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FRONT COVER: Carthage Jail from a sketch made by Frederick Piercy included in Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley edited by James Linforth and published by Franklin D. Richards in 1855. BACK COVER: Lucy Smith sketched “from life” by Frederick Piercy and included in Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley. Courtesy Church Archives. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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To GLEN M. LEONARD, in recognition of his conscientious production and expert work as associate editor of the first seven volumes of the Journal of Mormon History.

Return to Carthage: Writing the History of Joseph Smith’s Martyrdom

By Dean C. Jessee

A substantial part of Joseph Smith's History of the Church consists of an account of events surrounding the murder of the Mormon leader and his brother Hyrum at Carthage, Illinois, on June 27, 1844. Compared with the contemporary news reports of the Carthage tragedy, the pages of the History are lavish in particulars, giving actions and conversations of those involved with precise, hour-by-hour exactness. Considering the mid-1850s context in which this part of the History was written, the question arises, how was such a comprehensive picture reconstructed and how accurate is it? The answer to these questions is a revealing chapter in nineteenth century Mormon historiography.

Announcement of the killings of Joseph and Hyrum Smith appeared in the Nauvoo Neighbor on June 30, 1844, and was reported the next day in the Times and Seasons under the title, “Awful Assassination.” Bearing the signatures of Willard Richards, John Taylor, and Samuel H. Smith, the announcement deplored the tragedy and briefly outlined the events that led to it.

The papers also contained two statements written “at the request of the friends of Joseph and Hyrum Smith” by their attorneys, James W. Woods and Hugh T. Reid. The lawyers briefly reviewed the Carthage scene as they witnessed it — Woods after his arrival at Nauvoo from his Burlington, Iowa, law

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1The period between June 10, 1844, when the Nauvoo City Council ordered the marshal to destroy the Nauvoo Expositor press, and June 27 when Joseph and Hyrum Smith were killed, is covered in the Joseph Smith History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Press, 1948), 6:432–622.

2Unless otherwise indicated, all sources are located in the LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.
office on June 21, and Reid after arriving in Carthage from Fort Madison, Iowa, three days later. In addition to these statements, a July 15 Times and Seasons editorial gave tribute to the dead Mormon leaders but added little to the already-reported happenings at Carthage. Later in July, the Nauvoo Neighbor published Willard Richards’s account of the last “two minutes” in the jail in which he described the killing of the Smiths and the wounding of John Taylor.

The information contained in these contemporary announcements essentially reviewed the sequence of events during the last four days of Joseph Smith’s life, beginning with his departure for Carthage on June 24 on a charge of riot growing out of the destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor press. With the exception of the statement attributed to Joseph, “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter, but I am calm as a summer’s morning,” etc., these sources contained little of the personal dialogue and precise detail that later filled the pages of the History. How did it happen that a moment-by-moment narrative such as we find in the Carthage chapters of the History could be reconstructed from the meager sources available in 1844? The impression is almost one of history in reverse — the further we proceed from the event the more exact and abundant the information.

At Joseph Smith’s death, the History of the Church had been completed to August 5, 1838. Willard Richards, under whose direction the work continued thereafter, was able to bring the narrative to March 1843 before the exodus from Nauvoo disrupted his work. Eight years later, when writing on the History resumed, time and distance had imposed serious complications. Particularly frustrating was the 1854 death of Willard Richards, whose talented pen had been a guiding force behind the History, and whose close association with Joseph Smith had furnished the project with its most able mind.3

When George A. Smith was named historian in the place of the deceased Richards in April 1854, he found that delay in writing the History due to the migration across the plains had taken its toll of the source material.

Many records are nearly obliterated by time damp and dirt. Others lost, some half worked into mouse nests, & many important events were never written except in the hearts of those who were concerned. Joseph said it would be impossible for any man ever to write his history. I am doing the best I can towards it.4

As George A. surveyed events of the last days of the Prophet’s life, he found extensive gaps in the record.

In addition to the news reports published at the time of the murders, there was on file a three-page journal by Jonathan Hale outlining the movements of the Nauvoo Legion between June 18 and July 7, 1844, and a few other documents.

One of these was an affidavit, dated July 4, 1844, by William M. Daniels,

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2Times and Seasons, July 15, 1844, p. 585.
3On the writing of Joseph Smith’s History see Brigham Young University Studies 11 (Summer 1971):439–73. The frustration caused by the absence of Richards is mentioned in a letter of Wilford Woodruff to John Taylor, June 30, 1856, Historian’s Office Letterbook 1, pp. 315ff.
4George A. Smith to John C. L. Smith, February 28, 1855, Historian’s Office Letterbook 1, pp. 105ff.
who claimed to have witnessed the killing of Joseph Smith.  

