYMAN, J. REUBEN CLARK, AND THE DECLINE OF ORGANIZED WOMEN'S ACTIVISM IN THE RELIEF SOCIETY

Dave Hall

THE CONCLUSION OF WORLD WAR II marked an important transition for the Latter-day Saint Relief Society. As the government lifted wartime travel restrictions, plans laid by the society's leaders for future activities could, it seemed, move forward and so allow the organization to resume its dynamic role in Church and community affairs. Yet such envisioned possibilities never reached fruition. Instead, at the war's end, the Relief Society emerged with a more limited agenda, one that marked a milestone in a long path leading from its earlier status, in which it enjoyed considerable autonomy

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and relatively broad prerogatives, toward a newer position, perhaps best characterized as one among several closely regulated Church auxiliaries.¹

There were a number of reasons behind this latest shift. The evolving nature of Church administration and changes necessitated by membership growth played a role, as did long-term social trends affecting women and the larger society. Shifts in priorities along generational lines among Church leaders and Relief Society women themselves were important, as were the accidents of history. Many of these factors can be illuminated through an examination of the interaction between two individuals who played key roles in shaping the organization's future: Amy Brown Lyman, president of the society from 1940 to 1945 and, before that, a member of its general board for

¹For the Relief Society's status and prerogatives as laid out at its organization, see Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 44–50. For an overview of the relationship of the society to the priesthood, see Linda King Newell, "Gifts of the Spirit: Women's Share," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 111–50; and Newell, "The Historical Relationship of Mormon Women and Priesthood," in *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, edited by Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 23–48. While Mormon women did not claim to hold priesthood office, as Newell makes clear, they often saw the Relief Society operating in parallel to the priesthood quorums. Like the quorum organizations, the Relief Society, while governed to a considerable extent by its own structures of authority, ultimately operated under the direction of the priesthood leaders at the general, stake, and ward levels. Relief Society women themselves used terminology suggesting a linkage between the role played by the society and the quorums well into the twentieth century. For example, Emmeline B. Wells (then general secretary of the Relief Society) sent to Amy Brown Lyman a letter advising her of her appointment to the Relief Society general board. "I feel honored," Wells wrote, "to have this opportunity of congratulating you on your becoming a member of this Quorum (so to speak)." Emmeline B. Wells, Letter to Amy Brown Lyman, October 6, 1909, Amy Brown Lyman Collection, MSS 316, Box 2, fd. 9, L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections).

more than thirty years; and J. Reuben Clark, first counselor in the First Presidency. Both were extremely strong-willed, intelligent, and dedicated leaders—in some respects, very similar. But they followed models for Church administration that sometimes conflicted, and they also held markedly different views about the proper relationship of the Church to the larger community. The two diverged even more fundamentally in their ideas about the proper role of LDS women. Lyman sought to maintain a wide-ranging agenda for women in Church and community affairs, while Clark desired to limit their activities to those he felt most essential to the mission of the Church. A close examination of their interaction can shed light on the then-developing trajectory of the Relief Society even as it provides an illuminating case study of mid-twentieth-century decision-making in the LDS Church.

To Mormon women in the 1940s, Amy Brown Lyman represented both innovation and a link to the past.² Perhaps the best-known Latter-day Saint woman of her generation, she had met every president of Relief Society beginning with Eliza R. Snow; and, since her appointment to the general board in 1909 at age thirty-seven, had worked intimately with several of Snow's successors. But Lyman's Relief Society experience involved more than personal contact with prominent women with long histories of service. Born in 1872, she had grown to maturity watching women make valued contributions to the well-being of their communities as they followed the call of Church leaders to establish and develop home industry and promote improvements in public health while they tirelessly carried out their role, designated for them in their Nauvoo origins, of charity and care for ward members in need.³

These same women were active politically as well, exercising the franchise from 1870 until it was stripped away by the Edmunds-Tucker

²For a useful overview of Lyman's life, see Loretta L. Hefner, "Amy Brown Lyman: Raising the Quality of Life for All," in *Sister Saints*, edited by Vicky Burgess-Olson (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 95–113 and Amy Brown Lyman, *In Retrospect: Autobiography of Amy Brown Lyman* (Salt Lake City: General Board of Relief Society, 1945).

³For Relief Society activities during the period of Lyman's youth and young adulthood, see Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 83–150. In 1909, Lyman's two children were ages eleven and six; her husband, Richard R. Lyman, would be called as an apostle in 1918.

Act in 1887. Rebuffed but not retreating, then they organized themselves into branches of the Territorial Suffrage Association and vigorously lobbied to include woman's suffrage in the 1896 state constitution.⁴

All these endeavors were seen as complementary to those carried out by men through the priesthood organizations at a time when both sexes were actively seeking to build a Mormon commonwealth in the West. In fact, the relationship of Mormon men and women acting institutionally through their respective organizations in many ways reflects the nineteenth-century concept of separate spheres.⁵ This paradigm prescribed differing but, in theory, equally vital societal roles for men and women. As middle-class men increasingly left the home to engage in the competitive life of the modern, capitalistic economy, women, whose contributions to the household economy became increasingly invisible, were expected to assume a role as guardians of domestic life, and with it, societal virtue and morality. In practice, many middle-class American women skillfully found ways to expand their sanctioned roles beyond the walls of their own homes. For example, they argued that, to protect the home environment, they were required to address problems in the larger community. Thus, as the nineteenth century progressed, women in clubs and associations engaged in wide-ranging reforms that made them key players in community affairs before most were able to vote.⁶

Mormon women were not strangers to the idea of separate spheres, nor were they unaware of their ability to use such ideas to expand their own sphere of usefulness in the Church. Using the Relief Society as their vehicle, many emulated and sometimes surpassed their non-Mormon sisters in expanding their activities into commu-

⁴For Mormon women's activism on suffrage, see Carol Cornwall Madsen, *An Advocate for Women: The Public Life of Emmeline B. Wells, 1870–1920* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2006), 112–236, 247–49.

⁵For a classic work on separate spheres, see Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977).

⁶Karen Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868–1914*, (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1980); Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

nity affairs—most often with the approval and encouragement of Church leaders who saw the benefits that came to the community and to the Church's reputation at a time when Mormons were trying to counter a negative public image linked to polygamy and patriarchy.⁷

Lyman's family was deeply involved in all such activities, and she had grown up seeing the Relief Society as a vital and valued resource for women and the community.⁸ But like others of her peers, by the turn of the century, she found the agenda of the organization less relevant as Utah moved increasingly toward assimilation into the nation's social and economic mainstream. As a result, like other younger women she was hesitant to "move-up" into the organization and instead remained active in the Primary Association and the Young Women's organization, even as she turned some of her energies to clubwork.⁹ When Lyman was called to the Relief Society's general board in 1909, however, she joined a cohort of younger women al-

⁷Jill Mulvay Derr, "Woman's Place in Brigham Young's World," *BYU Studies* 18 (Spring 1978): 377–95.

⁸Lyman's "second mother" Elizabeth Crosby Brown (the first of her father's three wives) was Relief Society president in Pleasant Grove where Amy was born, while her own mother, Margaret Zimmerman Brown, and sisters Rose and Lydia, and half-sister Paulina, were teachers in the organization. In addition, her mother and Rose were tireless in their efforts to improve public health. Rose eventually became a nurse. The Brown women were also interested and involved in the cause of woman's suffrage. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 37–38; "Pleasant Grove," *Woman's Exponent* 5 (March 1, 1877): 150; "F. R. [Female Relief] Society Reports," *Woman's Exponent* 1 (April 1, 1873), 162; "W.S.A. [Woman Suffrage Association], Pleasant Grove," *Woman's Exponent* 18 (April 15, 1890): 175; "W.S.A. Pleasant Grove," and "U.W.S.A. [Utah Woman Suffrage Association] Convention," *Woman's Exponent* 18 (April 15, 1890): 170, 175.

⁹Jill Mulvay Derr, "Scholarship, Service, and Sisterhood: Utah Women's Clubs and Associations, 1877–1977," photocopy in my possession, courtesy of Jill Mulvay Derr; Sharon Snow Carver, "Club Women of the Three Intermountain Cities of Denver, Boise and Salt Lake City between 1893 and 1929" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 2000); Amy Brown Lyman, "Authors Club Address," photocopy of typescript in my possession, courtesy of Amy Lyman Engar. The Young Women's organization, which grew out of the Retrenchment Association, was originally called the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association, then the Young Women's Mu-

ready struggling to address the organization's declining appeal. They recognized that they would have to move it beyond the primary programs of the territorial period—home production, spiritual and economic retrenchment, and even suffrage—to serve the needs of and appeal to women coming of age in the Progressive Era. As they accomplished these goals, they reshaped the society, repositioning it anew as a valued and important player in Church and community.

Lyman was ideally suited to the task: Forward-looking herself and possessing unusual drive and energy, in the 1910s and 1920s, she was a critical player along with such women as Clarissa Smith Williams, Jeannette Hyde, Alice Merrill Horne, and Susa Young Gates in developing a broad new agenda. Vital to their plans was a modern educational curriculum, modeled in many ways after that of women's clubs, which encompassed instruction not only in doctrine, but also in literature, the arts, domestic science, and, especially important to Lyman, social welfare work.¹⁰ Lyman and her peers also expanded and reshaped the Relief Society's semi-annual conferences into closely focused seminars where, for two days in the spring and fall, they provided the women with detailed information and advice covering all aspects of the society's work.¹¹ Lyman's activities thus focused on maintaining the Relief Society in its role as a vital organization that provided needed services to the community and valued

tual Improvement Association. I use its current name for clarity. Not restricted to teenagers, it included young married women in its number.

¹⁰For the influence of club work on the Relief Society agenda during this period, see Jill Mulvay Derr, "'Strength in Our Union': The Making of Mormon Sisterhood," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press: 1987), 185–86. Lyman had been interested in social work since taking a course at the University of Chicago in the summer of 1902. When Joseph F. Smith called her as general secretary of the Relief Society in 1913, he charged her to make a special study of the subject with a view toward updating the Church's charitable practices. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 114; Amy Brown Lyman, "Social Service Work in the Relief Society, 1917–1928, Including a Brief History of the Relief Society Social Service Department and Brief Mention of Other Relief Society and Community Social Service Activities," 3, Lyman Collection, Box 1, fd. 17, Perry Special Collections.

¹¹Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 180–223.

outlets to Mormon women.

This reshaping of the Relief Society's agenda enjoyed the support of Church leaders, including and especially President Joseph F. Smith who saw the benefits that thereby accrued for the Relief Society and the Church.¹² These benefits included better relations with the larger community, both locally and nationally, in the wake of the negative publicity attending the Smoot hearings, concluded only a few years earlier in 1905.¹³ Under Smith, refocusing the Church away from the past that included polygamy, economic cooperatives, and general isolationism was a high priority. Additional benefits arising from this new agenda included a swelling membership for the Relief Society. Younger, civic-minded women were attracted to these popular new trends at a time when the society was strictly a voluntary, dues-paying organization.¹⁴

One of Lyman's most far-reaching projects, pursued at the urging of President Smith, was her organization in 1919 of the Relief Society Social Service Department, forerunner of LDS Social Services (now LDS Welfare Services). This new department complemented her appointment by a very supportive President Clarissa Williams as the effective "managing director" of the Relief Society's day-to-day affairs in 1921.¹⁵ As such, she had handled all correspondence with stake and ward societies and had written the monthly "Notes from the Field" column in the *Relief Society Magazine*, a function that allowed her to highlight local events and activities that she thought important to the organization. She was thus the main source of contact between the society's leaders and its rank and file. Short of being president herself, it would have been difficult for Lyman to have exercised more

¹²Lyman, "Social Service Work," 3.

¹³From Lyman's perspective, among the most important of these ties were those with the National Council of Women and the National Conference of Social Work. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 70–71, 88–91.

¹⁴In 1916, soon after these innovations began in the Relief Society, its membership stood at 43,894 enrolled, dues-paying members. By 1926, it numbered 61,627, an increase of 71 percent. General Board of Relief Society, *A Centenary of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret New Press, 1942), 86; Amy Brown Lyman, "Relief Society Annual Report, 1926," *Relief Society Magazine* 15 (May 1927): 257.

¹⁵Annie Wells Cannon, Journal, April 14, 1921, MSS 2307, Box 1, fd. 2, Perry Special Collections.

power. Her focus on social work harmonized with the national agenda of the Progressive Era, which further increased the society's achievements and prestige.

Lyman drew on the society's legacy of broad-based collective activism to involve large numbers of its rank and file in the problems of an increasingly complex society.¹⁶ In so doing, she led Mormon women into the front lines of modern social work as they studied and trained to use efficient and effective methods of delivering aid to those in need, becoming, in effect, a veritable army of social work paraprofessionals.¹⁷ Perhaps her greatest accomplishment occurred during the 1920s, when, with the encouragement of Clarissa Smith Williams, she orchestrated the society's Herculean attack on the high rates of infant and maternal mortality in the Intermountain West.

This attainment brought Mormon women into cooperation with officials administering the first federal program designed specifically to address social welfare needs: the Maternity and Infancy Act of 1921 which provided matching grants to the states for educational work benefiting mothers and young children. Better known as the Sheppard-Towner Act, this measure resulted in significant declines in maternal and infant mortality rates in many areas of the nation. Government leaders in Utah credited such gains in their locale to the efforts of thousands of Relief Society women who organized conferences that provided information on health and nutrition and set up clinics in which mothers and children were screened by physicians and nurses for health problems. Under the supervision of Lyman and the general board, one stake even sponsored a maternity hospital while many others arranged for physicians and nurses to assist expectant mothers and provided the supplies necessary for clean,

¹⁶For Mormon women and the suffrage struggle, see Madsen, *An Advocate for Women*; Lola Van Wagenen, *Sister-Wives and Suffragists: Polygamy and the Politics of Woman Suffrage* (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1994; rpt., Provo, Utah: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History/BYU Studies, Dissertations in LDS History Series, 2003).

¹⁷Dave Hall, "From Home Service to Social Service: Amy Brown Lyman and the Development of Social Work in the LDS Church," *Mormon Historical Studies* 9 (Fall 2008), 67–88.

safe deliveries.¹⁸

At a time when Mormons were just beginning to emerge from the shadow of negative stereotypes, Lyman's work in the Relief Society helped mold the organization into a vibrant agency carrying out a well-respected agenda of education and community betterment. In so doing it provided convincing evidence for a more positive image, winning for the Church and its women the respect of social reformers and women's organizations across the nation.¹⁹ Under Lyman's leadership, Relief Society women also became a potent lobbying force for a variety of measures benefiting the health and welfare of the entire community.²⁰

Such activities carried out by women organized for that purpose harmonized well in the national context. Like women across the coun-

¹⁸Loretta L Hefner, "The National Women's Relief Society and the U.S. Sheppard-Towner Act," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50 (Summer 1982): 255-67. Cottonwood Stake led out in this effort. Amanda N. Bagley, "Relief Society Conference address, October 3, 1925," *Relief Society Magazine* 12 (December 1925): 635-36.

¹⁹Utah became something of a national model as its low combined infant and maternal mortality rates attracted the attention of the U.S. Children's Bureau, Department of Labor, which highlighted its progress in bureau reports. In a 1926 visit, Children's Bureau chief Grace Abbott noted that Utah stood "very high in child welfare work." Abbott had for some time recognized the "unique features" of the state's success and had invited H. Y. Richards, director of Utah's Bureau of Child Hygiene, to address a 1925 conference of Sheppard-Towner administrators on the topic of "Cooperation of Lay Organizations in Maternity and Infancy Work." "Child Welfare Plea Is Made," *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 28, 1926, newspaper clipping, Amy Brown Lyman Papers, Box 4, fd 3, Perry Special Collections; H. Y. Richards, M.D., director, Bureau of Child Hygiene, State Board of Health, Utah, "The Cooperation of Lay Organizations in Maternity and Infancy Work," *Proceedings of the Third Annual Conference of State Directors in Charge of the Local Administration of the Maternity and Infancy Act*, Children's Bureau Publication, No. 157 (Washington D.C.: Department of Labor, 1926), 183-86.

²⁰Foremost among the Relief Society's lobbying efforts during this period was funding for a state training school for the mentally retarded. *Handbook of Relief Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: General Board of Relief Society, 1931), 60; Vera White Pohlman, Oral History, interviewed by Dave Hall, Salt Lake City, Utah, July 22, 1991, audiotape in my possession; Evelyn Hodges Lewis, Oral History, inter-

try, Mormon women felt the need to build an agenda of service and reform because most male political and community leaders were generally not addressing a host of social problems then emerging in American society.²¹ As Mormon women, mobilized through the Relief Society, joined their American counterparts in leading out on social welfare issues, they were fully aware of the important contribution made by their sex. General board member Jeannette Hyde expressed this view when she defined women's responsibility to improve maternal and child health at the April 1923 Relief Society general conference: "You may ask, 'Would not the men . . . have done the same?' I shall only answer you by asking: 'Have they done it in the past?'"²²

In short, in the first three decades of the twentieth century, Lyman and the women of her generation adapted the legacy of female activism developed during the territorial period to address the issues affecting them in a new setting. In the process, they created a valued role for themselves in Church and community, one praised by priesthood leaders and individual members alike.

With such experiences behind her, Lyman seemed ideally prepared to use her trained social work veterans to confront the challenges soon to emerge during the Great Depression. However, in 1928 Clarissa S. Williams resigned because of poor health. Called to replace her was Louise Yates Robison, the sixty-two-year-old wife of a businessman and mother of six, who had served as a counselor in the Relief Society presidency for seven years.²³ Although Robison selected Lyman as her first counselor, the two women never developed a congenial working relationship. The new president was more retir-

viewed by Dave Hall, August 28, 1992, San Bernardino, California, audiotape in my possession. For a contemporary observation acknowledging the Relief Society's political influence and the training school effort, see "Presiding Bishop Sylvester Q. Cannon," in Julia A. F. Lund, "Conference of the Relief Society," *Relief Society Magazine* 16 (December 1929): 661.

²¹J. Stanley Lemons, *The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), esp. 117–80; Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890–1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

²²Jeannette A. Hyde, "Responsibility of Woman as a Citizen," *Relief Society Magazine* 10 (June 1923): 308–10.

²³Jennie Brimhall Knight, "Louise Yates Robison," *Relief Society Maga-*

ing by nature than Lyman and less willing than Williams to wholeheartedly support Lyman's initiatives.²⁴ In fairness, Robison found herself in a very difficult situation after the dynamic collaboration between Williams and Lyman. With a less ambitious vision of her own, Robison proved increasingly unsupportive of Lyman's expansive agenda for the organization; perhaps the principal reason behind the noticeable coolness that developed between the two women. As a result, Lyman found her energies restricted largely to the central offices of the Social Service Department—an admittedly important position given the gathering economic storm, but one in which she felt isolated and frustrated. Given the wide influence she had previously exercised as general secretary under Williams, her new status gave her little ability to shape the organization's agenda and simultaneously left her with comparatively little contact with the rank and file.²⁵ Some of Lyman's co-workers believed that her comparative restriction may have contributed to a noticeable drift in the organization's agenda at a time when resolute action was required to confront

zine 16 (January 1929), 3–6.

²⁴An example of Robison's conservatism is her handling of the Relief Society's lobbying to support the creation of a state training school for the mentally retarded, a measure that had begun under her predecessor. Robison prefaced a circular letter regarding a petition drive mounted by the society in favor of the institution: "As you know the Relief Society is very conservative in its activities, but this is in reality a piece of follow-up work upon our convention program, and we feel that the need sought justifies all our efforts." Louise Y. Robison and Julia A. F. Lund, Relief Society Circular Letter to the Utah Stakes, December 31, 1928, Relief Society Circular Letter Files, CR 11 8, LDS Church History Library.

²⁵Pohlman, Oral History. Parry D. Sorensen, who served as a missionary when Richard R. and Amy Lyman presided over the European Mission (and who went on to a lengthy and distinguished career as a journalist and university professor in Utah) recalled Amy's frustration over conditions in the Relief Society under Robison. Richard told Sorensen that Lyman and Robison "just tolerated each other." Parry D. Sorensen, Oral History, interviewed by Dave Hall, Salt Lake City, June 19, 1992, 7, typescript in my possession. For Lyman's supervision of Relief Society affairs from an unapproving observer, see Annie Cannon, Journal, April 14, 1921, December 13, 1928, January 28, 1929, Box 1, fds. 2–4.



J. Reuben Clark, counselor in the First Presidency, 1933–61. All photos in this article, unless otherwise noted, courtesy of the LDS Church History Library.

head-on the developing economic crisis.²⁶ It is true that, despite the impressive service Relief Society women rendered in response to the economic crisis, it exhibited far less proactive innovation. Whatever

²⁶Pohlman, Oral History; Leona Fetzer Winch, Oral History, Interviewed by Dave Hall, Manti, Utah, July 27, 1991, tape in my possession;

the cause, over the course of the 1930s the impressive activism exercised in community affairs by Relief Society women during the previous decade began to dissipate.²⁷ Such were the circumstances in the Relief Society when J. Reuben Clark joined the First Presidency early in 1933.

Clark and Lyman were nearly exact contemporaries, born just a few months apart.²⁸ The paths they followed to fulfill their parallel ambitions provide insight into the opportunities and constraints that gender imposed on men and women of their generation. Like Lyman, Clark was raised in a small Utah community (in his case Grantsville, in hers, Pleasant Grove) and both were noted from their youth for their intelligence and ambition.²⁹ The two also had in common early training as educators—in Lyman's case, one of the few career options then open to her sex. But while, according to the

Lewis, Oral History. Speaking at the October 1935 Relief Society conference (which Robison was unable to attend due to the severe injury of her husband in a fall), Lyman gently expressed her pent-up frustrations: "I have often wondered why, during this depression, when so many men have been out of work, somebody did not mobilize them in the interest of community improvement. I hope that by next Spring we in the Relief Society will have some plans for this work." Amy Brown Lyman, "Official Instructions," *Relief Society Magazine* 22 (November 1935): 703–9. Of course, by the following April, J. Reuben Clark's Churchwide plan had been announced.

²⁷For the considerable amount of Relief Society charitable activities during this period, see Jill Mulvay Derr, "Changing Relief Society Charity to Make Way for Welfare, 1930–1944," in *New Views of Mormon History: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington*, edited by Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 244–58. For other factors that affected Relief Society activism in the 1930s, see Derr, "Strength in Our Union," 186–88.

²⁸Clark was born in September 1871, Lyman in February, 1872. Lyman died in December 1959. Clark outlived her by three years, dying in 1962.

²⁹Other shared characteristics included strong wills and stubbornness. Even as a young girl, Lyman's take-charge, determined manner earned her the nickname of "Ready Aim Fire" from the children of Pleasant Grove. Susan Elizabeth Driggs, Oral History, Interviewed by Dave Hall, Pleasant Grove, Utah, July 7, 1991, audiotape in my possession. Clark's strength of will is perhaps best illustrated by an anecdote related by D. Michael Quinn, *Elder Statesman: A Biography of J. Reuben Clark* (Salt Lake City: Signature

custom of the time, her teaching career ended with marriage, his ended when he pursued a career available from the broader range of opportunities open to men. His dreams led him eastward, far beyond the Wasatch. While Lyman remained in Utah and eventually found both local and national recognition and distinction through her Relief Society work, Clark sought and achieved notable distinctions in the secular realm of law and politics in the nation's capital and New York City. He held a series of important government posts including Solicitor General of the State Department in the William Howard Taft administration, Undersecretary of State for President Calvin Coolidge, and finally, Ambassador to Mexico during the presidency of Herbert Hoover. Clark's achievements in the secular realm caught and held the attention of Church leaders and ultimately led to his rather reluctant entry, at age sixty-one, into the highest levels of Church leadership as counselor to President Heber J. Grant.³⁰

Perhaps no one was more stunned by this latter development than Clark. Responding just months before his call to a letter repeating speculation that he was destined to fill a vacancy in the Church's Quorum of the Twelve, Clark responded candidly: "I think there is no more danger of my being named [an apostle] than there is of my flying to the moon." He added that he had "never sought nor craved church office."³¹ In fact, for much of his adult life he had been largely uninvolved in Church affairs. But he was neither antagonistic toward the Church nor did he ever deny his association with the faith, even during the very difficult years of the Reed Smoot investigations when being a Mormon in Washington was no advantage. And during the mid-1920s when he turned away from Washington for a time and focused his energies in Utah, he returned to full activity and even accepted a call to the general board of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association. But his priorities and ambitions were cen-

Books, 2002), 7, 8. When asked by a non-Mormon co-worker whether Clark shared a common ancestor with the co-worker's wife through the Woolley family, Clark responded: "Is your wife rather insistent in her opinions?" . . . 'Yes,' was the reply. 'Does she ever discount her opinions?' 'No.' 'If you have a dispute, is she right and you wrong?' When the man answered in the affirmative, Reuben smiled and said, 'Yes, we are related.'"

³⁰Ibid., 40, 41.

³¹Ibid., 41.

tered outside of the Church even as high-ranking Church leaders, including President Grant, watched his developing career with approval and saw the advantages that accrued to the Church through his secular attainments.³²

During the decades in which Clark focused on the advancement of his career, to maintain the stability and spiritual well-being of his own family, Clark relied almost completely on his devoted wife, Luacine (“Lute”) Savage Clark. Her assistance was especially important as his career demanded frequent and often lengthy absences which left her exclusively in charge of household affairs. Based on his own experience, no doubt reinforced by that of his eastern peers, he saw this division of labor as the natural role of women: Men were to make a living, and women were to make a home that would be an emotional refuge for their husbands and to raise the children. Anything else that claimed the attention of women he saw as a distraction and a deviation.³³ It was almost the polar opposite from the perspective toward women held by Lyman and many others in the Church who had witnessed the Relief Society’s dynamic activism of the 1910s and 1920s and could bear record of the benefits it brought to the Mormon community.³⁴

In comparison to Clark, Lyman could best be termed a feminist,

³²Ibid., 21–24, 30, 38, 39.

³³Ibid., 11, 18. Speaking to the Relief Society general conference in 1949, four years after Lyman’s release, Clark gave a clear statement of his views: “We of the Priesthood are out in the world. We meet all kinds of conditions. We are engaged in something of a battle from day to day, trying to secure those things which maintain life. We do not have much time with you, nor with the children, and so we must look to you, and do look to you . . . to build the home and make it a home. . . .

“I hope the Lord will bless you in your labors. I hope he will bring to each of you a realization of what you ought to be, and what you ought to do. And do not try to be anything else but good mothers and good homemakers, for that will exhaust all the time, all the effort, and pay the greatest dividends of anything else you can do in the world.” J. Reuben Clark, “The Prophet’s Sailing Orders to Relief Society,” *Relief Society Magazine* 36 (December 1949): 797–98.

³⁴A number of Church leaders over the years advocated public activism by Mormon women through the Relief Society, especially in areas of moral issues and public health. Sylvester Q. Cannon, Presiding Bishop

although not a radical one, her co-workers and family members were quick to point out.³⁵ She was, rather, a cultural feminist. She did not challenge the idea that men and women had separate yet complementary roles to play in society. But she was strongly committed to equality in employment, equal pay for equal work, and the necessity of women's involvement in community affairs, including politics.³⁶ Lyman was especially committed to what she and others of her generation termed "organized womanhood." This meant women working together *as women* to pursue desired reforms, especially in such areas as social welfare and public health. As Lyman watched the benefits that members of the Relief Society brought to their communities through collective activism, she recognized the corresponding gains in confidence and self-esteem that came to these women through their participation in these endeavors.³⁷

These contrasts in their views regarding the role of women were not the only differences that divided Clark and Lyman. Perhaps Clark's long separation from the Mormon core led him to hold rather idealized views not just about women, but also about the Church's ability to take care of its own. Whatever the factors behind his reasoning, he was particularly troubled by the cooperation taking place be-

from 1925 to 1928, had been outspoken in his support of the Relief Society's activities. During Lyman's presidency, others were not shy in praising the broad role the Relief Society women had played in the past and urging them on to similar efforts in the future. "The usefulness of the Relief Society," observed LeGrand Richards of the Presiding Bishopric, for example, "goes far beyond sewing and canning and doing these menial things that have to be done." LeGrand Richards, "The Place of the Relief Society in the Welfare Program," *Relief Society Magazine* 27 (May 1940): 309–12; see also Joseph F. Merrill, "Let Us Do Something about Smoking," *Relief Society Magazine* 27 (May 1940): 304–6.

³⁵Pohlman, Oral History; Amy Kathryn Lyman Engar, Oral History, interviewed by Dave Hall, Salt Lake City, December 4, 1990, audiotape in my possession; Wintch, Oral History.

³⁶She felt strongly that women should run for office themselves and won a seat in the Utah legislature in 1922, where she introduced the legislation allowing Utah's participation in the Sheppard-Towner Act. Pohlman, Oral History; Engar, Oral History.

³⁷Pohlman, Oral History; Wintch, Oral History; Engar, Oral History. For the national context, see Lemons, *The Woman Citizen*, x, xi.

tween the Church (in particular the Relief Society and Presiding Bishopric's Office) and the government in dealing with the crisis of the Great Depression.³⁸ Like Clark, Lyman was a Republican and not uncritical of aspects of the New Deal.³⁹ But because of her work in the Social Service Department, she dealt regularly with thousands of jobless, hungry, and increasingly desperate victims of the economic downturn and thus recognized that the New Deal's relief programs were indispensable supplements to overburdened local and Church resources. Consequently, she willingly cooperated with federal efforts to address the national emergency, including the short-term "federalization" of the Relief Society's Social Service Department to assist in the distribution of relief and even agreed to transfer several of her trained social workers to positions in the public sector as county and state agencies developed.⁴⁰

For Clark, quite simply, such cooperation was dangerous. Government, as he saw it, was corrupting, especially the Democratic

³⁸Garth L. Mangum and Bruce D. Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), 122.

³⁹Lyman was unhappy with the New Deal's early reliance on the dole, a view not uncommon among social workers of the time. Engar, *Oral History*. For other social workers who shared Lyman's views, see James T. Patterson, *America's Struggle against Poverty, 1900–1985* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985), 45.

⁴⁰As early as the spring of 1932, Lyman was telling the Relief Society General Board about a shift in thinking among charity workers and politicians. Faced with state governments who were unwilling or unable to take action and with local sources of relief largely exhausted, knowledgeable observers, she noted, realized that only the federal government could be looked to for a solution. Relief Society General Board Minutes, May 19, 1932, quoted in Derr, "Changing Relief Society to Make Way for Welfare," 251. In April 1934 general conference, Lyman praised Roosevelt's "heroic" efforts to ease unemployment and urged Relief Society women to remain interested participants in the political process. "Counselor Amy Brown Lyman," *Relief Society Magazine* 21 (May 1934): 286–89. See also Amy Brown Lyman, "Present Day Problems," draft of address presented at April 1934 conference, Lyman Papers, Perry Special Collections; Pohlman, *Oral History*; Wintch, *Oral History*.



General Church Welfare Committee, 1940. J. Reuben Clark presides at the head of the table with Harold B. Lee seated third from Clark's left. Amy Brown Lyman is the only woman present.

brand of Franklin Roosevelt.⁴¹ As he later expressed it, he was worried that programs such as those of the New Deal might lead to the establishment of “a socialistic or communistic state in which the family would disappear, religion would be prescribed and controlled by the state, and we should all become mere creatures of the state, ruled over by ambitious and designing men.”⁴² In addition, he was concerned that the New Deal would lead to conditions that would result in seri-

⁴¹For Clark's partisan views, see Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 137. Vera Pohlman felt that her own position with the state welfare commission (by implication making her a Democrat) was the main reason Lyman had to “fight” Clark to get approval for Pohlman to join her presidency as general secretary-treasurer. Pohlman, Oral History. Clark's office diary also reveals an ongoing involvement in Republican politics. For example, on August 15, 1936, he recorded an extended discussion with Herbert Hoover about the Republican National Convention. J. Reuben Clark Office Diary, Clarkana Papers of J. Reuben Clark, Jr., MSS 303, Box 9, fd. 1, Perry Special Collections.

⁴²J. Reuben Clark, Letter to Golden R. Buchanan, May 8, 1943, Box

ous political trouble for the nation. "I fear," he observed during a regional priesthood meeting in October of 1935, "we need not be surprised if some blood shall run before we of this nation finally find ourselves."⁴³ For Clark, cutting all links to corruptive federal programs and monies was thus a matter of necessity to protect the Church and its members—not to mention the reputation Mormons enjoyed for taking care of their own. Clark's views were shaped by his experience with politics and government; Lyman's by her work in the social work trenches. As a result, in welfare matters Lyman was more pragmatic while Clark tended toward the ideological.

Soon after entering the First Presidency, Clark's concerns led him to propose what eventually became the Church Welfare Plan. Despite initial resistance from Presiding Bishop Sylvester Q. Cannon and others directly involved with relief who saw Church resources as grossly inadequate to the task, Clark continued to lobby for a Church alternative to federal measures. At April 1936 general conference, he was finally able to announce his plan.⁴⁴ Based on her experience, Lyman was convinced that the proposed move would not command sufficient resources to adequately assist even the "worthy poor" who were its intended beneficiaries, but she nevertheless saw Clark's initiative as a valuable supplement to still meager and often inconsistent federal measures and as a major step forward for the Church's charity efforts. Consequently, she came wholeheartedly to support the plan.⁴⁵ However, there was little she could do directly to support the new program's development because her estrangement from Robison had already distanced her from the center of power in the Relief Society and, after mid-1936, she spent the next two years in England with her husband, Apostle Richard R. Lyman, where he presided over

367, fd.1, Clark Papers, as quoted in Quinn, *Elder Statesman*, 392.

⁴³J. Reuben Clark, Address at Special Priesthood Meeting held in Tabernacle, October 7, 1935, typescript, Clark Papers, Box 196, Binder 2, 15; see also Quinn, *Elder Statesman*, 393.

⁴⁴When initially announced in the aftermath of the Social Security Act, it was named the Church Security Plan, but it was later changed to avoid confusion with the government program. Mangum and Blumell *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 126.

⁴⁵Pohlman, Oral History; Wintch, Oral History.

the European Mission.⁴⁶

As the welfare plan developed, Clark sought the focused support of the Relief Society but was disappointed with what he saw as indifference under Robison's leadership.⁴⁷ By the late 1930s, he seems to have realized that a change in Relief Society administrations was necessary if his program was to achieve its desired ends. In 1937, during an extended visit to England to commemorate the centennial of missionary work in Great Britain, Clark had become better acquainted with Amy Lyman, who, among her other activities, was then striving to organize the welfare activities of European Relief Societies.⁴⁸ It seems likely that, during this time, Clark began to realize how Lyman's energy and skill could benefit his welfare plan. When the Lymans returned from England in September, 1938, despite Clark's differences with Amy in many areas, it was likely his influence that assured her selection as the new general Relief Society president in December 1939.

⁴⁶On the welfare plan, see Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 130–51. On Lyman during the Great Depression, see Pohlman, *Oral History*; Wintch, *Oral History*.

⁴⁷In the fall of 1937, Church leaders complained that general Relief Society leaders seemed apathetic toward the new plan. As evidence of this, they pointed to the printed program for the fall 1937 Relief Society conference. In general, these conferences focused intensively on the items at the heart of the society's agenda as determined by its leadership. The program for that fall revealed, however, that not a single session was devoted to the welfare plan. While it was apparently too late to change the bulk of the conference sessions, Relief Society leaders made time for a First Presidency message which urged the women of the society to increase their efforts in behalf of the welfare plan "so the greater and more permanent object of this program might be realized, namely: That each individual family shall be helped in its efforts to help itself." In his remarks at the conference, President Grant also urged greater support for the program. His address was later given extensive treatment in the *Relief Society Magazine*. "Message from the First Presidency," Relief Society Conference, September 30, 1937, *Relief Society Magazine* 24 (November 1937): 737; Heber J. Grant, "Address," *Relief Society Magazine* 25 (January 1938): 12–15 Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 144.

⁴⁸Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 127; "Social Service Institutes—European Mission," Amy Brown Lyman Collection, Box 2, fd. 6, i-xiii, Perry Special Collections.