Daniels, a 23-year-old cooper, was with a Warsaw militia unit on June 27 and heard discussion that Illinois Governor Thomas Ford would be leaving Carthage and that men from the unit would be sent to join with the Carthage militia to attack the jail. Daniels heard the order from the Governor to disband the troops, and reported that the men were again called into line and addressed by Warsaw Signal editor, Thomas Sharp, who urged the killing of the Mormon leaders. According to Daniels, a vote was taken; some of the men refused to participate in the scheme, but the remainder, numbering about eighty-five, proceeded on toward Carthage. En route, a Carthage militiaman informed them that the Governor was gone and they could now “kill Joseph and Hyrum Smith and must do it quick” before he returned. Some time later Daniels saw the attack on the jail by men with blackened faces; he saw Joseph fall or leap from the window, and then shot as he lay on the ground. In 1845 a distorted version of the Daniels account was published in Nauvoo by Lyman O. Littlefield. This publication (to be discussed later in this paper) was the source of the story that after Joseph was shot, the men who did the killing, and another with a knife, intent upon mutilating his body, were paralyzed by a sudden, bright light and had to be carried from the scene.

Perhaps the most important item bearing upon the events at Carthage available to George A. Smith was the personal diary of Willard Richards. Beginning in December 1842, when he was appointed Joseph Smith’s private secretary, Richards had kept the Prophet’s diary in addition to his own. But on June 21, 1844, when he crossed the Mississippi with Joseph and subsequently went to Carthage with him, he discontinued Joseph’s diary, probably seeing no need to make a double record while the two men were together.

The value of the Richards diary lies in the precise time references it contains for all that took place at Carthage. Such exact references as “12 minutes before 1” and “3 minutes before 3” in noting occurrences suggest on-the-scene reporting by someone with an accurate sense of keeping records. But while Richards noted with exactness when events transpired, he was less precise in recording what took place. The brevity and illegibility of his entries is further evidence, along with the specific time designations, that he had his diary with him at Carthage, that he was involved in the events himself, and at the time was unable to do more than identify with a word or phrase what was happening, intending, no doubt, to flesh out the details later.

Since Richards died before he was able to expand his diary, historian George A. Smith faced the challenge, as he approached the chapters on Carthage, of having an exact time frame and brief hints of what took place, but insufficient particulars to go with it. To solve this problem he began collecting information from all who had been with the Smiths during their last days.

5The affidavit was given before Hancock County Justice of the Peace Aaron Johnson and is in the handwriting of William W. Phelps.

6Born in New York State, Daniels had lived in Illinois about eight years, and was residing near Augusta at the time of his involvement at Carthage. The pamphlet, published in Nauvoo in 1845 is titled, A Correct Account of the Murder of Generals Joseph and Hyrum Smith at Carthage on the 27th day of June, 1844 by William M. Daniels, an Eye Witness.
Among the first to provide information was Edward A. Bedell, aide-de-camp to Governor Ford. Bedell was Utah Indian agent in April 1854 when he was interviewed at the Historian's Office. Thomas Bullock took notes of Bedell's recollections as he responded to questions by George A. Smith. Upon hearing William Daniel's report, Bedell felt that his "main statements" were correct. He related that on June 27 Governor Ford had ordered Warsaw militia general, W. Douglas Knox, to Nauvoo with two field pieces and told him to meet the Governor on the way; but after proceeding two and one-half miles Knox's order was rescinded and he turned back toward Warsaw. However, certain men under Levi Williams refused to go home and gathered at Prentice's railroad shanty at 10:30 a.m., where they discussed an attack on the Carthage jail. The dissenters sent a request for the cannon to blow the jail down, but Knox refused. Bedell added that during the attack on the jail, Joseph shot three men — one Vorhees from Green Plains in the right shoulder, one Gallagher from Warsaw in the face, and another was "badly shot." He stated that Joseph Smith lived "some time" after he fell from the window; and after the crime "nearly all" of the people of Warsaw fled to Quincy by boat. Bedell also reported that the bodies of the Mormon leaders were taken from the jail to the Hamilton Hotel where John Macomber, a local tailor, was preparing to wash them when Bedell and General Knox arrived on the scene.