As president, Lyman fully marshaled Relief Society women in support of the welfare plan, seeing in this obligation an opportunity to serve the needs of Church members while fostering a renewed sense of *esprit de corps* in the organization. In consequence, the plan reached a high point of effectiveness. But Lyman's goals extended well beyond simple support for Clark's initiatives. She also sought to reverse the drift in Relief Society affairs that had characterized the 1930s, revitalize its agenda, and renew the collective activism of years past to address issues of import to a coming generation.⁴⁹

Making effective use of the tools at her disposal, she began with the March issue of the *Relief Society Magazine*, the first prepared entirely under the supervision of her new general board.⁵⁰ On its cover was an illustration of a young woman in profile, eyes lifted in an expression of resolute anticipation, below her the words "Looking Forward." To anyone perusing the publication, it was apparent that a firm hand with a clear vision had shaped its content. A central theme was the approaching hundredth anniversary of the society in 1942, which Lyman saw as an important opportunity to engender a renewed sense of mission among its members. Board members wrote short articles extolling past activities and calling the current generation to "accomplish even greater things." Giving direction to this exhortation, the *Magazine* highlighted aspects of a new agenda in education, social welfare work, and spiritual uplift.⁵¹ The board also gave renewed emphasis to a centennial membership drive begun under Louise Robison with the stated goal of enrolling enough dues-paying members to reach 100,000 by the anniversary date. "With faces set resolutely toward the future," predicted new General Board member Mary Grant Judd, along with growing numbers, "a new determination will come

⁴⁹For a summary of Lyman's plans, see Amy Brown Lyman, "Relief Society as a Community Builder," *Relief Society Magazine* 27 (March 1940): 179–81.

⁵⁰Seeking to create a unified and energetic band of leaders, Lyman released fourteen members of the previous board at her call, all but one of whom were older women who had served ten years or more, several for nearly two decades. She retained nine members, all but one of whom had served five years or less, and added twelve new women to her own board.

⁵¹Donna D. Sorensen, "Relief Society Spiritually Strong," *Relief Society Magazine* 27 (March 1940): 173.



This idealized portrait of spiritualized resolve, labeled “Looking Forward,” captures the mood with which Amy Brown Lyman launched her presidency. Photo by Dave Hall.

to us to do our part in an organization which will wield an ever increasing influence for good.”⁵²

Sounding the keynote in the issue was Lyman’s “Relief Society as a Community Builder.” It focused in detail on the society’s impressive accomplishments in the realm of social welfare, including the dynamic activism of the 1920s. “The achievements of Relief Society women, both in public life and in the home,” she observed, “stand today as a monument to the power of their faith and service and as a challenge to the coming generation.”⁵³

However, in nearly all but her support of the Welfare Program, it soon became clear that Lyman’s agenda was in conflict with Clark’s. Because Heber J. Grant’s health was declining, Clark was exercising an ever-growing influence over Church affairs. In fact, the eighty-three-year-old Grant, already somewhat fragile physically, experienced a debilitating stroke just a month after Lyman became Relief Society presidency. But Grant’s health was not the only factor driving Clark’s influence over Church affairs. The force of his personality must also be taken into account as well as a new style of leadership he brought with him as a legacy of his years in law and government, one that reinforced and extended trends already appearing in Church government. Clark’s approach toward decision-making was strongly top-down in character and typical of the male-dominated secular realm in which he had made his career. While he knew the need to carefully examine all sides of a problem before a decision was made, he possessed keen mental abilities and rarely encountered an argument persuasive enough to force him to alter his views.⁵⁴ In addition, in his administrative style he was often outspoken and unusually direct, repeating the main thrust of his views several times in both written and oral communications. When confronted with a request with which he did not agree, he left no room for confusion about his response, stating on one occasion: “When you tell people no, you better tell it in emphatic terms; if you say it in a nice way they think you indi-

⁵²Mary Grant Judd, “My Relief Society Tapestry,” *Relief Society Magazine* 27 (March 1940): 167.

⁵³Lyman, “Relief Society as a Community Builder,” 181.

⁵⁴Clark himself acknowledged this trait in a light-hearted way, quipping to his brother: “We Clarks are a good deal like the Harvard man—you can tell a Harvard man wherever you see him—but you can’t tell him much. Even so with us.” Quoted in Quinn, *Elder Statesman*, 50.

cate yes.”⁵⁵ And Clark, who gave his absolute loyalty to President Grant, expected it in return from those under his authority. Clark’s general reluctance to revisit a decision once made proved a challenge to the equally strong-willed but somewhat less emphatic Lyman.

While sometimes unusually direct and outspoken herself, especially while pushing for innovations during the development of the Relief Society’s dynamic agenda in the 1910s and 1920s, Lyman’s administrative style was very different from Clark’s. Indeed her approach toward decision-making differed noticeably from the male-dominated business model used increasingly in Church affairs. Prioritizing consensus, her decision-making style was more in line with practices from an earlier period in Church history and one that remained valorized by her sex.⁵⁶ As Relief Society president, Lyman gathered around her strong-willed and accomplished women to whom she delegated significant responsibilities and the authority to carry them out. When large matters came before the Relief Society board for discussion, she did not dominate the process but encouraged board members to speak their minds freely before a decision was made. And when that decision was reached, it generally reflected the consensus of all involved.⁵⁷

Just as Lyman followed a template for decision-making that dif-

⁵⁵Ibid., 51.

⁵⁶For an example of Lyman’s willingness during the 1910s to press an issue when she thought it in the best interest of the Relief Society, see Janath Russell Cannon and Jill Mulvay Derr, “Resolving Differences/Achieving Unity: Lessons from the History of Relief Society,” in *As Women of Faith: Talks Selected from the BYU Women’s Conferences*, edited by Mary E. Stovall and Carol Cornwall Madsen (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989): 128–31. For examples of a consensus model in Church decision-making, see Edwin B. Firmage, ed., *An Abundant Life: The Memoirs of Hugh B. Brown* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 127, and Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 97.

⁵⁷Leona Fetzner Wintch, a member of Lyman’s general board, and Vera White Pohlman, Lyman’s secretary-treasurer, both recalled Lyman’s willingness to surround herself with strong leaders whom she encouraged to speak their minds even when it sometimes (though rarely) led to heated discussions about matters of import. Wintch, Oral History; Pohlman, Oral History. Evelyn Hodges Lewis, who worked as a social worker for Lyman, re-

ferred from the male model utilized by Clark, in regard to lines of authority she followed a pattern that was more typical of her sex. In general it can be observed that American women, excluded from traditional seats of power, had long used personal relationships to develop alternative sources of influence. Women of the Relief Society were no exception. Lyman found it both natural and prudent to develop personal relationships with Church leaders, including wives and daughters in this network of influence. But as Thomas G. Alexander has pointed out in his now-classic study, *Mormonism in Transition*, by the turn of the century, in consequence of membership growth and administrative demands, most Church organizations were already moving away from such informal power relationships toward more rigid models drawn from developing management styles in government and industry.⁵⁸ The Relief Society lagged in adopting these changes and, even after its leaders were officially obliged to work through intervening levels of priesthood authority rather than deal directly with the First Presidency, in practice they continued to use personal contacts to make end-runs around the formal structure.⁵⁹ Lyman, for example, had earlier counted on extended family ties through her husband to facilitate access to Joseph F. Smith. Similarly, since childhood, her husband had been very close to Heber J. Grant while she had been close to his wife, Augusta Winters Grant. In addition, she now counted the daughters of President Grant, J. Reuben Clark, and George Albert Smith, president of the Quorum of the Twelve, among her board members. In light of such links, even if the formal bureaucracy resisted her ideas or plans, she could often count on getting a fair hear-

called that Amy was a strong administrator who ran a tight ship but, while she had decided opinions, was willing to listen to her workers and treated them with respect and concern. Lewis, Oral History.

⁵⁸Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 93–124. For the development of modern management techniques in the larger society, see Alfred D. Chandler Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977).

⁵⁹Such end-runs, of course, still operate in the Church, especially at the local level, as individuals who have experience in ward or stake leadership can attest. For changes in access by the Relief Society to the First Presidency and indications that leaders of the organization worked around it, see Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 241–42; Pohlman, Oral History; Annie Cannon, Journal, August 11, 1928, Box 1, fd. 3.

ing and, as a result, carefully cultivated and managed these routes to influence.⁶⁰

Clark, however, sought to limit such short-circuiting of formal lines of authority even as he sought efficiency over consensus in Church government. As early as the mid-1930s, his management style was gaining momentum which led many to applaud the firm hand with which he wielded his administrative power, even as his style raised the eyebrows of others. Some even felt his approach lent an unduly authoritarian tone to Church decision making.⁶¹ By the 1940s, Clark's strong hold on Church affairs coupled with Grant's declining health made Lyman's efforts to work around the formidable counselor increasingly difficult. Clark shielded the ailing president from stress by continuing to restrict access to him, becoming, in essence the gatekeeper of the First Presidency and coming to function, over time,

⁶⁰These were Mary Grant Judd, Marianne Clark Sharp, and Edith Smith Elliott. President Clark cautioned Lyman against using the daughters of Church leaders as means to work around the bureaucracy; but in the view of family and co-workers, the opportunity to influence decisions through these contacts was certainly not lost on Lyman. However, Lyman's appointment of Sharp to the Relief Society board should not be seen as simple conciliation of Clark. Sharp, who possessed her father's razor-sharp intellect, was a valued member of Lyman's board and went on to become a dynamic counselor in the Relief Society presidency of Belle Spafford. The same could be said about the talents and contributions of Judd and Elliott. As far as social ties with President Grant and his wife, Lyman and Augusta Winters Grant belonged to some of the same women's clubs, and for years the Lymans and Grants frequently socialized. Pohlman, Oral History; Engar, Oral History; Wintch, Oral History, "Richard Roswell Lyman," in Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compendium of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901–30), 3:756; Amy Brown Lyman, "Augusta Winters Grant," Lyman Collection, Box 6, fd. 3, Perry Special Collections.

⁶¹Clark's wife wrote him on August 20, 1936, that Apostle Albert E. Bowen felt that some Utah Mormons disagreed with Clark's political associations and reported that some even asserted that Clark "was nothing but a Dictator." Quoted in Quinn, *Elder Statesman*, 80. Typically given to hyperbole, Lyman's husband, Richard, expressed the same concerns, saying in Parry Sorensen's hearing in the late 1930s or early 1940s, "We're living under a dictatorship here." Sorensen, Oral History, 8.

much like a corporate chief operations officer. By 1940 he had already assumed responsibility for much of the day-to-day management of Church affairs and had come to make routine decisions and, since the mid-thirties, had even handled much of President Grant's mail. Although he tried to be careful to ensure that his decisions reflected the will of the Church president, given the compelling reasoning with which he presented his perspective and the growing trust that Grant demonstrated in his judgment, it is not surprising that Clark's personal views seemed to prevail.⁶²

In fairness to Clark, not only was President Grant ailing, but the second counselor in the First Presidency, David O. McKay, was suffering from a serious lung ailment at the time of Grant's stroke and experienced "periodic health problems thereafter." Clark was therefore left with tremendous burdens that pressed heavily upon him.⁶³ Amy Lyman, aware of the pressures on Clark, was no doubt sympathetic; she had been in a similar position of extreme pressure when, as general secretary, she carried demanding responsibilities during the administrations of Emmeline B. Wells and Clarissa Smith Williams.⁶⁴

Given these circumstances, Lyman could not have been surprised to find that, even as she announced her agenda for a reinvigorated Relief Society, Clark was seeking to move the organization in the opposite direction as part of an overall strategy to simplify Church programs. But while she knew that it was important to defer to those in authority, she felt that some issues were of such import that further discussion was warranted. She had never been afraid to stand up for what she knew was right and, as a leader, encouraged oth-

⁶²Quinn, *Elder Statesman*, 15, 83–86. Quinn notes Clark's efforts to preserve the prerogatives of the ailing Church president but then presents evidence that can be interpreted to demonstrate that, despite Clark's protestations to the contrary, he seems to have been the initiator of Church policies.

⁶³Quotation and information on McKay's health from Quinn, *Elder Statesman*, 92.

⁶⁴Wells experienced declining vigor in the latter years of her administration while Williams, already plagued by heart problems, named Lyman manager in charge of all Relief Society affairs at the beginning of her presidency in 1921. Pohlman, *Oral History*; Annie Cannon, *Journal*, April 14, 1921, Box 1, fd. 2.

ers to do the same.⁶⁵

In March 1940, just a month after President Grant's stroke, Clark summoned Relief Society leaders into a meeting with the presidencies of the other auxiliaries to discuss a memorandum he had written calling for a reduction of what he deemed "unnecessary activities." He sought to bring about a significant realignment of programs to focus them more closely on what he saw as the central missions of the Church: strengthening family unity, building testimony, and caring for the poor. At a time when a great deal of concern was being expressed nationally and in the Church about the toll the Great Depression had taken on family life, he was especially troubled by activities that took women out of the home.⁶⁶ Consequently, he asked the Relief Society to pull back from its broad agenda and focus its energies on supporting the welfare plan as its major non-home-centered objective. Encapsulating his views that the organization should pursue only a limited range of tasks under the close supervision of Church leaders, in an address delivered later that year, he urged the Relief Society to give up its broad agenda of educational work and leave the "merely social, cultural, and educational" to other community agencies. Except for the welfare plan, the organization should limit its activities to the "promotion of faith and testimony." In calling upon the society to assume its rightful position as the "handmaid of the priesthood," Clark envisioned its role as much like his own marriage. In that relationship, his devoted wife concentrated on providing support and assistance for him. He thus discouraged the Relief Society's practice of leading out in independent, if complementary, spheres of activity.⁶⁷

From Clark's perspective, concerned as he was about the growth of demanding Church programs, it did not seem unreasonable to ask the Relief Society to give up much of its educational work. He did not seem concerned about education itself being a distraction drawing

⁶⁵Wintch, Oral History; Pohlman, Oral History.

⁶⁶Divorce rates actually went down during the Depression, due to cost, but simple desertions seemed to have increased dramatically. David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 165–66; Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 282–83.

⁶⁷J. Reuben Clark, "Memorandum of Suggestions," quoted in Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 297–98; J. Reuben Clark, "Our Homes," *Relief Society Magazine* 27 (December 1940): 802.

women away from their roles in family and church; he did not indicate whether he approved of women's education or professional activities once they were married, although his extremely intelligent and well-educated daughter seemed to indicate that he approved of women's intellectual development, at least within his own family. Instead, his concerns involved the conservation of church resources and the energies of its members. In his eyes, much of the Relief Society education curriculum seemed unnecessary, especially in light of alternative education opportunities readily available through schools, colleges, and universities. Nor, given the growth of public sector services, did he find it necessary to continue—much less to expand—the Relief Society's broad-based social and charitable agenda—one linked to the larger community.⁶⁸

But based on her years of experience in building up the Relief Society, Lyman saw these activities, not as distractions from the society's central mission but as critical to it. In fact, she saw them as the key to holding the loyalty of its members. On the one hand, the educational curriculum provided vital intellectual stimulation for women in a congenial social setting. And while public sector services had greatly expanded under the Roosevelt administration, there remained many gaps to be filled, not to mention a perennial need for involvement and oversight by experienced and interested women, like those in the Relief Society, to ensure that public programs were functioning properly.⁶⁹ In short, while she agreed with Clark on the desirability of strengthening families and shoring up the welfare plan, she saw such issues as only part of a larger agenda that was vital to the spiritual and emotional well-being of Mormon women, an agenda which made valuable contributions to the entire community. In light of these considerations, the strong-willed Lyman seems to have decided to initiate

⁶⁸Of course, it is probably not irrelevant that the agenda the Relief Society sought to pursue might again have led it into cooperation with government programs as had been the case in earlier decades—a point that would not have been lost on Clark.

⁶⁹Oversight of the public sector was an ongoing concern for Lyman, and she had long seen the growth of federal programs as both an opportunity and a challenge for Relief Society women. In the October 1935 Relief Society conference, for example, she urged the women to see that they were represented on local welfare boards. Amy Brown Lyman, "Official Instructions," *Relief Society Magazine* 22 (November 1935): 703–9.

a series of maneuvers designed to engage the equally strong-willed Clark in negotiations to seek a compromise concerning the Relief Society's future.

Lyman was not being disloyal in her efforts to reshape Clark's plans in a way that would be, from her perspective, more beneficial both to Mormon women and the larger community. There was no doubt that she would ultimately follow the direction of her priesthood leaders; she had been taught to do so in her youth, and associates noted that she continued to do so as Relief Society president.⁷⁰ Yet she felt it her duty as she fulfilled her own calling to safeguard the welfare of the women within her stewardship. As Relief Society general president, if she thought Clark's plans were based on faulty assumptions or inadequate information about women and their needs, she saw it as her responsibility to make him aware that a more nuanced approach was required. Clark, of course, while self-confident and often opinionated, made no claims of his personal infallibility—quite the contrary. And he certainly understood the give and take of decision making even at the highest levels of the Church.⁷¹ Although he expected compliance, on those rare occasions when he was confronted with a coherent, compelling, and determined counter-argument, he had been known to readjust his plans. His willingness to make adjustments in the timing of the welfare plan is one example.⁷²

Lyman thus adopted a two-fold response to Clark's proposals. On the one hand, she cultivated support for her position among other Church leaders, including Presiding Bishop LeGrand Richards and his counselor, Joseph L. Wirthlin, with whom she worked closely, and the ailing but still involved Heber J. Grant, to whom Clark always deferred. On the other hand, she reached out to Clark himself in a number of ways. Most importantly, she continued to provide the Relief Society's unwavering support for the welfare plan. She made meaningful gestures to Clark in other ways as well, asking him, for instance, to contribute to the *Relief Society Magazine* a series of articles

⁷⁰Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 5. Leona Wintch noted that Lyman deferred to priesthood leaders, even when she disagreed with their views. Wintch, *Oral History*.

⁷¹Quinn does an excellent job of capturing the complexity and nuances of Clark's thinking and behavior in this regard. See, for example, Quinn, *Elder Statesman*, 50–54.