Between November 1854 and June 1856, four others who had been with Joseph Smith during his last days at Carthage left detailed accounts of their experience. A reading of their recollection identifies the source for much of the content of the Carthage chapters of Joseph Smith's History.

The first to respond to an inquiry by the church historian was John S. Fullmer, at the time presiding over the Manchester and Preston conferences of the Mormon Church in England. Fullmer had lived on a farm four miles from Nauvoo in June 1844 when Joseph and Hyrum Smith were arrested. As an officer in the Nauvoo Legion he had been on duty during the time the city was under martial law. Because of his "great interest in the welfare of the Prophet and Patriarch," he had accompanied the arrested men to Carthage, even though he was not one of those named in the arrest warrant.

On November 27, 1854, Fullmer reviewed his experience in a four-page letter. He had arrived at Carthage in the morning on the 25th of June in time

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7John Solomon Fullmer was born July 21, 1807, in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. He wrote that he had been with Joseph Smith "a great deal since my first acquaintance with him; was in his company and employ, in his office and in his store over a year and acted also at times as his private secretary." John Solomon Fullmer to Wilford Woodruff, October 18, 1881.

8John S. Fullmer to George A. Smith, November 27, 1854. Fullmer notes that several months after the Carthage murders he wrote "a long letter for publication" in the New York Herald, but thought it "too long and did not send it." Fullmer had the document with him in England in 1854, where Franklin D. Richards read it and "of publishing it," along with "an abridged account of the difficulties which followed in Hancock County." This explains the 1855 publication at Liverpool of the pamphlet: Assassination of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, The Prophet and the Patriarch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also A Condensed History of the Expulsion of the Saints from Nauvoo, by Elder John S. Fullmer, addressed to "James G. Bennett Esq., Editor of the New York Herald." Although Fullmer wrote his letter to George A. Smith in 1854, he had access to his recollections written within "months" of the events they describe.
to attend the hearing of the prisoners on the riot charge and saw them bound over in the sum of $500 each.

The amount required of each was twice and a half times as much as the highest sum that they could have been fined in case of conviction. It was evident that the magistrate intended to outreach the pile of the brethren, so as to imprison those on trial for want of bail; but it happened that there was strength to cover the demand. I went it to the full extent of my worth; so did others — and the prisoners were all released. But Joseph and Hiram having been arrested in the first instance on two charges, one for riot, the other for treason, were now not suffered to enjoy their liberty after the first examination and release; and were almost immediately taken in charge by a constable. [Italics in the original].

That evening when the Smiths were confined in the jail, Fullmer went with them. The following day, after leaving the jail for a time, he was readmitted only after his pockets were searched; but in his boot he carried a single barrel pistol that he gave to Joseph Smith. Fullmer told of lying on the floor next to the Prophet during the night.

He laid his right arm out for me to lay my head upon it. . . . After the brethren were all quiet and seemed asleep, excepting myself, he talked with me a little about the prospects of his deliverance. He did not say he knew that he had to die, but he inferred as much, and finally said he “would like to see his family again,” and he “would to God that he could preach to the saints once more in Nauvoo.”

The next day, June 27, Fullmer left the Carthage jail for Nauvoo to assist in obtaining witnesses for the treason hearing scheduled for the 29th, but finding the witnesses had all been arranged for, he returned to his farm.

Another important source for the Carthage history was a twenty-page letter sent by Cyrus Wheelock to the church historian in December 1854. From London, England, where he was engaged in missionary work, Wheelock wrote of his disadvantage in not being able to give his recollections “so clear and distinct . . . as desirable,” because he did not have his journal with him and was forced to “depend almost entirely” upon his memory.9

Although Wheelock was not among those charged with the destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor, he was “as a friend” requested to accompany those who were so charged. He wrote that upon their midnight arrival at Carthage on the 24th, and being harassed by the assembled rabble to see Joseph Smith, Governor Ford put his head out of the hotel window “and very meekly” said, “Gentlemen, gentlemen, I know your great anxiety to see Mr. Smith, which is natural enough, but it is quite too late tonight for you to have that opportunity, but I assure you gentlemen that you shall have that privilege tomorrow morning, as I will cause him to pass before the troops upon the square and I now wish you with this assurance, quietly & peaceably to withdraw to your quarters.” To this there was a faint, “Hurrah for Governor Ford,” and the crowd dispersed.