⁷²Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 121–24.

on the Bible, a subject to which he had devoted a lifetime of study. She also reemphasized testimony building and spiritual matters in the Relief Society curriculum. Concerned about family stability herself, she agreed to trim “unnecessary meetings” that took women out of the home. The curriculum year was shortened from nine months to eight, for instance, and stake Relief Society conferences were reduced from two days to one.⁷³ At his suggestion, she declined an invitation from the General Federation of Women’s Clubs to send Relief Society delegates to a national meeting held on the topic of defense. In short, she sought to follow the same advice she frequently offered to others: “Compromise on the lesser things, but hold firm to essentials.”⁷⁴

For Lyman, the essentials were laid out in an address she delivered at the Utah State Agricultural College in July 1940, one of the first opportunities she had to speak after the memorandum meeting outside of the formal venue of conference. It is clear from the topic she chose—“Some Challenges to Women”—and the content of her address, that Lyman had been struggling to find a way to balance Clark’s concerns with her own priorities for the Relief Society.⁷⁵ In this Logan speech she laid out an explicit blueprint of her own for women, even as she made some concessions to Clark’s sensibilities on matters of greatest concern to him. “I would like to advocate the idea of women becoming more interested in politics and government, both local and national,” she declared. They should not only vote, but also play an active role in the political process, helping select candidates and even running for office themselves “in fields where they are especially qualified.” “Women’s organizations,” and here we can assume

⁷³Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 282. Clark’s series on the Bible, “Wist Ye Not That I Must Be about My Father’s Business,” appeared serially in the *Relief Society Magazine* in 1943 and 1944.

⁷⁴Clark, Office Diary, June 10, 1941, Box 11, fd. 2, Clark Papers.

⁷⁵While much of what Lyman said at Logan would be repeated in bits and pieces in later Relief Society conference addresses and can be seen in the agenda of the organization as revealed in the pages of the *Relief Society Magazine*, this address neatly summarizes Lyman’s own vision while revealing her efforts to carefully adjust her views to make them more compatible with those of Clark. Amy Brown Lyman, “Some Challenges to Women,” Address, Utah Agricultural College, July, 1940, Lyman Collection, Box 4, fd. 7, Perry Special Collections.



Relief Society presidency, 1940–42. Standing, left: Vera W. Pohlman, general secretary-treasurer, Marcia K. Howells, first counselor, seated left: Donna D. Sorensen, second counselor, and Amy Brown Lyman.

she included the Relief Society, “should be interested in city, county, state and national administration and finance; in industrial problems and economics; in personal health, both mental and physical; in public health and health education; in the schools and school programs; in recreation; in housing.” “Let us work,” she continued, “against de-

structive forces, such as the use of alcohol, tobacco and other narcotic drugs; disease, crime, prejudice, war.” She especially encouraged such engagement by “older women” whose children were already raised—apparently in a nod to Clark’s concerns about taking mothers of young children out of the home.⁷⁶ However, in its entirety, Lyman’s address represents a strong call not for women’s retrenchment in the home, but for their active involvement in the affairs of the community. In other words, it calls for them to continue to pursue the kinds of activities that had characterized the work of the Relief Society in previous decades.

A major test of her ability to renegotiate Clark’s agenda to one more in line with long-running Relief Society practices came only weeks later. At that time, a Church board charged with simplifying programs in the auxiliaries took up Clark’s recommendation to consolidate Church magazines—specifically, combining the *Relief Society Magazine* with the *Children’s Friend*—the organ of the Primary Association.⁷⁷ Lyman discussed the matter with the Relief Society general board; and in a letter signed by Lyman and her counselors, Marcia K. Howells and Donna D. Sorensen, and representing the consensus of the board, they responded with a lengthy defense of the status quo. Their rhetoric was revealing: They asserted that the Relief Society was one of the oldest women’s organizations in existence and had long been regarded as the premier woman’s organization of the Church, a “companion to the Priesthood.” As such, it stood higher in the estimation of LDS women than any of the other Church auxiliaries. Once a woman joined the Relief Society, she could remain a dues-paying member for the rest of her life, while the Primary and YLMIA were aimed at the narrower age brackets of girls and young

⁷⁶Ibid., 5. Social workers had long been concerned about the absence of mothers of young children from the home. During the first decades of the twentieth century, this concern took the form of calling for a “living wage” that would allow mothers to remain at home with their children. Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), 408.

⁷⁷While Church correlation is generally associated with the 1960s and especially with Harold B. Lee, Clark was the father of the effort and his proposals for Church magazines in 1940 represent an example of his ongoing desire to simplify and economize in Church programs. Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 297–99, 330–36.

women. For all these reasons, Relief Society leaders reasoned, the organization deserved a periodical of its own. Indeed, it had been served with its own publications for nearly seventy years, first by the *Woman's Exponent*, then, after 1914, by the *Relief Society Magazine*, periodicals tailored to the specific needs of Mormon women. They not only entertained and inspired but also provided invaluable sources of information to women in even the most isolated areas. They had represented and unified a large and diverse organization.

Furthermore, from a practical perspective, the savings through consolidation would be minimal to nonexistent since official material (lesson manuals, official notices, etc.) would still have to be distributed, requiring the maintenance of separate mailing lists and the means to publish and disseminate these materials. This response was a strong and ultimately convincing argument, and Clark backed away from the proposal, thus sparing the *Relief Society Magazine*, as it turned out, for another thirty years.⁷⁸ This experience no doubt indicated to Lyman that her strategy to influence Clark's agenda might be successful if she marshaled her resources effectively.

In light of subsequent events, however, Lyman seems to have made a rare miscalculation by underestimating Clark's own resoluteness and failing to grasp his impressive skills in bureaucratic maneuver. Yet Lyman was formidable in her own right and might indeed have carried off at least some of her plan for a reinvigorated agenda—one that included continued community activism—except for the intrusion of larger events that greatly limited her effectiveness.

The first was World War II which brought severe restrictions to the work of the organization. Because of government recommendations to limit unnecessary travel, Church leaders suspended many meetings for the duration—including the society's semiannual conferences and the massive celebration planned for the Relief Society centennial in 1942. Even "nonessential" ward and stake meetings were cancelled, and general and stake Relief Society leaders were severely restricted in their travels with most visits to stakes and wards eliminated. True to form, Lyman saw opportunity even in this wartime environment. During World War I, Relief Society women had thrown their energies behind a wide variety of activities in support of the war effort. Now, in addition to continuing support for the welfare plan,

⁷⁸Patricia Ann Mann, "A History of the *Relief Society Magazine*, 1914–1970" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1971), 116, 127–31.

Lyman organized a new generation of women to undertake Red Cross work, scrap metal drives, and efforts to ensure fair prices of commodities. Through the *Relief Society Magazine*, she also kept members informed of war-time developments among other American women and seemed well on her way to laying the foundation for new areas of collective activism to pursue in the postwar period.⁷⁹

However, she was unable to find a silver lining in the second event that affected her activities: the November 1943 excommunication of her husband for adultery. Richard R. Lyman had been a well-loved Church leader, especially among the youth. He was unusually approachable and affectionate for a General Authority, qualities that accompanied long-standing rumors of improper behavior.⁸⁰ At some point in the autumn of 1943, the First Presidency felt prompted to investigate, and Clark assigned Harold B. Lee, his protege who had been appointed an apostle in 1941, to the task. Lee found such evidence of wrong-doing that he led police officers to an apartment

⁷⁹Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 277–303; Pohlman, Oral History; Wintch, Oral History; “Notes to the Field: Pamphlet Available, How to Win on the Home Front,” *Relief Society Magazine* 30 (May 1943): 329; “Notes to the Field: Salvage Program,” *Relief Society Magazine* 30 (May 1943): 329; “Fat Salvage Program,” *Relief Society Magazine* 30 (June–July 1943): 395; “Care of Children in Wartime,” *Relief Society Magazine* 30 (May 1943): 332–33; Amy Brown Lyman, “Women and the Home Today,” *Relief Society Magazine* 30 (April 1943), 236–39, 297.

⁸⁰Mark Knight Allen, for example, whose mother, Inez Knight Allen, served on Lyman’s general board and who worked closely himself with Amy as a psychologist at the Utah State Training School, remembered that his family socialized frequently with the Lymans, and while he liked Richard Lyman a great deal personally, his mother was “leery” about traveling with the apostle on Church business because “he’d get a little fresh once in a while.” Mark Knight Allen, Oral History, 9, 11, Interviewed by Dave Hall, Provo, Utah, August 2, 1991, typescript in my possession. In another example, general board member Leona Fetzer Wintch recalled that, during the 1920s, her father, Casper Fetzer, bishop of Jefferson Ward in Salt Lake City’s Grant Stake, met with a member of the ward who was very upset about Richard Lyman’s behavior. This unnamed individual complained to Fetzer, saying that something had to be done about it or it “would blow the church apart.” Leona Fetzer Wintch, Oral History, interviewed by Dave Hall, Manti, Utah, November 21, 1994, audiotape in my possession.

where Richard was discovered in compromising circumstances. Brought before his quorum to account for his actions, he admitted to a long-term relationship with a woman whom he had met in a counseling situation some twenty years previously. He was subsequently excommunicated for violation of "the Christian law of chastity."⁸¹ This public punishment for the sexual transgression of an apostle in a Church known for its high standards of morality rocked the entire Church and made news around the world.⁸² Amy was working in the Relief Society offices when she learned that Richard had been charged with the offense. It was completely unexpected. In shock, she kept repeating: "I do not believe it" over and over. Overcome with emotion, she returned home and remained in bed, prostrated, for several days.⁸³

By temperament, Amy and Richard were very different. His open manner contrasted with her personal reserve that some mistook for coldness. Still, they had enjoyed a close relationship intellectually and emotionally.⁸⁴ Amy had come to rely on Richard's unstinting support and encouragement as she pursued her Relief Society career, and he had always shown himself to be her biggest booster.⁸⁵ The revelation of his infidelity was therefore all the more devastating for her.

⁸¹Richard R. Lyman, Letter to Melvyn A. Lyman, February 16, 1963, photocopy in my possession; Melvyn A. Lyman, Oral History, interviewed by Dave Hall, Delta, Utah, June 13, 1992, audiotape in my possession; Quinn, *Elder Statesman*, 252; John Sillito, "Enigmatic Apostle: The Case of Richard R. Lyman," Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, 1990, audiotape of session in my possession.

⁸²Amy's nephew heard about the excommunication through the military's *Stars and Stripes* newspaper, when serving in the Army in Alaska. Keith Hayes, Oral History, Interviewed by Dave Hall, Provo, Utah, September 10, 1991, audiotape in my possession.

⁸³Vera White Pohlman, Oral History, interviewed by Dave Hall, Salt Lake City, June 21, 1994, audiotape in my possession; Emmeline Wirthlin, Oral History, interviewed by Dave Hall, Salt Lake City, April 8, 1992, audiotape in my possession.

⁸⁴Sorensen, Oral History; Pohlman, Oral History; Allen, Oral History.

⁸⁵Pohlman, Oral History; Allen, Oral History; Engar, Oral History; Lyman, Oral History; David and Sabey Pingree, Oral History, interviewed by Dave Hall, Salt Lake City, July 2, 1993, audiotape in my possession.

Indeed, it would be hard to imagine a situation more difficult for Lyman personally or professionally. Richard's excommunication publicly humiliated her. From a religious perspective, his transgression called into question the status of their temple marriage and, with it, her own standing in the eternities. More immediately, her professional accomplishments were now held up to a new kind of public scrutiny. Indeed, many blamed her, expressing suspicions that wifely inattentiveness to a husband's emotional and sexual needs, resulting from her harried professional life, had led him to seek a more satisfying relationship elsewhere.⁸⁶

Now, with Richard's life shattered and her own status and legacy in doubt, she was encouraged—even by some Church leaders—to leave him and move to California where she had extended family. However, she had long told her social work clients that you could not run away from your problems, and she soon made it clear that she would not take that option herself. Instead, perhaps due to a sense of perspective gleaned from decades of counseling or more simply because of enduring affection for Richard, Amy made the decision to stay both with him and in Salt Lake City, telling family members that in “every other way he had been an ideal husband and father” and “she was not going to leave him now.”⁸⁷ Nor did she desert her Relief Society responsibilities. Despite the embarrassment and humiliation the incident caused her, she soon returned to the Relief Society offices. David O. McKay, in a public show of support, escorted her to the office on her first day back.⁸⁸

As for Clark, Richard's excommunication seems to have signaled the end of any flexibility regarding a refocusing of the Relief Society's agenda. He likely saw Lyman's continued presence as Relief

⁸⁶Pohlman, Oral History; Driggs, Oral History; Wintch, Oral History.

⁸⁷Wirthlin, Oral History.

⁸⁸Pohlman, Oral History; Wintch, Oral History. Details of Amy's personal response to the crisis have been difficult to determine as she soon gathered her family around her and made them promise never to talk about it, as she felt that would make the whole situation worse. Engar, Oral History. I have found that family members directly involved have steadfastly sustained this commitment. Unfortunately, in the absence of first-person reports, a host of rumors regarding Richard's actions sprang up to fill the gaps.

Society general president as a highly visible reminder of the scandal brought upon the Church. Furthermore, Richard, during his Church court, had also made statements blaming Amy's inattentiveness for his actions; and Clark may have found these accusations credible.⁸⁹ Under the circumstances, it would not have been surprising if Clark had viewed Amy Lyman as Exhibit A for what might happen in a marriage when women leave their appropriate sphere. Lyman was certainly aware of such concerns and almost daily encountered avid stares and hushed conversations on the streets, in stores, and as she rode the streetcar from her home to the Relief Society offices.⁹⁰

Despite the scandal, associates believed Lyman hoped to retain her position as president and to continue to contribute her wealth of knowledge and experience to the goals of maintaining the prerogatives of the Relief Society.⁹¹ And to a remarkable degree, she allowed no lag at the helm of the organization. Instead, she continued to push ahead with the society's contributions to war work and the welfare plan, making 1944 one of the most productive years the society had experienced.⁹² In addition to ongoing activities, looking ahead to the end of travel restrictions, Lyman and her board began to plan a series of visits and instructional meetings to regulate the practices of local societies that had strayed significantly from standard procedures.⁹³

Under her direction, the *Relief Society Magazine* in 1944 also be-

⁸⁹Leona Wintch informed me on several occasions that she had sought in the latter 1950s to have one of the new women's residence halls at Brigham Young University named for Lyman, but BYU president Ernest L. Wilkinson told her that it was "too soon," as "Richard had blamed Sister Lyman for his actions." Wintch, Oral History. See also Sillito, "Enigmatic Apostle." The contrast between what Clark felt was a wife's proper role and Lyman's own actions would have come poignantly to Clark's mind when his own wife, Lute, died during the summer of 1944, after a difficult illness. Amy Brown Lyman, "Luacine Savage Clark," *Relief Society Magazine* 31 (September 1944): 487.

⁹⁰Pohlman, Oral History.

⁹¹*Ibid.*; Wintch, Oral History.

⁹²Relief Society women donated three quarters of a million hours of labor during 1944 in sewing some 250,000 articles for the Red Cross and welfare plan. Vera White Pohlman, "Annual Report—1944," *Relief Society Magazine* 32 (August 1945): 478–79.

⁹³Pohlman, Oral History.

gan to address issues of anticipated import in the postwar period, including international affairs and the creation of the United Nations. Such informational articles also urged Relief Society women to support the cause of building a lasting peace. In addition, the *Magazine* encouraged women to engage in renewed campaigns to combat liquor and tobacco use, issues whose relevance would reach well into the postwar period.⁹⁴

Yet despite her personal gallantry and high-quality leadership, sometime in the summer of 1944, Clark asked Lyman to resign, with the expectation that her successor would be sustained at October conference. Although Lyman obediently tendered her resignation, the expected release did not occur, perhaps because Clark suffered for several weeks with a severe bout of the flu in September, perhaps due to the First Presidency's inability to agree on her successor, or perhaps even because President Grant intervened. Six months later, however, she was released at April 1945 general conference, slightly one month before Grant's death.⁹⁵

Lyman's successor as president of the Relief Society, Belle Smith Spafford, was a strong woman of talent and intelligence. Called to the general board in 1935 and as counselor to Lyman in 1942, she was best known as editor of the *Relief Society Magazine*.⁹⁶ By any measure, Spafford was a logical successor to the accomplished Lyman. However, she soon found that she was not to enjoy the same broad prerog-

⁹⁴Leland Hargrave Creer, "The Polish Question," *Relief Society Magazine* 31 (May 1944): 243-49; "The New Turkey," *Relief Society Magazine* 31 (October 1944): 557-64; and "Palestine," *Relief Society Magazine* 31 (December 1944): 684-88; "Notes to the Field: Notice of Special Ward Relief Society Meeting to Be Held January 30, 1945," *Relief Society Magazine* 31 (November 1944): 632-33.

⁹⁵It is unclear whether Clark took this step on his own initiative. Pohlman, Oral History; Wintch, Oral History; Engar, Oral History; Clark Office Journal, September-October 1944, Clark Papers, Box 13, fd. 2, Perry Special Collections. Circumstantial evidence of Grant's role in her temporary reprieve can be found in President Amy Brown Lyman, "Editorial: Birthday Greetings to President Heber J. Grant," *Relief Society Magazine* 31 (November 1944): 630.

⁹⁶Marianne C. Sharp, "Belle Smith Spafford Called to Be Ninth General President of Relief Society, April 1945," *Relief Society Magazine* 32 (May 1945): 259-61; Pohlman, Oral History.



Amy Brown Lyman, (standing), and her counselors, Marcia K. Howells (left) and Belle Smith Spafford (right), 1942-45.

atives as her predecessor. Under her administration the society came under the closer supervision of priesthood leaders and became a supporter rather than an initiator of policy. In so doing, the society moved closer to its denoted status as an auxiliary and farther from earlier generations' vision that it represented an organization for women parallel to the priesthood quorums. This shift reflected a new reality—that in a Church growing in membership and complexity of administration it seemed necessary to limit the Relief Society's ability to develop and pursue its own agenda.⁹⁷

When President Grant died, Clark fulfilled the same role as manager and gatekeeper for Grant's successor, George Albert Smith. Furthermore, Spafford almost certainly lacked the powerful network of supporters among the other General Authorities that Lyman had cultivated for decades. Thus, Spafford had little recourse but to realign the Relief Society with Clark's priorities.⁹⁸ Indeed, they may well have been Spafford's priorities as well. Speaking in Relief Society conference in 1949, she listed the organization's chief responsibilities: "The Relief Society, since its inception, has accepted as one of its major responsibilities the task of guiding, directing, and training its members in their vital role of mother and homemaker." She maintained further that "to develop within the members a firm and abiding testimony of the gospel, and to make of them good mothers and homemakers is one of the Relief Society's first concerns."⁹⁹ Whether these words accurately expressed her own sentiments, under Spaf-

⁹⁷Women continued to insist on the Relief Society's unique status well into the mid-twentieth century, even as they became somewhat grudgingly reconciled to the organization's reidentification as an "auxiliary." And despite that status and its more limited agenda, the Relief Society still occupies a unique position among the auxiliaries as the only one organized by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

⁹⁸Quinn, *Elder Statesman*, 93–96.

⁹⁹Belle S. Spafford, "Woman's Role as Homemaker," *Relief Society Magazine* 36 (November 1949): 727. Clark referred to this address in his remarks at the same conference, indicating he hoped Relief Society women could build a home themselves like "the home of which Sister Spafford has spoken." He praise is understandable as Spafford's remarks directly mirror his own views as they appear in his "Memorandum" of March 1940. Clark, "The Prophet's Sailing Orders to the Relief Society," 797. These views contrast sharply, however, with those of Lyman and her board as expressed in

ford's leadership there would be no return to the large-scale activism of times past. Symbolizing this new era, the organization's semi-annual conferences, suspended during wartime, became annual meetings held only in October.

This is not to say that Spafford completely surrendered all remnants of the society's independence. Despite ongoing pressure for the consolidation of programs, she held onto the *Relief Society Magazine* for another twenty-five years and maintained the organization's separate educational curriculum throughout her presidency. As a body, Relief Society women continued to assist in the welfare plan, providing significant aid to post-war Europe. Members also raised funds for such community causes as the March of Dimes' drive against polio.¹⁰⁰ Spafford herself won local and national recognition as she continued Lyman's efforts to expand and professionalize the Church's social services. But the postwar Relief Society was noticeably less activist than it had been in previous decades, its role considerably circumscribed compared to Lyman's plans for the postwar period.¹⁰¹ In fact, Clark kept Spafford and the Relief Society confined within fairly narrow bounds. While women were given permission to raise money for a new Relief Society headquarters building, for example, he would not allow Spafford to draw on those funds to begin construction. Only when David O. McKay became president in 1951 and Clark was named second counselor instead of first counselor did she gain access to them.¹⁰²

This particular success raises the question of why Spafford did

the March 1940 *Relief Society Magazine*.

¹⁰⁰Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 322; Basil O'Connor, "Infantile Paralysis and the March of Dimes," *Relief Society Magazine* 42 (January 1955): 38.

¹⁰¹This diminished activism can be seen in comparing the *Relief Society Magazine* for the period with issues produced under Lyman. This change is most obvious in the "Notes from the Field," column. Under Spafford's leadership, instead of highlighting outstanding accomplishments among LDS women to stimulate like action, particularly in community involvement or social activism, it came to focus more on social events such as the Relief Society's annual birthday celebrations, local bazaars, and socials.

¹⁰²Gregory Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 203. Clark's reasons for withholding the funds are not clear, but his reluc-

not expand the society's agenda when McKay's leadership might have provided a more congenial environment. Perhaps by then patterns of behavior had already been set for Spafford's presidency, with forces of administrative inertia proving too powerful to overcome. Or perhaps McKay's views regarding the Relief Society and the role of women were substantially in line with Clark's. Certainly his wife, Emma Ray Riggs McKay, like Clark's, was definitely home and family centered.

On the other hand, perhaps Spafford, a generation younger than Lyman, did not feel a compelling need for continued collective activism, even as Lyman's generation had not fully valued all the prerogatives considered so vital to their mothers. As one example, the exercise of spiritual gifts, particularly speaking in tongues, faded from common practice around the turn of the century and were viewed by women of Lyman's generation as "old fashioned."¹⁰³

Similarly, in their pursuit of their immediate priorities, previous generations—including Lyman—may have helped to establish precedents that significantly undermined their autonomy in the long run. Lyman likely was among those who pressed for the replacement of the aged and enfeebled Emmeline B. Wells in 1921 so that the society could more effectively pursue its agenda of social welfare work. However, this action established the precedent of releasing Relief Society presidents; from Eliza R. Snow on, like other General Authorities, the presidents had served for life. Clarissa Williams's resignation in 1928 due to declining health moved this innovation further along the path toward routine practice. It was thus comparatively easy to release Louise Yates Robison, although she was reported displeased by the move, and even easier to release Lyman, rather than allowing her to continue under the cloud of her husband's misbehavior hanging over her presidency.

Further, after the chaotic decades of the Great Depression and World War II, many Americans craved the kind of stability a settled

tance may have been related to his ongoing concerns over Church finances.

¹⁰³Pohlman, Oral History; Wintch, Oral History; Emmeline B. Wells, "Charity and Faith," *Relief Society Bulletin* 1 (April 1914): 2. On the declining use of spiritual gifts (especially tongues and blessings of healing) among Mormon women, see Newell, "Gifts of the Spirit: Women's Share," 124–39.

family life seemed to represent.¹⁰⁴ Given such national trends, the Relief Society may well have reflected the desires of its members during the 1950s and 1960s. Its retaining of the *Magazine*, its own educational curriculum, and a limited program of activities (such as socials, sewing for welfare projects, and occasional drives for charity funds) were not insignificant successes.¹⁰⁵ Spafford and other Relief Society leaders could point to signs implying that this approach worked. For more than two decades, Spafford's administration boasted a record of uninterrupted membership growth.¹⁰⁶ Thus, although Clark continued his influential role until his death in 1961, other reasons must be considered in understanding why Spafford did not focus the Relief Society on the large-scale collective activism of the past.

In retrospect, the changes that took place in the prerogatives and programs of the Relief Society after the Second World War might even seem somewhat inevitable. The needs of a growing Church to streamline its procedures and reduce its expenditures undoubtedly created pressures to further limit and supervise the actions of the individual quorums and auxiliaries. Yet it seems possible that, under different circumstances—different views on the part of J. Reuben Clark and especially different behavior on the part of Richard R. Lyman—the Relief Society's organized activism in community affairs plus the broader control over its own agenda it had long enjoyed might have survived to be adapted for the use of subsequent generations. Certainly numerous causes ranging from public health to improvements in education might have benefited from the collective interest of Relief Society women, like similar issues in previous decades. And given the Church's expansion internationally, this legacy could have benefited members in less developed nations as well.

Other possibilities abound. If Amy's leadership position had not been vulnerable because of her husband's reputation, she might have been able to marshal her capital with other Church leaders to successfully pursue a more expansive agenda for the Relief Society. If she had held onto her presidency longer, she might have found greater sup-

¹⁰⁴Perhaps the best-known exemplar of this view is found in Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

¹⁰⁵Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 306–7; 322–24.

¹⁰⁶"1966 Annual Report," *Relief Society Magazine* 54 (June 1965): 451–54.

port during the administration of George Albert Smith or even possibly under David O. McKay. Lyman lived well into her eighties and remained vigorous until her death in 1959.

While “what if’s,” are interesting to ponder, they do not alter events as they actually transpired. What seems to have occurred, viewed from our vantage point of nearly seventy years, is that both Lyman and Clark sought to lay out a course for the Relief Society that would allow women to contribute meaningfully to the overall goals of the Church. But based on their individual perspectives and experience, each sought to enact visions for the future of the organization that were in many ways at odds with each other. Under more settled circumstances it might have been possible to forge some kind of compromise that addressed Clark’s main concerns while retaining the prerogatives for the Relief Society that Lyman valued the most; but given the restrictions imposed by World War II and especially the devastating blow to Lyman’s position caused by Richard’s excommunication, such a reconciliation proved unattainable. In consequence, Relief Society women emerged from the World War II with diminished control over their own agenda and without the sanctioned role for collective activism in community affairs they had previously enjoyed.

REVIEWS

David L. Bigler and Will Bagley. *Innocent Blood: Essential Narratives of the Mountain Meadows Massacre*. Vol. 12 in KINGDOM IN THE WEST: THE MORMONS AND THE AMERICAN FRONTIER. Norman: Arthur H. Clark Co., an imprint of the University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. 508 pp. Photographs, maps, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth: \$45.00. ISBN: 978-0-87062-362-2

Reviewed by Polly Aird

Having collaborated on an earlier volume in the Arthur H. Clark's KINGDOM IN THE WEST series—the award-winning *Army of Israel: Mormon Battalion Narratives*—editors David L. Bigler and Will Bagley join forces again, this time to document the 1857 frontier atrocity of the Mountain Meadows Massacre in southwestern Utah and its aftermath. The editors are well versed in the subject, Bigler having authored *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847–1896*, and Bagley *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows*.

Innocent Blood is the first attempt to collect in one place the “essential” primary sources for the massacre since Juanita Brooks’s 1950 landmark volume *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, which included thirteen documents in the appendices. In the preface to *Innocent Blood*, the editors ask: “Why return to this awful tale? . . . Over the last decade, the Internet revolution has made many key Mountain Meadows sources, ranging from James Carleton’s 1859 report to Brigham Young’s 1875 affidavit, easily available to an international audience. Yet over the years we have turned up a wealth of evidence that casts entirely new light on the event. We have attempted to assemble this material into a compelling record that presents the key aspects of the story and the divergent perspectives on it.” They continue: “These records should help dispel the mystery and confusion surrounding the crime. Much of this evidence has been suppressed for more than a century, and it deserves to see the light of day” (17). Bigler and Bagley further make clear that they look at

“the combination of dogmas and events that led to the massacre. At the same time, we caution readers that the version of Mormonism described in these pages has little if anything to do with the modern institution” (18).

By my count, this volume includes 176 documents, 94 of which have never been published. Many of the others are from obscure government reports, old newspapers, or similarly difficult-to-access sources. In presenting these “essential” documents, Bigler and Bagley note, “We have done our best to explain the complex context that led to the creation of these documents and the crime they describe. In the process, we have tried to keep our editorial comments as few and dispassionate as possible” (18), saving their conclusions for the Afterword. The documentary approach, they believe, “is especially appropriate for this highly contentious subject, since a close examination of the evidence is the only way to understand this particularly relevant episode in our nation’s history” (20).

The sixteen chapters in *Innocent Blood* cover: (1) the people who made up the Fancher-Baker Arkansas wagon train; (2) the Mormon Reformation of 1856–57 and Church leaders’ preaching the doctrine of blood atonement; (3) the murder of Apostle Parley P. Pratt in Arkansas; (4) the Fancher-Baker train’s travels south through Utah Territory; (5) the first reports of the massacre; (6) Mormon and non-Mormon accounts that came out within a year and a half of the massacre; (7) the U.S. Army’s expedition to bury the bones and investigate the crime; (8) the recovery of the surviving children; (9) the dissent that began to arise within the ranks of the faithful; (10) John D. Lee’s two trials; (11) the events leading up to and following John D. Lee’s execution; (12) the efforts to separate Brigham Young from any blame; (13) accounts written long after the massacre by people who were not there; (14) accounts given by massacre participants much later in life; (15) reminiscences of four of the surviving children; and (16) the continuing contentions aroused by the massacre. These chapters are followed by the Afterword and a four-page timeline of events, an important aid to readers.

The Mountain Meadows Massacre is a difficult, multifaceted, and emotional subject with many “moving parts.” Because most readers of the *Journal of Mormon History* have a basic knowledge of the massacre, I will focus on the conclusions Bigler and Bagley draw from the documents, for they give the reader a perspective into their choices of what they included and why. As they point out, however, others will come to different conclusions from the same material (18). The value of this collection is that the editors have tried—and mostly succeeded, I believe—to be even-handed, presenting documents of opposing views as appropriate. For example, in Chapter 3, Bigler and Bagley consider the murder of Parley P. Pratt in Arkansas and Eleanor McLean Pratt’s impassioned appeal for revenge, but they also document President Young’s sad but non-inflammatory response. Equally important,

the editors let voices from every quarter speak—from Church leaders to ordinary Mormons without power, from Mormon and non-Mormon journalists, from army officers and Indian agents, from Arkansas relatives, from a U.S. senator from California, from the surviving children, from Indians and massacre participants and southern Utahns who were not participants, from lawyers, and from Church apologists to Mormons troubled by Young's cover-up. Their manuscript sources take up six pages of the bibliography. Nevertheless, the editors had to make choices for this collection, and some scholars may see the ones they chose as driving too carefully toward their thesis.

Bigler and Bagley open their Afterword with a quotation from Andrew Hamilton at the trial of John Peter Zenger in 1735: "I will beg leave to lay down, as a standing rule in such cases, that the suppressing of evidence ought always to be taken for the strongest evidence" (461). In the case of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the editors point out that "the surviving evidence is only that part of the historical record which has not disappeared or been altered, suppressed, or destroyed" (462). The footnote to this statement lists missing pages from the 1857 southern Utah journals of Preston Thomas and Isaac Coombs, from John D. Lee's 1859 journal (and they should add his 1857 journal¹), and from the autobiographies of Jacob Hamblin and Nephi Johnson. Also missing are letters between Brigham Young and both Isaac Haight and William Dame.²

Bigler and Bagley trace the Fancher-Baker train from its arrival in Salt Lake City on August 3, 1857, to its arrival a month later in Cedar City, about forty miles from Mountain Meadows. They point out that what made this train different from others was its large size and that women and children outnumbered the men by about three to two. "For the mature men who led the train, its many women and children added up to a compelling reason to avoid trouble" (463).

The day the emigrants arrived in Salt Lake City, George A. Smith set out on a fast tour of the southern settlements. "At each settlement Smith fanned the flames of the Reformation. Joseph Woods, Thomas Willis, and others recalled George A. Smith telling a congregation at Cedar City that the emigrants were coming, 'and he told them that they must not sell that company *any grain or provisions* of any kind, for they were a mob of villains and outlaws, and the enemies of God and the Mormon people'" (463–64). In an Au-

¹Robert Glass Cleland and Juanita Brooks, eds., *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1848–1876*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 1983), 1:Introduction (unpaginated).

²The letter from Isaac Haight to Brigham Young that James Haslam carried in his hurried ride to Salt Lake City has never been located. The other missing letters may refer to orders Bigler and Bagley believe were sent south with George A. Smith.

gust 4 letter from Brigham Young to Isaac Haight, president of Cedar Stake, Young wrote, "I wish you to pay strict attention to the instructions which I forwarded to you by him [Smith]" (464). The editors comment, "Smith's visit eliminated the need to create a paper trail of written orders" that might later compromise "the interest of the 'kingdom'" (464).

The Fancher-Baker train arrived in Cedar City on September 4, 1857. "The size of the attack force that was in place at dawn three days later" at Mountain Meadows, write Bigler and Bagley, "indicates that Colonel Dame had to begin issuing orders to attack the Fancher-Baker party by the first of September, days before the wagon train reached southern Utah. This begs a critical question: why would a military officer issue orders to attack an emigrating party he had never seen? The implied answer helps explain why Haight and Dame did not wait for clarification from Salt Lake when they issued the order to decoy and exterminate the Arkansans: they already had their orders" (467).

"The devastating nature of the initial attack," during which at least seven emigrants were killed and several others wounded, "indicates that the sharpshooters were Mormons," write the editors (467). They also conclude that William Aden and his companion set out on a desperate mission to seek help from the Dukes train behind them on the trail when Aden was murdered. In contrast to Lee's claim that the other man made it back to the Fancher-Baker encampment, the editors think he was most likely killed, for otherwise, "would the Arkansans have surrendered had they known that Mormons were among those attacking them?" (468).

Bigler and Bagley characterize as "bizarre" James Haslam's departure for Salt Lake City late on the first day of the attack with a letter asking President Young what should be done with the surrounded emigrants (468). Why was he sent? In any place else on the frontier, the editors posit, the local settlers would not have sought direction from 250 miles away but would have rushed in to help the beleaguered emigrants. In any other place on the frontier, they argue, it would have been unimaginable that, instead of a rescue, the settlers joined the Indians to slay the emigrants.

Turning to events after the massacre, Bigler and Bagley question why Brigham Young, still acting as governor and declaring martial law, made no effort to investigate the atrocity or punish the perpetrators. It was only after Jacob Hamblin's report to Young nine months later in June 1858, that Young sent George A. Smith—the man who had roused the settlements in southern Utah in the first place—to investigate. The only result of his "investigation" was an ever more disingenuous and elaborate story that blamed the emigrants and the Indians.

Bigler and Bagley conclude, "A harmonious sequence of events reveals that the Fancher train was marked for destruction at least as early as the day

it arrived in Salt Lake Valley. . . . The episode has all the marks of a planned operation that goes in a straight, consistent line to a preordained finish without internal contradictions" (473–74). They continue, "Despite his uncounted lies, Lee's confession helps answer the massacre's most troubling question. The men who assisted him at Mountain Meadows 'were acting under the impression that they were performing a religious duty,' Lee concluded" (474).

Finally, Bigler and Bagley suggest that the ideas of "original" Mormonism are key to understanding the massacre: "The bones [of the emigrants] tell of forgotten doctrines and beliefs that no long energize true believers: the Kingdom of God as an earthly state—the imminent coming of the Son of Man—oaths to avenge the blood of the prophets—American Indians as instruments of divine justice—the shedding of human blood for the remission of sins not forgiven by Christ's sacrifice—divine land ownership—unthinking obedience to higher authority—revealed justice—the sealing up against all crimes save shedding innocent blood—the law of adoption—and others. All can be found at Mountain Meadows" (473).

Bigler and Bagley have compiled a valuable set of documents and interspersed them with narrative passages explaining their significance. Because of missing or altered documents and others written long after the events that give conflicting dates or details, scholars will always argue about chronology or other particulars. But what are we to make of some of the major arguments of the editors? One way to assess their work is to ask how they answer some of the big questions:

Question 1: Was the death of Parley P. Pratt a catalyst for targeting the Fancher-Baker wagon train, whose members came from the county adjacent to that in which Pratt was killed? Bigler and Bagley draw a circumstantial link when Eleanor McLean Pratt, Parley's plural wife and the legal wife of the man who killed him, rushed back to Utah with excited cries for vengeance. The documents show, however, that Brigham Young, though saddened over the loss of his friend and beloved apostle, did not write or preach vengeance for his death. Thus, while Pratt's death does not appear to have incited Young against the Arkansas company, it no doubt further demonized the emigrants in the eyes of the southern Utah leaders and added to the belief that they were somehow enemies of God.

Question 2: Was there a connection between the massacre and the September 1 meeting of Brigham Young and Dimick Huntington in which they promised the Southern Paiute chiefs the cattle belonging to the emigrants? Bigler and Bagley imply that there was, that "the Paiute leaders knew what cattle he meant because they had seen them at Corn Creek only days before meeting with Brigham Young" (119, 466). The editors argue that it was the promise of this particular herd of livestock that persuaded the Indians to at-

tack the emigrants.