The next morning, when Joseph and Hyrum Smith were introduced to the troops, some of them rioted, throwing their hats in the air, drawing their

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swords and proclaiming that “they would introduce themselves to the damned Mormons in a different style.” Later that day, June 25, a number of officers and their associates visited the prisoners. It was Wheelock who reported the conversation in which Joseph asked the men present if he “looked like a man guilty of the charge preferred against him”:

I wish you to speak freely, and unreservedly, as you feel, and tell me, do I look to be the character I am judged to be? Is there anything in my countenance or appearance to justify the belief that I am a murderer, or a whoremonger, or guilty of treasonable designs against the government; or would my appearance in any way lead you to suppose that I was the enemy of mankind and of good order, and government? Gentlemen, please to answer me truthfully as upon your honor.

To this one of the group replied, “No sir, General Smith your appearance would indicate the very contrary; I can see nothing in your appearance to justify the gross charges that are everywhere proclaimed against you, but . . . we cannot see what is in your heart, and we’re unable to fathom your purposes.” Joseph responded,

Very true gentlemen you cannot see what is in my heart, and are therefore unable to judge me or my intentions, but, I can see what is in your heart, and will tell you what I see — I can see you thirst for blood, and nothing but my blood will satisfy you, it is not for crime of any description that I, and my brethren are thus continually persecuted, and involved in law suits, and harassed by our enemies, but there was other motives, and some of them I have expressed, so far as relates to myself, and inasmuch as you, and the people, thirst for blood, I prophecy, in the name of the Lord, that you shall witness the scenes of blood, and sorrow to your entire satisfaction. Your soul shall be perfectly satiated with blood, and many of you who are now present, shall have an opportunity to front the cannon’s mouth from sources you think not of.

In reporting this conversation, Wheelock explained, “I have given the above, as near as possible, in the words used, and the substance I know to be strictly true.”

When Joseph and Hyrum were moved to the jail, Wheelock remained at the hotel to “watch the movement of things.” He spent most of the day, June 26, circulating among the militia gathered in and around the hotel and reported hearing the sentiment that “the law is too short for these men, but they must not be suffered to go at large, and if the law will not reach them, powder and balls must.”

On the morning of the 27th, after obtaining a pass from the governor, Wheelock was admitted to the jail. “The day being a little rainy,” he wore an overcoat in the side pocket of which he had concealed a revolver. Passing the guard unmolested by showing the pass, he entered the prison, reported what he had heard the previous day, and, unobserved, slipped the gun out of his pocket into Joseph’s. “I accomplished it so secretly, that he himself did not notice it, until I took him by the hand and guided it to the pocket in which I had placed it.” The Prophet then took out the gun and examined it and asked if Wheelock had not better keep it for his own protection, but Cyrus refused, saying that he felt it providential that he was able to get the weapon into the prison when all who had previously entered had been searched. At this point, Joseph took the pistol given him by Fullmer earlier and gave it to his brother Hyrum saying, “You may have use for this.” Hyrum responded, “I hate to use
such things or to see them used.” “So do I,” said Joseph, “but we may want to help the guard defend the prison.”

Wheelock’s stay at the jail ended shortly after this when he was sent with a message to the Nauvoo Legion that there should be no military display when the governor should visit Nauvoo. He was also instructed to procure “several more pistols or revolvers,” and bring them to Carthage “for the use of the brethren should they seem to be required.”

Another witness to the events at Carthage was Dan Jones, a Welsh riverboat captain, who wrote his recollections at length to Thomas Bullock in January 1855.10 At that time Jones was presiding over a Mormon mission in Wales. Dramatic and flowery in his prose, his manuscript would raise questions of reliability to the writers of the History. He told of “thousands” assembled at the grove in Nauvoo on Sunday, June 23, the day before Joseph Smith left for Carthage:

All felt as if their much loved Prophet was already beyond the vail; nor could the hideing folds of night’s dark cloak cheer their throbbing hearts with a beam of hope; but the pensive morrows sun saw a City bathed in tears, and after a night as sleepless to the devoted Saints below as it was to those sleepless on high recording their prayers and sealing up the “vials.”11

Jones was among those who accompanied Joseph Smith to Carthage on June 24 and returned to Nauvoo for the state arms, but “failing to get a horse” he was forced to remain in the city overnight.

“By request,” on the morning of the 25th he took important documents in Emma Smith’s possession to Carthage in time to enter them as evidence at the

10The Jones manuscript of 26 pages titled, “The Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith,” covers events in Hancock County, Illinois, between June 12 and 27, 1844. Although not written under the salutation of a letter, or signed, the document’s filing notation in Thomas Bullock’s hand gives the date, January 20, 1855.