However, it is questionable if more than one chief, Ammon, returned to southern Utah before the massacre, and he is known to have persuaded one band *not* to attack the Dukes and Turner trains, which were traveling a few days behind the Fancher-Baker party (132–33).³ Rather than the promise of the Fancher-Baker cattle, I believe the September 1 meeting was about a topic of more immediate interest to Brigham Young: He wanted to ally the Indians with the Mormons in the face of the approaching Utah Expedition. George A. Smith carried the warning south about the imminent conflict: The army is coming, save your ammunition, keep your guns in order, do not sell a kernel of grain to emigrants passing through Utah. An express rider from Salt Lake City caught up with Smith bringing a letter from Nauvoo Legion General Daniel Wells to Iron County militia commander William Dame with additional orders: “Instruct the Indians that our enemies are also their enemies . . . they must be our friends and stick to us, for if our enemies kill us off, they will surely be cut off by the same parties” (113). I believe that it was this warning, plus the local leaders’ promise of cattle and other goods, that persuaded the Indians to join in the attack.

Question 3: Did Brigham Young send orders, written or verbal, by George A. Smith telling the southern Utahans to destroy the wagon train then making its way south? As noted above, Bigler and Bagley believe such orders were issued. Besides the possibility of verbal orders, however, it is conceivable that orders were given another way. Young’s gestures with his arm or finger were well known and fraught with meaning. When Young visited Mountain Meadows in 1861 and saw the monument erected by the army two years before, “He just lifted his right arm to the square and in five minutes there wasn’t one stone left upon another,” Dudley Leavitt recalled (461). Or consider the letter Dame wrote Young seven months before the massacre: “We try to live so when your finger crooks, we move.”⁴ Ardis Parshall remarks that “hand gestures were a literal and deliberate accompaniment to Brigham Young’s speaking style” and quotes T. B. H. Stenhouse: “It was no idle threat when he [Young] said: ‘Apostates, or men who never made an profession of religion, had better be careful how they come here,

³See also Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, and Glen M. Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 177, 269.

⁴Quoted in William P. MacKinnon, *At Sword’s Point, Part 1: A Documentary History of the Utah War to 1858* (Norman, Okla.: Arthur H. Clark, an imprint of the University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 81.

lest I should bend my little finger.’”⁵ In sum, one cannot rule out orders issued by Young—written but destroyed, verbal, or by gesture—but likewise, one cannot prove they existed.

Question 4: If, for the moment, one assumes that Brigham Young did indeed send orders south to exterminate the Arkansans, the question remains: Why? One argument that can carry weight is that the massacre was the direct outcome of the violent preaching of the Mormon Reformation. Bigler and Bagley quote Frank J. Cannon’s reasoning: “The massacre ‘was the logical culmination’ of the Reformation that Young had sanctioned and ‘the legitimate result of the doctrine of blood atonement. It was no more than the translation into deeds of sermons which Brigham and his aids had preached for years If the sermons of the “reformation” meant anything, the Mountain Meadows massacre was justified. If they meant nothing, why were they uttered?’” (452).

My own conclusion is that orders to kill the Fancher-Baker emigrants were probably not issued. Nevertheless, Brigham Young had built up an atmosphere—a fanaticism—in which such an atrocity was not inconsistent. Mountain Meadows Massacre was the most extreme case of violence in Utah in this period, but it was not an isolated incident. A number of murders took place both before and after the southern Utah atrocity: the ambush of the Tobin-Peltro party in February 1857 on the Santa Clara River; the Parrish-Potter murders of March 1857 in Springville; the murder of Richard Yates in October 1857 in Echo Canyon; the murder of the Aikens party in November 1857 on the Sevier River south of Nephi; the murder of Henry Forbes in January 1858 on the road between Springville and Provo; and the murder of Henry Jones and his mother in April 1858 in Payson. The first two are known to have been the result of letters that Brigham Young sent to bishops south of Salt Lake City, and the others were in one way or another the result of direction from local bishops or other Church leaders.⁶ As William MacKinnon puts it, “This little-examined violence . . . firmly links the Mountain Meadows massacre to a broader context—the military campaign and the ter-

⁵Quoted in Ardis E. Parshall, “‘Pursue, Retake & Punish’: The 1857 Santa Clara Ambush,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 73 (Winter 2005): 74 note 24.

⁶For accounts of these murders, see MacKinnon, *At Sword’s Point, Part I*, chap. 12; Polly Aird, *Mormon Convert, Mormon Defector: A Scottish Immigrant in the American West, 1848–1861* (Norman: Arthur H. Clark Co., an imprint of the University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), chaps. 12–15; Parshall, “‘Pursue, Retake & Punish,’” 64–86; Polly Aird, “‘You Nasty Apostates, Clear Out’: Reasons for Disaffection in the Late 1850s,” *Journal of Mormon History* 30 (Fall 2004): 129–207; and David L. Bigler, “The Aiken Party Executions and the Utah War, 1857–1858,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 38 (Winter 2007): 457–76.

ritorial culture of violence that spawned it.”⁷

Brigham Young made no effort to investigate these various murders or to bring the perpetrators to justice; and in the case of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, he protected the perpetrators for years. Perhaps he felt that, since no one had been held accountable for the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, there was a grim retribution in protecting the guilty in these cases. But by ignoring these crimes, Young gave the appearance of sanctioning them or at least excusing them. Certainly he expressed approval of the massacre on his visit to Mountain Meadows in 1861 when John D. Lee reported that he said, “Vengeance is Mine Saith the Lord, & I have taken a litle of it” (256). But as news of each new murder spread through the territory, it was easier for Mormons at all levels to step away from customary respect for the law and Christian ethics, to shrug them off with “all is right,” and to reinterpret these acts of violence as part of God’s cleansing of His kingdom or as just revenge for wrongs the Mormons had endured in the past.

Brigham Young was not only president and prophet of the Mormon Church but de facto governor of the territory, ex-officio superintendent of Indian Affairs, and ultimate adviser of the Nauvoo Legion. He held incredible power and influence over his people. The violence that took place in Utah in this period reflected his religious worldview, appearing in such manifestations as the apocalyptic rhetoric of the Reformation, which described God as sometimes requiring bloodshed; the oaths of vengeance against Mormonism’s enemies made in endowment rites; the insistence on absolute obedience to Church file leaders; the determination to protect God’s law of celestial marriage (polygamy); the belief or fear that the approaching army under General “Squaw Killer” Harney had the intent of wiping out the Mormon people or at least of dispossessing them once more and forcing them to flee into the wilderness; the strident declarations that Utah was independent of the United States and under a law higher than that of the U.S. government; the belief in Joseph Smith’s prophecy that all “gentile” nations on earth would be overthrown, and that the time was now at hand; and finally the belief that the American Indian, as the “battle ax of the Lord,” would play a vital role in ushering in the Millennium. Young had brought his people to the Great Basin when it was still part of Mexico; he wanted to establish the kingdom of God outside of the United States after it had failed to protect Mormon lives and property. Now, ten years later, the army was marching toward them and it looked as if the mobs were coming again.

One example of Young’s bellicose attitude came the day after the massacre but before news of it had reached him. He wrote to Jeter Clinton, a mis-

⁷MacKinnon, *At Sword’s Point, Part 1*, 297.

sionary in Philadelphia, "If he [President Buchanan] do[es] not mete out justice to us; the war cry will resound from the Rio Colorado to the head waters of the Missouri—from the Black hills to the Sierra Nevada—travel will be stopped across the continent—the deserts of Utah become a battle ground for freedom. It is peace and our rights—or the knife and tomahawk—let Uncle Sam chose" (126).

Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, and Glen M. Leonard in their *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* describe the findings of scholars who have investigated violence in different religious and ethnic cultures:

Episodes of violence often begin when one people classify another as "the other," stripping them of any humanity and mentally transforming them into enemies. Once this process of devaluing and demonizing occurs, stereotypes take over, rumors circulate, and pressure builds to conform to group action against the perceived threat. Those classified as the enemy are often seen as the transgressors, even as steps are being taken against them. . . . The conditions for mass killing—demonizing, authority, obedience, peer pressure, ambiguity, fear, and deprivation—all were present in southern Utah in 1857.⁸

Walker, Turley, and Leonard also state that "we think context is the historian's best friend."⁹ They give a thorough account of the people and events in southern Utah that led to the massacre, but where they do not go far enough, I believe, is in not applying the model they have set up to the larger context of Utah as a whole. The entire territory was afire with an on-going religious Reformation, with condoned violence typified by the murders of the Parrishes, and with a mounting war frenzy—all three elements led by Brigham Young. One must first take into account his leadership before considering the poor or weak leadership in southern Utah or asking how decent men could carry out such violence.

Question 5: Why was this particular wagon train targeted? As discussed above about the murder of Parley P. Pratt, the emigrants having come from Arkansas does not appear to have been reason enough to support a decision to wipe out the entire company. Nor was the September 1 meeting in which Young promised the Indians the emigrants' cattle. Nor was the doctrine of blood atonement or disputes over the emigrants' cattle grazing on Mormon-claimed land. Rather, I see the documents pointing toward another factor that focused attention on these emigrants: *The Mormons were at war*. Between August 15 and 25, George A. Smith blazed through southern Utah giving "war sermons" filled with venom and hostility," according to James

⁸ Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy*, xiv.

⁹ *Ibid.*, xv.

Martineau (107). In addition, military express riders had warned of the possibility of attack from the East or the South.¹⁰

The Fancher-Baker train was the first to appear on the horizon after these sermons and rumors. Moreover it was a particularly wealthy train just at a time when the Mormons, especially in southern Utah, were particularly poor after having suffered droughts, locust plagues, severe winters, and famine.¹¹ The Mormons were short of everything needed for battle, especially arms, ammunition, and clothes. The Fancher-Baker train must have looked like a bonanza with its hundreds of cattle and horses; rifles, including Kentucky long rifles, shotguns, and pistols; ammunition; saddles; wagons; and gold coins. Here were legitimate spoils of war.

I hypothesize that Brigham Young's orders, if they were issued, must have been to appropriate the emigrants' possessions that were needed to fight the fast-approaching army. Defining them as essential for the protection of Zion shifts the ground from mere greed. The orders were most likely the already known instructions from Daniel H. Wells to Nauvoo Legion Colonel William Dame, "See that the law is strictly enforced in regard to arms and ammunition¹² and as far as practicable that each Ten shall be provided with a good wagon and four horses or mules, as well as the necessary clothing" (102). At the same time Wells was issuing these instructions, Brigham Young was writing to Church members east and west, instructing them to procure guns and ammunition and to come home.¹³ One can easily imagine that the leaders in southern Utah, highly excited about the threat of the army and alarmed that other military units might be coming from the East or the South, watched the Fancher-Baker train approach and saw exactly the supplies they needed.¹⁴

Tellingly, although the Fancher-Baker wagon train was the one massacred, it was not the only one attacked. When the Dukes and Turner compa-

¹⁰Ibid., 68–69; MacKinnon, *At Sword's Point, Part 1*, 251.

¹¹Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 129–30.

¹²The law Wells referred to was most likely one of regulations of the Nauvoo Legion when it was reorganized in January 1857. Section 20 reads, "Any person enrolled and failing to provide arms, accoutrements and ammunition suitable to his corps, where he has had an opportunity of so doing, shall be fined as a delinquent for non-attendance. Any person having disposed of his arms, accoutrements, or ammunition, so as to leave himself unprovided, shall, upon conviction before a court martial, be fined in twice the amount of the value of such, which amount shall be paid into the Territorial treasury." "Militia in Utah," *Deseret News*, April 1, 1857, 4.

¹³MacKinnon, *At Sword's Point, Part 1*, chap. 10.

¹⁴Further support for this thesis comes from Elliott/Elliott Wellden, who said that the original plan was to attack the emigrants as they moved through Santa Clara Canyon, and then "at some opportune point on that stream, while the company was

nies followed a few days later, first Church leaders in Beaver and then “horse thieves” (149 note 20) at the fork of the road between Harmony and Pinto advised them to hire Mormon Indian interpreters for protection through Indian lands as far as a springs beyond Las Vegas. The fearful emigrants reluctantly agreed. Retained for a high fee, the interpreters then told the company leaders that they must give presents of goods and firearms to the various native bands. Soon after the travelers made these generous presents, the interpreters deserted the emigrants and joined the Indians in an attack that ran off all their livestock except for those hitched to the wagons. The Dukes and Turner companies, stripped of nearly everything, struggled on and finally made it to San Bernardino (144–50, 162–64).¹⁵ It seems likely that what saved them from death was the letter Brigham Young sent to Isaac Haight, although it arrived too late to prevent the massacre at Mountain Meadows: “In regard to the emigration trains passing through our settlements, . . . you must not meddle with them. The Indians we expect will do as they please” (367). Until this letter, the southern Utahns, riled up to do their part to protect Zion, appear to have been ready to attack all wagon trains that traveled the southern route to California.¹⁶

How well did Bigler and Bagley do in assembling the “essential” documents about the massacre? The items they chose are a significant, balanced, and comprehensive selection that span topics ranging from the atmosphere of the times to the massacre’s legacy. They form a priceless collection for anyone trying to understand the details of the massacre, the varying interpretations, the heated emotions of the times, and the problems with the original sources. The editors elucidate many of the complex factors and make them more understandable. For example, Chapter 2 provides the clearest and most succinct overview of the Mormon Reformation of 1856–57 that I have seen.

As for the conclusions the editors draw, I have already noted that I think the links between the massacre and Parley P. Pratt’s murder or the meeting of the Indian chiefs with Brigham Young are overstated. Nevertheless, those associated documents add important context. The strength of the editors’

strung out along the road, traveling, the Indians should attack it, kill as many of the men as they could, and get away with as much cattle and spoil as possible, but not to harm the women and children.” Quoted in Walker, Turley, Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 139.

¹⁵See also Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 165–68.

¹⁶Juanita Brooks, referring to the companies traveling through southern Utah, wrote, “This policy of robbing the passing emigrant was clearly a part of the general war tactics.” Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 122.

interpretation of the massacre lies in placing it directly in the context of the religious thinking of Brigham Young and his people. But while the religious mindset is fundamental to understanding what happened, there is more to the picture. Bigler and Bagley might have advantageously given more emphasis to the Mormons' feelings of grievance and resentment at past injustices and repeated dispossession of land and property. This long-standing anger joined the more recent sufferings brought on by a succession of natural disasters, the hysteria of preparing to fight the army led by a famously cruel general, and the happenstance of a wealthy emigrant wagon train passing through their territory at a time when any outsider was seen as an enemy. The ingredients combined to ignite the mass killing.

Additionally, a more complex picture would bring in the violence elsewhere in the territory that the Church leaders not only promoted in their sermons (which the editors consider in detail) but allowed to take place with impunity; the impact of the extreme poverty of the southern Utahans and their panic to prepare for war; and finally the burning need to obtain everything valuable from later wagon trains, also for the war effort. Bigler, Bagley, and I agree that Brigham Young was ultimately responsible for the massacre. Our difference is that they presuppose an order to kill the emigrants whereas I see an order to prepare for war. In the end, it was Brigham Young's irresponsible leadership in the 1850s that led to the crime.

Finally, it would be helpful to have some items corrected in a revised edition of *Innocent Blood*: (a) The preface states that the order to start the killing was "Do your duty!" (based solely on Lee's account) while other sources claim that the signal was simply "Halt!"; (b) Quotations from the *Alta California* fail to identify it as published in San Francisco; (c) Use of the older term "Historical Department Journals" instead of the current "Church Historian's Office History of the Church" (98); (d) The need to date the Autobiography of John Pierce Hawley, which appears to have been written in 1885 (109); (e) A confusing map legend (128); (f) The lack of an explanation about the how and why of George A. Smith's "investigation" of the massacre (199, 229 note 27, 469); (g) The date of President Buchanan's pardon, which is incorrectly dated as April 6, 1857, when it should be April 6, 1858 (200); (h) The failure to note that the *Harper's Weekly* article was authored by Charles Brewer (207); (i) The need to update the paragraph about apologists' version of what happened, now happily no longer true with the publication of Walker, Turley, and Leonard's *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (462); (j) The failure to include some of the documents in the index, as for example, those about the Dukes company (143–50, 162–64). In addition, the item for September 1, 1857, in the timeline that reads, "Mormon interpreters begin recruiting Indians" (476) needs amplification. The only explanations I could find are in the 1885 autobiography of John Pierce Hawley (108–9) and a

brief allusion to “recollections of Nauvoo Legionnaires” (166–67). And missing for that date is Brigham Young’s meeting with the southern Indian chiefs. The editors might also further explore whether the William Edwards affidavit (422–23) is a forgery, for it was acquired by the Utah State Historical Society from rare manuscripts dealer Mark Hofmann before he was known to be a forger. Although this list is long, the points are mostly minor and are few in number considering the complexity of the volume.

No doubt some scholars—if this had been their book—would have chosen a few different documents or left some out. Differences of opinion on the relative significance of some documents will never be resolved. In balance, however, I believe this is an invaluable and successful volume. Along with Richard E. Turley Jr. and Ronald W. Walker, eds., *Mountain Meadows Massacre: The Andrew Jensen and David H. Morris Collections* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press and University of Utah Press, 2009), which includes previously unavailable statements from massacre participants taken thirty-five to fifty years after the fact, researchers will have ready access to the most important of the known primary sources that have not already been published, such as John D. Lee’s confessions in *Mormonism Unveiled*. Whether one agrees with Bigler and Bagley’s interpretations or not, I highly recommend this volume.

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Shannon A. Novak. *House of Mourning: A Biocultural History of the Mountain Meadows Massacre*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008. xvii + 226 pp. Photographs, tables, maps, notes, bibliography, index. Hardback: \$29.95. ISBN: 978-0-87480-919-0

Reviewed by Jared Tamez

House of Mourning, this recent addition to the mounting historiography of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, was almost a decade in the making. Shannon Novak is a forensic anthropologist with a doctorate from the University of Utah, currently an assistant professor of anthropology at Syracuse. On August 6, 1999, Utah state archaeologist Kevin Jones called Novak to solicit her aid in analyzing some remains that had been unearthed in southern Utah. Three days before, during renovation work in preparation for a new monument/memorial at Mountain Meadows, a backhoe had uncovered a mass grave, exposing thousands of bones (7).

At the time, Novak was unfamiliar with the events surrounding Mountain Meadows and the controversies that still linger there: "I thought I had left 'dead-body politics' behind," she confessed ruefully (xiii). She selected her haunting title from Ecclesiastes 7:2: "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart."

In all, the remains of about twenty-eight bodies were recovered (roughly a fourth of the estimated 120 victims) and eighteen skulls were reconstructed from the thousands of bones and bone fragments recovered (59, 10). The bones were washed and sorted at the Museum of Peoples and Cultures at Brigham Young University (with student assistance) and then transferred to the University of Utah. Legal complications and outside pressures forced an abrupt halt to the project, and the remains were turned over to BYU for reburial the day before the September 11 dedication of the newly constructed memorial, just about a month after their exhumation (7).

In her book, Novak aims to "situate the massacre in a wider historical context and approach it not as a morality tale but as a busy intersection of social and cultural forces in antebellum America" (4). She succeeds in doing so. In launching her study, Novak acknowledges past scholarship on the massacre but does not comment on it in depth. She argues that even the best works on the subject (which she considers to be Will Bagley's *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002], and David L. Bigler's *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847–1896* [Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark, 1998] do not say enough about the victims, focusing instead on the perpetrators. She lightly takes to task other authors (Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* [Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1950]; Thomas G. Alexander, *Utah: The Right Place* [2d rev. ed., Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, Publisher, 2003]; and Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979] for making only cursory examinations of the victims and their background, with one text (Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1892]) claiming that the Mormons were also victims on the killing fields. It should be noted that this evaluation of the historiography deals with the authors' discussion of the victims in their respective works, but Novak does not comment on the conclusions or methods of each text (4–6).

After some preliminary notes on historical perspectives on the massacre, Novak's first chapter, "Streams," examines the geographic characteristics of the Ozark Plateau, spanning northern Arkansas and Missouri, from whence the emigrants came. Novak explores how the geography of the plateau affected the lives of its early settlers, touching on race, class, social, and eco-

nomic issues and giving context to the lives of the families that would go on to Mountain Meadows. Chapter 2, "Confluence," reports that the group killed at Mountain Meadows did not set out from Arkansas as a cohesive unit but resulted from a number of additions and divisions. Novak examines some factors that may have led these groups to converge at Mountain Meadows.

Chapter 3, "Nourishment," discusses the dietary habits typical of the Ozark Plateau and on emigrant trails and analyzes how well the expected norms match the evidence found in the bones. Using detailed 1850s U.S. census data, Novak outlines the property, agricultural, and livestock holdings of the thirteen major families whose members constituted most of those killed at the meadows. The presence of anemic lesions in some of the remains indicates active cases of anemia at the time of death. Novak explains that "the typical southern diet was deficient not only in protein but in several vitamins and minerals," a deficiency which was likely exacerbated on the trail west, and which may have contributed to their anemic condition (74). Additionally, Novak, based on her analysis of the recovered teeth, concludes that the incidence of caries (cavities) and overall dental health was about average for the time. She also notes that 16 percent of adult teeth exhibited stains from tobacco resin (77).

In Chapter 4, "Constitution," Novak examines claims by John D. Lee and others that the emigrants were "diseased" with pox or syphilis and Dame's charge that "all the women were prostitutes." As context, Novak provides an analysis of disease patterns and attitudes toward disease in antebellum culture—attitudes which tied affliction very closely to morality. "Thus, the language of disease and illness could be used as a social weapon" (107). The skeletal record, she reports, shows no evidence of pulmonary disease (like tuberculosis) or of syphilis. In fact, Novak concludes that the physical constitution of the emigrants was actually quite good and discounts the Lee and Dame claims, stating that, "By claiming that the emigrants were syphilitic, Lee and his confederates were commenting on more than the physiology of the Arkansans. . . .To insinuate that parents were afflicted with disease—especially one such as syphilis—was to comment on the character, or future character, of their offspring. . . . Such reasoning allowed even children to be viewed as morally corrupt" (108–9).

In the fifth chapter, "Domains," Novak explores gender norms in the Ozark region and analyzes what the bones reveal about differences in activity and injury patterns between the men and women. The samples at Mountain Meadows show that the males' femurs (thigh bones) indicated reduced mobility while those of the women were elongated, suggesting an increased mobility. Novak concludes that this pattern "reflects an asymmetry in mobility patterns, as women were walking extensively on the hilly landscape

while men were riding horses" (133).

The final chapter, "Epitaph," is perhaps the most striking. Here Novak analyzes the injury patterns that caused the victims' deaths. First, Novak discusses attitudes toward death on the trail. When Jack Baker dictated his will in April of 1857 before setting out on his fatal journey, his first concern was to secure a decent burial. "Like many emigrants," Novak notes, "Baker dreaded the thought of his bones left unburied and exposed to the sun, the wind, and the wolves" (149). Providing photographs of bullet wounds, massive skull fractures, and bones with animal teeth marks, Novak walks the reader through the different ways the individuals under examination were killed. The injury pattern is consistent with historical records. The men were shot, the women and children bludgeoned.

An exception to the historical record is that Novak found no evidence of scalping, throat cutting, or arrow wounds, which were said to have been inflicted by Indians at the scene. The most common trauma was a single gunshot to the head, point blank, execution style. The shattered condition of many of the teeth indicates that a number of the victims were shot from behind with the bullet exiting through the face. Finally, Novak shows how even the remains that are absent exhibit loss consistent with scavenger activity, and how the remains that are present exhibit damage consistent with weathering incident to lengthy exposure to the elements.

This study is an excellent example of how interdisciplinary work can enhance and expand historical analysis. By introducing elements of anthropology, geography, and sociology, as well as history, Novak confirms some elements of the historical narrative concerning the Mountain Meadows Massacre while refuting others. Additionally, it is the most in-depth treatment of the lives and times of the victims of Mountain Meadows. Novak admits that this evidence cannot shed light on motives or responsibility of the assailants, and she does not attempt to address those issues. All told, Shannon Novak's *House of Mourning* will prove to be a valuable addition to the study of the tragic tale of the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

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Sherman L. Fleek. *Place the Headstones Where They Belong: Thomas Neibaur, WWI Soldier*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2008. 222 pp. Illustrations, tables, maps, photos, chronology, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth: \$28.95. ISBN: 978-0-87421-695-0

Reviewed by Robert M. Hogge

General John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, presented the Medal of Honor (the nation's highest combat award) to Private Thomas Neibaur on February 9, 1919, on a snow-covered field at Chaumont, France. Neibaur was the first Idahoan and probably the first Mormon to receive this prestigious award. When he arrived home at Sugar City, Idaho, on May 27 that year, 10,000 people celebrated, along with a bevy of politicians and Church leaders, the governor proclaiming the occasion as "Neibaur Day." Other than the heroic event itself—Private Neibaur's single-handedly stopping a German counterattack at a crucial hill, Côte de Châtillon—there is "precious little information on his personal life" (xxi) as author Sherman Fleek admits. In the introduction, Fleek does attempt to justify writing "a full biography with so little information" (xxii). But I agree with Vardis Fisher who, reflecting on Neibaur's life after "Neibaur Day" in 1919, wrote: "[Of] life after that day of roses, the less said the better" (xxiv).¹ The book itself is Fleek's attempt to refute Fisher's sad conclusion.

In Chapter 1, Fleek makes the Mormon connection by telling the story of Thomas's famous Jewish ancestors, Alexander and Ellen Neibaur, the first people of Jewish descent to become Latter-day Saints (7). They were faithful members of the Church, but their colorful son Isaac was "a Mormon desperado in Utah, rustling cattle and [committing] worse crimes" (13). Getting caught up in Isaac's escapades, I almost forgot I was reading a biography of Thomas, the great-grandson of Alexander Neibaur. Fleek calls Thomas "the believing Mormon boy" (112–13), which he may have been as a youth; but his daughter Marian described her father as "a believer in God, but not religious" (166).

In Chapter 2, "War Comes to America, 1917," Fleek comes to life as a military historian, beginning with this sentence: "How does one summarize a conflict that ended with some ten million dead soldiers and civilians?" (23). And then, in a most rigorous way, he does just that, describing the causes of World War I politically, economically, culturally, and militarily. In many ways, he follows the dictum of Frederic Henry, a fictional character in a famous World War I novel: "Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage,

¹Fleek cites Vardis Fisher, "Roses, Roses All the Way," *Idaho Statesman*, January 4, 1943. Between 1935 and 1939, Fisher directed the Idaho branch of the WPA Federal Writers' Project. In that role, he met and interviewed Neibaur. Fisher, too, was an Idahoan, born of a Mormon family. Unlike Neibaur who remained a nominal Mormon throughout his life, Fisher, as an adult, left the Church, considering himself an atheist. He wrote one historical novel about the Mormons, *Children of God*, which won the Harper Prize in Fiction for 1939.

or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates."² Fleek spends fifteen pages bringing us up to date on World War I, along with attempting to describe the LDS Church's complicated stance on war, before pulling the eighteen-year-old Neibaur back into the biography: "I enlisted on March 30, 1917, as a volunteer in the National Guard of Idaho" (37), Neibaur wrote years later. He then disappears again as Fleek describes the relationship between the National Guard and the U.S. Army. At the chapter's end, Fleek describes the transition Neibaur made from the Idaho National Guard to the U.S. Army. Other chapters describe training camps, followed by the young Idahoan's deployment to France in 1918.

Chapter 6 is the central chapter in the biography, the one that vividly describes Thomas's act of heroism. But of its twenty-three pages, only about the last eight and a half focus on Neibaur's specific actions when his lieutenant ordered him and two other squad members "to silence a group of machine gun positions" (122) midway up the hill, Côte de Châtillon. In an account he wrote later, Neibaur describes their objective: "a nest of machine guns shooting down on us" (124). The three men climbed cautiously toward the German machine-gun nest where they were delayed, in their advance, by entanglements of barbed wire. Neibaur was carrying a twenty-five-pound French *Chauchat* automatic rifle. When a German platoon discovered the three men advancing toward them, they opened fire, hitting all three men, killing two and wounding Neibaur with three bullets through his thigh. Realizing he was not seriously wounded, he crawled for cover, then held off a reinforced German platoon "in full view of his company and most of his battalion" (125).

Neibaur fired his automatic rifle at some forty-five soldiers coming at him with fixed bayonets, killing or wounding many of them until his automatic rifle jammed. He crawled and stumbled down the hill toward friendly lines while members of his own company at the bottom of the hill fired at the pursuing Germans. During this intense exchange, Neibaur was wounded for the fourth time; a shell "pierced his right hip, crossed through his lower abdomen, and lodged in his left hip near his spine" (126) where the bullet would remain for the rest of his life. Neibaur collapsed, and the Germans captured him, holding him prisoner for about thirty minutes. When American forces resumed shooting, the remaining fifteen German soldiers took cover, leaving Neibaur unguarded. Neibaur found his own pistol in the dirt, picked it up, pointed it at the Germans, and, in English, ordered them to surrender. When they ignored him, he shot and killed four, taking the other

²Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Scribner's, 1929), 185.

eleven as prisoners. When he reached friendly lines with his prisoners, he was ordered by his officers to take the prisoners to the collection point behind the lines—all of this before receiving medical attention for his own wounds.

Although Fleek describes Neibaur's actions in this skirmish in vivid and memorable detail, it took the author more than one hundred pages to get to this crucial account. Much of the rest of the book is definitely anticlimactic because Neibaur experiences what Robert Freeman³ calls "the fleeting nature of a hero's reward" (viii). Despite his moment of glory, Neibaur made "a gradual slide into misfortune, poverty, humiliation, dejection, ill health, and finally premature death" (xx). The book's final chapters document that downward spiral.

For readers interested in military history, especially as it relates to World War I, Fleek presents memorable snippets of information about famous poets (Wilfred Owen and Joyce Kilmer), along with some of the more important military personalities: General John J. Pershing, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, Colonel Douglas MacArthur, Lieutenant Colonel George S. Patton, Brigade General William "Billy" Mitchell (U. S. Army Air Service), and three other Medal of Honor awardees—Corporal Alvin York,⁴ Lieutenant Colonel William "Wild Bill" Donovan, and Sergeant Michael Donaldson.

Although there is much to recommend in this book, Fleek admits that the "details of Thomas Neibaur's life are a mystery" (xxi). How does he solve this problem? By repeating some of the same information at various points. For example, the preface characterizes Neibaur: "He would be both the first Mormon and the first native-born Idahoan to be awarded the Medal of Honor" (xi). Just a few pages later in the introduction, Fleek repeats: "He was the first native-born soldier from Idaho as well as the first Mormon, or member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to be awarded the Medal of Honor" (xiv–xv). Like a shotgun blast, the book is riddled with these and many other needless repetitions.

Fleek is correct, however, when he says that Thomas Neibaur needs to be rescued from obscurity. James Hopper visited the Neibaur family in 1928 "collecting accounts of Medal of Honor recipients for a book" (159). Thomas also wrote a nine-page essay about his war experiences that appeared in the LDS *Improvement Era* in July 1919. These accounts, plus "a

³Freeman is one of the founders of BYU's Saints at War Project and co-author with Dennis A. Wright of *Saints at War: Experiences of Latter-day Saints in World War II* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2001). Fleek tells us that the inspiration for this Neibaur biography began "with a casual phone call and conversation with Robert Freeman" (xi).

⁴Immortalized in the 1940 film, *Sergeant York*, starring Gary Cooper (168).

dozen or so published articles and essays" (19) since Thomas Neibaur's death in 1942 might be sufficient for a chapter on Neibaur in a collection about Mormons in the military. Maybe that could be Sherman Fleek's next project.

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Richard G. Moore. *Know Your Religions, Volume 2: A Comparative Look at Mormonism and the Community of Christ*. Orem, Utah: Millennial Press, 2009. xiv + 230 pp. Paper: \$14.95; ISBN 1-932597-67-0

Reviewed by Steven L. Shields

Richard G. Moore took on a formidable challenge in attempting to explain Community of Christ to readers who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In this volume, he introduces a brief history of Community of Christ and then tackles several key points of doctrine. A closing chapter titled "Future Challenges of Community of Christ" is helpful to the conversation, as are the several appendixes which include some official position statements by the denomination. Unfortunately, there is no index, which limits the usefulness of the book.

Moore sets out to compare "official LDS doctrine to official Community of Christ doctrine" (3) but cannot do so because "it is not always easy to determine official Community of Christ doctrine" (3). The absence of the kind of dogmatic declaration Moore is apparently expecting to find should have been a clue that a different type of comparative study is demanded by the subject matter. Such a study needs the expertise of a theologian. Like auto mechanics trying to be heart surgeons, historians are ill equipped to make theological judgments.

At the outset, Moore notes that a rift took place following the death of Joseph Smith Jr. but never explains the rationale behind the rift. He likewise touches on the Kirtland-Nauvoo dichotomy but never explains it. Fixed in his own paradigm, he focuses on how much Community of Christ has changed over the decades but fails to explain the deeper implications of the transformation or give credence to the possibility of a different interpretation of the meaning of Joseph Smith's work and what is meant by "restoration."

On the one hand, Moore states that because of living prophets and modern revelation, both churches have evolved in doctrine and theology (31).

On the other hand, he states that the LDS Church accepts all of Joseph Smith's "teachings as revelatory and the word of God" (65) and declares that the LDS Church "followed the teachings of Joseph Smith from the Kirtland era as well as from the Nauvoo era" (182).

However, in this book Moore never considers or compares the transformation and reinterpretations that his own denomination has undergone. LDS Church teachings have changed dramatically in many areas, including allowing the priesthood ordination of black men, the discontinuance of both the Standing High Council and the Council of Fifty, the ascendance of the Twelve over the Presidency, the change in tithing from increase to income, the change in the Word of Wisdom's status from advice to commandment, the discontinuance of the office of patriarch to the Church, and the multitude of changes in the temple rituals, not to mention many other teachings (such as blood atonement and the law of consecration) that have not been talked about in LDS Church official publications for perhaps a century or more. These instances can all be valid examples of the doctrine of continuing revelation and how subsequent prophets can receive inspiration to reinterpret doctrines, practices, and policies.

On the same basis, to state that Community of Christ merely "was greatly influenced by Joseph Smith III" (182) or his successors without according them the same level of legitimacy as that of Brigham Young and his successors, but to declare in several places that Community of Christ "rejected" doctrines and teachings or "does not believe" in something or another, is simply unjustifiable. Moore's remark that the church organized by Joseph Smith, Jr. is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "but in doctrinal matters the Community of Christ has moved purposefully away" from that particular religious organization (181) is disingenuous, to say the least.

This blurring of the past to validate the present does not help build a foundation of understanding between people in the two denominations. Moore's inference is that the current LDS Church paradigm is original to the work of Joseph Smith Jr. and that it is Community of Christ that has departed from the "true path." The pattern formed by such an approach leaves me unsure about what the author really wants when he says that the membership of each denomination "needs to gain a greater understanding and appreciation for each other" (184).

Another difficulty in fostering understanding between the two denominations is that, while they both use many of the same words, the meanings and applications are often very different. Moore brushes past this problem when discussing ecclesiastical organization: "Beyond the names, some substantial differences have developed over the years" (51–52). None of these differences is explained in the book.

Most of Moore's comments in his sections of the book dealing with the

LDS Church are simply reiterations of current Church teachings on the chapter topic. If this is the basis for the comparison, then by all means compare current Community of Christ teachings with current LDS teachings and forget the history. By spending most of the narrative comparing Community of Christ today with what it was in its earlier incarnations, Moore has not made a comparison between the two denominations but has written a treatise on transformation in Community of Christ from the time of Nauvoo to the present.

The lack of references to current literature and the heavy dependence on a small handful of voices for information is not helpful to gaining an understanding of Community of Christ. The author is overly dependent on dated, and in some instances superseded, material such as Russell Ralston's polemic *Fundamental Differences between the Reorganized Church and the Church in Utah* (1960), *Exploring the Faith* (1970), and *Church Member's Manual* (1991). Not only are there current Community of Christ publications that could have been used, but there is a vast bibliography of contemporary scholarship in recent editions of *Restoration Studies*, the *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*, and in the Theology series published by Community of Christ Seminary. Additionally, almost 100 pages of commentary on Doctrine and Covenants 163 have been published since July 2007 in the *Herald*. The document *We Share* in Appendix D (199) is crucial in comparing the contemporary Community of Christ with another religious organization, but the book refers to it only occasionally. It is unfortunate that Moore reprinted the outdated 1970 "Statement of Belief" (185), since the space could have been used better in another way. And in more than one instance, he declared something as a position of Community of Christ when it is clearly the opinion of just one person (87 note 229, for example).

Few readers will discern that Community of Christ places heavier emphasis on orthopraxy, while the LDS Church places more emphasis on orthodoxy. Of course, both denominations have some of each. What has not been understood by people in either denomination is that the LDS Church is more of a system of belief (with plans, commandments, obedience to leaders, and tests of faith) while Community of Christ has deliberately been moving closer to a way of life (focused on community, openness about theology, and the communal nature of the prophetic impulse). This is not to say that one way is better than the other, but rather that there is more than one way to understand the life of faith.

I'm afraid most readers will miss Moore's candid footnote that speaks to this important difference which reads, "I was surprised to see how willing [Community of Christ] was to publish varying views concerning doctrines and other issues in their magazine, the *Herald*. Controversial topics and disagreements with Community of Christ leaders and decisions are openly ad-

dressed. I believe this comes from Community of Christ's desire to get everyone involved in the discernment process. It appears that the opinions of members concerning doctrine and policy are listened to and considered" (168).

Readers may also miss the related, but perhaps nuanced difference, expressed in Moore's introduction: "Even though the church [Community of Christ] has a prophet-president, revelation is more important than the revelator. It sees its theology not so much as 'a task of the institutional church' or 'the domain of a few academicians,' but as something open to all church members. President W. Grant McMurray suggested that members of Community of Christ should think of themselves not so much as a 'people with a prophet' but as a 'prophetic people'" (4). Further reference to this concept appears on pp. 40–41.

Another significant expression of the orthopraxy-orthodoxy dichotomy, which many readers may not fully recognize, is Moore's quoting Mark Scherer, Community of Christ Historian-Archivist. "We as members of the Community of Christ lift up the teachings of a Carpenter from Nazareth and not a Prophet from Palmyra." Scherer added that this statement did not intend to demean the contribution of Joseph Smith, a great man and founder of the Restoration Movement. Rather, "we in the Community of Christ prefer to go to the primary source rather than the secondary source" for our doctrine and teachings" (64–65).

The difference with which the two denominations officially approach their respective Church histories is also an area where more than the superficial report in this volume may be helpful to the kind of comparative study the subject matter needs. Moore reports that "LDS leaders would like Mormon historians to write things that are not only true but also faith promoting" and "the LDS Church's 'official view' of church history is to focus on the positive aspects of it and the hand of God in it" (58). This view, according to Moore, is closely tied to the LDS culture of obeying Church leaders (60). On the other hand, Moore accurately reports that Community of Christ members and historians "are free from the strictures that confuse matters of faith with sound historical methodology" (53). Community of Christ has moved away from an apologetic approach "in which the church is always presented in a favorable light" (56).

An important omission about priesthood in the main text of the book is touched on in footnote 128 (52), which quotes William D. Russell about priesthood in the LDS Church as a ladder, with ordinations done at certain age levels. Priesthood office is inextricably tied to salvation in LDS understanding, since ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood for males is required for entrance to the temple. In Community of Christ, priesthood ordination and salvation are not connected, so progressive ordinations to differ-

ent priesthood offices are not normative, although it does happen. This is a nuanced difference that needs more than superficial treatment. There are several other places throughout the book where similar critical explanations are glossed over or simply absent.

Moore states that Community of Christ mission center presidents are similar to LDS Church stake presidents (50). They are not. In fact, Community of Christ mission center presidents and bishops would be more closely compared to LDS Church Area leaders. These positions, in both denominations are full-time jobs. The disparity continues when Moore curiously points out that LDS stake presidents and bishops do not “receive any remuneration for their service” (51). Perpetuating the myth that Community of Christ “practices a paid ministry” and the LDS Church does not, is both inaccurate and unfair.

I appreciated the chapter on the “Nature of God.” I especially was glad to see a reverse comparison where Moore notes that some Community of Christ members do not understand the LDS position on the topic (80). Moore quotes from the Book of Mormon (appropriately giving the reference for both editions). Sadly, though, the chapter lacks even a brief summary of how the doctrine of God metamorphosed significantly during the lifetime of Joseph Smith Jr.

The chapter on salvation is confusing, especially where Moore writes about what he calls Community of Christ’s view of three levels of heaven or degrees of glory (100). The article cited, however, is merely a summation of doctrinal teachings of Doctrine and Covenants 76 and not a discussion of Community of Christ belief. The material Moore cites does not mention celestial, terrestrial, or telestial glories. Talking about salvation under the rubric of “glories” or “kingdoms” is not present-day Community of Christ terminology. These few paragraphs are more in line with LDS Church teachings and jargon. The chapter is further confused by the failure to clearly explain that LDS doctrine adds “exaltation” to its idea of salvation. Moore seems disappointed to discover that Community of Christ does not “mention a ‘plan’ of salvation” (92) or that it does not have an “official statement about the existence of Satan” (98). Why Community of Christ should use the same language as the LDS Church, or why Community of Christ would be required to have a “plan” for salvation or a “statement” about Satan is never explained. Moore leaves the questions hanging, further biasing his readers, even though it might be unintentional. This chapter quotes from LDS Doctrine and Covenants 137 but fails to continue the discussion that Community of Christ may see this vision (even though it has not been canonized) as a good argument (coupled with Moroni 8, LDS 22–24/CofC 26–28) that baptism and other ordinances for the deceased are not necessary and that God has provided another way. Perhaps it is a failing on the part of Commu-

nity of Christ in not seeing the strength of this argument in expressing its own understanding of salvation.

The chapter on scriptures suffers from several unfortunate problems. Moore has misquoted as official an item of legislation about the Book of Mormon that was being proposed for consideration at the 2007 World Conference (114). When this particular item came up for consideration, the First Presidency ruled it out of order because the “resolution proposes to legislate or mandate belief for the entire church.” While affirming the Book of Mormon as scripture, Community of Christ has never mandated the degree of belief or use of this or any other book of scripture. The First Presidency went on to declare that the “central testimony of the *Book of Mormon* is Jesus the Christ” (World Conference Bulletin 2007:326–27).

The position of Community of Christ on the Book of Mormon was made clear in WCR (World Conference Resolution) 215 (1878) and WCR 222 (1879) and reconfirmed in a 2003 official statement on scripture, which Moore has helpfully included in Appendix B. I was surprised that Moore seems to be unaware that there are two editions of the Book of Mormon published by Community of Christ (82 note 216).

The discussion of the Doctrine and Covenants and later the Pearl of Great Price suffers tremendously because the author has not explained the two denominations’ differing understanding of the nature of revelation, the nature of scripture, and canonization. Moore declares that “some sections dating from the time of Joseph Smith . . . are accepted as scripture by the LDS Church that Community of Christ has rejected as uninspired” (114). He adds in the footnote that these sections deal with “baptism for the dead and eternal marriage.”

Readers ought to be reminded that the document on “eternal marriage,” or polygamy, was not publicly known or published until several years after Joseph Smith Jr.’s death—after the two denominations had taken separate paths. Later Moore repeats that Community of Christ “never accepted Joseph Smith’s revelation on eternal marriage” (137). The document was first published in September 1852 in Salt Lake City in *Deseret News*. Why does Moore not give this important historical information to his readers?

Moore inaccurately declares that “the 1844 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* was already canonized scripture in the RLDS Church when Joseph Smith III became its prophet-president in 1860” (143). Here he confuses canonization with publication. John Taylor unilaterally added several items to the 1844 printing of the book, which became the most widely available version, since all printed copies of the 1835 first edition of the book had long since been distributed. Moore’s report on the Community of Christ World Conference voting to remove some sections from the Doctrine and Covenants in 1970 would be more complete when understood as a correc-

tive canonization procedure (143–44).

Canonization, as a specific action, was followed in 1835 when a general assembly, by vote, authorized the publication of the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. The LDS Church followed this same canonization procedure after it moved to Utah. At a general conference in Utah in August 1852, Joseph Smith's revelation on polygamy (now LDS D&C 132) was publicly presented for the first time, voted on, and officially adopted as a revelation. The same procedure was followed in 1880 when the LDS Church made the Pearl of Great Price its fourth book of scripture. Again, in 1890 when polygamy was ended, a vote of the conference was called, followed in 1902 by the presentation and canonization of a revised version of the Pearl of Great Price. The same canonization procedure was followed in 1976 when an 1836 vision of Joseph Smith Jr. and a 1918 vision of Joseph F. Smith were canonized by conference vote and added to the Pearl of Great Price, then moved to the Doctrine and Covenants in 1979. The same procedure was followed in 1978 when Spencer W. Kimball's announcement on giving priesthood to "all worthy male members" was presented to the conference of the Church and voted on. This same procedure has been followed by Community of Christ. To merely state that Community of Christ has rejected "some sections dating from the time of Joseph Smith" (114) with no further explanation biases the reader by retrospectively projecting a current LDS paradigm into the conversation. I see it as another example of blurring history to validate the present.

I find it curious that the Community of Christ section on scripture even lists the Pearl of Great Price at all. The book never existed in anything like its present form in the original church during Joseph Smith's lifetime. The entire discussion should be in the LDS Church section only. I think it is unfortunate that Moore chooses to defer important facts of history about this book until later in the chapter when talking about the LDS Church. Moore ignores how much the book has changed in content and in artwork from its first publication in 1851 as a missionary tract in England, until the current editions, including the fact that it was voted on in Salt Lake City by a general conference not once, but twice, to complete the canonization process.

Most of the content of the Pearl of Great Price as currently published by the LDS Church is found in Community of Christ publications, as Moore correctly points out. The Joseph Smith history materials and the "articles of faith" found in the Pearl of Great Price are found in Community of Christ historical records. I am not sure what Moore means by stating that these two items "would likely be accepted by Community of Christ" (117). If he is implying that Community of Christ would view them as scripture, he is mistaken.

The Book of Abraham is the section of the Pearl of Great Price that is objectionable to most members in Community of Christ, mainly because of what is viewed as that book's non-biblical teachings and because of its dubious provenance. Moore generally has the history of the Book of Abraham correct, including its tentative use and publication in the early Reorganization. To declare, however, that Community of Christ "rejects" the Pearl of Great Price is unjustified (122).

The chapter on the purpose of temples seems mostly a justification for the current LDS practices and is negatively biased against Community of Christ belief and practice. Moore says next to nothing about the purpose of the temple in Community of Christ and provides no information whatsoever about temple ministries, although authoritative information is far from lacking.

Why is there no mention that the temple at Independence is modeled on the House of the Lord at Kirtland, with one area for public worship, another area for teaching the priesthood, and third area for Church leaders' offices? Information from the Community of Christ website is misrepresented in footnote 430 (146). It is the ministries of the temple that can be shared anywhere the Church gathers, and not just the "ministries of Community of Christ." While temple ministries are part of the overall ministries of the denomination, they are distinct from the sacraments (or ordinances) and other typical congregational ministries.

By asserting, "Since the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith, temple building and the ordinances performed in the temples have been essential components of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (146), Moore again blurs history to give a clearly negative message to his readers about Community of Christ. He writes that "Community of Christ does not believe in the temple ordinances of Mormonism. Community of Christ built its temple in Independence because of the prophecy that a temple would be built at Independence" (148). In the first place, despite the historical record, Moore is attempting to declare that current LDS temple ordinances are the original ordinances of the movement. Second, why reinforce something that Community of Christ does *not* believe without explaining the uses and purposes of its temple? Finally, Community of Christ built the temple in Independence, not just "because of the prophecy" but because modern revelation through Prophet-President W. Wallace Smith (Section 149) and through Prophet-President Wallace B. Smith (Section 156) commanded it to be built!

I was mystified by Moore's assertion: "There is no restriction of coffee and tea as there is in the LDS version of the Word of Wisdom" (154). I cannot find the words "coffee" or "tea" in either the Community of Christ version (D&C 86) or the LDS version (D&C 89). In fact, the wording of both versions

is identical. Why is the author implying that Community of Christ has changed something? A short study of the history of the Word of Wisdom, its interpretation, and application in the LDS Church after arriving in Utah would benefit all readers on this point and provide for a more balanced understanding.

The publisher's disclaimer on the copyright page that the book is "not an official publication of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" is understandable. But why does the disclaimer fail to mention that the book also is not an official publication of Community of Christ? This omission ought to be corrected in a future printing. I also note that William D. Russell's academic credentials are incorrectly given on the book cover and title page. Russell has a "J.D." not a "Ph.D."

One of the best comments in the entire book is among Moore's concluding remarks. He states: "Each church maintains the course it is on, believing that it is being guided in its growth and development by the Lord" (168). Had he used this statement as his guiding rubric of interpretation from the beginning of the book, the end result may well have been the comparative study that readers will hope to find.

In the end, the book lacks the depth of analysis necessary to truly foster understanding. While the tone is much gentler than Joseph Fielding Smith's book of the previous century, the end result is the same. The book is more a lopsided history of how Community of Christ has transformed from the earliest years of the original church to the present, than a comparison between two distinctly different denominations. Largely unaware of their own denomination's history of dramatic transformation and changing philosophical foundations, LDS readers when completing the reading of this book will surely reach what I think is the desired (if unstated) conclusion: a self-reaffirmation of the LDS Church as the "only true church."

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BOOK NOTICE

Kenneth W. Merrell, *Scottish Shepherd: The Life and Times of John Murray Murdoch, Utah Pioneer*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2006. xvi, 230 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendix (Children of John Murray Murdoch), bibliography, and index.

This family history, which author Kenneth W. Merrell, the great-great-grandson of John Murray Murdoch, describes as “part biography and part social history” (xii), presents a portrait of a Scottish convert whose conversion was thorough and whose long life was devoted to the LDS Church despite several trying experiences.

The book begins with two chapters of context on Scotland’s geography, history, famous Scots, and the larger Murdoch family. John was born in 1820 in Ayrshire, the sixth of eight children. His father, a coal miner, was asphyxiated in attempting to rescue an individual overcome by “black damp” (nitrogen and carbon dioxide). Eleven-year-old John went to work as a shepherd, then in the mines.

He was strongly influenced toward Mormonism by his brother-in-law, confirmed by a dream in which a “beautiful little bushy tree” that had just been planted had, in just “a day or two . . . already taken root and was actually showing signs of bearing fruit” (34). He and his wife, Ann Steele Murdoch, emigrated in 1852 at the behest of Brigham Young who wished to estab-

lish the sheep industry in Utah and had commissioned Franklin D. Richards, mission president, to send two shepherds and their dogs (48). This instruction apparently comes from family stories, as the author does not provide a citation.

Both of John and Ann’s young children died, at least partially from semi-starvation during the journey, after they reached the United States. Their three-year-old daughter’s death was accompanied by an event so horrible that John, in his brief biography at age eighty, recorded an alternate version that stressed the kindness of strangers but told a nephew the grisly details. When he and Ann, who was pregnant, were preparing the body for burial, a sympathetic stranger offered to have a wagon convey the little body in its “substantial box” to the cemetery “free of charge.” The wagon took a different route than the walking path; and after John had buried his daughter, he returned by the wagon road, entered a building he had passed by before, and was watching “a large vat of boiling water” when “to my horror [I] saw the head of my own little girl with her yellow curly hair rise to the surface and disappear. . . . We learned that this was a dissecting establishment” (63).

The trek across the plains, which resulted in twenty-four deaths in their company and the birth of their third child in a violent hailstorm, was further plagued by cholera, accidents, stampedes, and food short-

ages. In Salt Lake City, Brigham Young had changed his mind about raising sheep, so John worked at a variety of odd jobs, including digging potatoes for Brigham Young, and they lived for three years in Third Ward.

In 1856 John's seventy-three-year-old mother became one of the scores of fatalities in the Martin Handcart Company but left the cherished family memory of telling her son-in-law (who also succumbed): "Tell John I died with my face toward Zion" (82). "Wee Granny's" death prompted the often-reproduced painting by Clark Kelly Price, commissioned by the family (211).

John served in the Utah Militia in Echo Canyon during the Utah War, in the Third Ward bishopric, in the first branch presidency when the family moved to Heber Valley in 1860, then as counselor in the high priests' quorum until just before his death, then was ordained a stake patriarch in 1890. He was also a militia captain during the Black Hawk War but did not leave the county.

He married another Scotswoman, Isabella Crawford, who was fourteen years his junior, as his plural wife. Together, his two wives bore twenty-two children, nine of whom (41 percent) predeceased their parents (156). Except briefly after the Manifesto, the

two women shared the same household, each having a separate section, and the family life seems to have been remarkably harmonious. Family stories relate glimpses of the wives walking arm in arm or all three sitting by the fireside holding hands (198). Several of the children were musical, and family evenings spent singing provided cherished memories.

In April 1891, John was arrested for cohabitation and sentenced to a month in the penitentiary and a fine of \$100. Unprepared for the sentence, he received permission to return to Heber, collect his clothing, and present himself at the penitentiary (described as being in Provo). He had to insist that the warden admit him because he had no commitment papers (185).

Considering the book's title, information about Murdoch's sheepherding activities is surprisingly brief (163–67). He served as "supervisory shepherd" in the Wasatch Sheep Cooperative until it disbanded (no dates) and then lost his own herd (no date) when it was entrusted to an unreliable shepherd, an event that may have ended his sheep ranching (167).

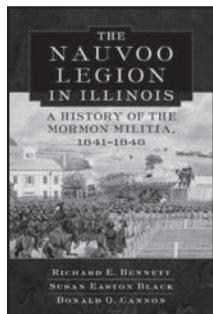
John died at age eighty-nine, leaving 101 grandchildren. Murdoch's descendants at the book's writing are estimated at 6,000 or more (214).

THE NAUVOO LEGION IN ILLINOIS

A History of the Mormon Militia, 1841–1846

By Richard E. Bennett, Susan Easton Black,
and Donald Q. Cannon

\$39.95 HARDCOVER · 440 PAGES, 25 B&W ILLUS., 5 TABLES



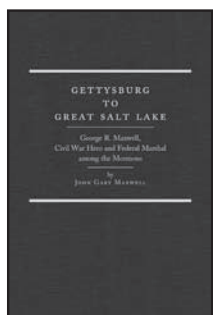
When the Mormons established their theocratic city of Nauvoo on the banks of the Mississippi in 1839, they made self-defense a priority, having encountered persecution, violence, and forcible expulsion elsewhere. Organized under Illinois law, the Nauvoo Legion was a city militia made up primarily of Latter-day Saints. This comprehensive work on the history, structure, and purpose of the Nauvoo Legion traces its unique story from its founding to the Mormon exodus in 1846.

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