Dan Jones was born in Flintshire, Wales, August 4, 1810. He was well educated and had covered “much of the world as a sailor” during his lifetime. Jones was converted to Mormonism in 1843, and shortly afterward captained the steamboat Maid of Iowa, jointly owned by himself and Joseph Smith. For details see Rex LeRoy Christensen, “The Life and Contributions of Captain Dan Jones,” (M.A. thesis, Utah State University, 1977).

11Describing Joseph’s departure from Nauvoo, Jones wrote: “Monday, 24th — Eventfull day! found hundreds gathered before the Mansion House early in the morning; — in their midst with head erect towering above the rest the Prophet stood gazing alternately on the devoted City and its much loved citizens; in suspense he listened to the entreaties of the throng, not to give himself up or he would be murdered; a few, tho enough, brave hearted men proposed to escort him where he would find the protection denied him by the ‘Christians’ among the red ‘pagans’ of the West: — others, up north would have him go, while fearless Tar, inured to other climes, whose heart was a Malstrom of fury, proffered him a safe passage on a Steam Boat, then ready by, to whither he would; a smile of approbation lit up the Seer’s countenance, — his lovely boys hanging on to his skirts urged on the suite and cryed ‘Father, O Father don’t go to Carthage they will kill you.’ — a volley of arguments more powerfull yet from the streaming eyes of her he loved best, and whose embrace was hard to sever; nor least impressive were the pleadings of his doting Mother whose grey ringlets honoured a head weather-beaten by the persecutions of near twice ten years. ‘My Son, my Son, can you leave me without promising to return? Some forty times before have I seen you from me dragged, but never before without saying you would return; what say you now my Son? He stood erect like a beacon among roaring breakers, — his gigantic mind grasping still higher; the fire flashed in his eye; with hand uplifted on high he spoke ‘My friends, nay dearer still my brethren, I love you, I love the City of Nauvoo too well to save my life at your expense, — If I go not to them, they will come and act out the horrid Missouri scenes in Nauvoo; — I may prevent it, I fear not death, my work is well nigh done, keep the faith and I will die for Nauvoo.’
hearing. That night, when the prisoners were transferred from the hotel to the jail, Jones and Stephen Markham helped clear the way through the “drunken rabble.”

After the prisoners were transferred to an upstairs room in the jail on the 26th, Jones and Markham spent the morning carving the warped door with a penknife so that it would shut. In the afternoon when the sheriff came to take the men to the courthouse for the hearing on the treason charge, and a tense situation developed over the question of jurisdiction, Joseph, followed by the other prisoners, “walked boldly” into the midst of the gathering crowd, “locked arms with the worst mobocrat he could see” and they proceeded to the courthouse.

After the hearing had been postponed and the men returned to the jail, Hyrum read extensive extracts from the Book of Mormon and Joseph “bore a powerful testimony to the guards of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the Gospel, and the administration of angels.” Jones wrote that the men retired late that night, Joseph and Hyrum occupying the only bed and the others lying on mattresses on the floor. Willard Richards stayed up writing “until his last candle left him in the dark.”

Upon the discharge of a gun in the night, Joseph moved from the bed to the floor. Reclining near Dan Jones, the Prophet asked the Welshman if he was afraid to die and promised him he would yet fill a mission to his native land. Jones recorded that he was awakened about midnight by “heavy treads as of soldiery close by,” and heard someone whisper near the window below, “Who, and how many shall go in?” Dan saw a “large number of men in front of the prison,” and gave the alarm as they rushed up the stairs to the door of the room. But hearing the prisoners moving about, and Joseph yell out, “Come ye assassins we are ready for you, and would as willingly die now as at daylight,” the intruders left the jail.

The next morning Dan was sent to inquire of the guard the cause of the disturbance in the night and was told by Frank Worrell, “we have had too much trouble to bring old Joe here to let him ever escape out alive, and unless you want to die with him you better leave before sundown.” According to Jones, Worrell added, “You’ll see that I can prophecy better than old Joe that neither he nor his brother and anyone who will remain with them will see the sun set today.” Upon being sent to inform the governor of this and other threats, Dan was told by the chief executive that he was “unnecessarily alarmed,” and that the people in Carthage were “not that cruel.” Returning to the jail and being refused entrance, Jones was given a letter to deliver to Quincy. A short time later he left town.

Another to report his recollections of Carthage was Stephen Markham. Writing to Wilford Woodruff on June 20, 1856, from Fort Supply, now Wyom-

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12 The letter sent by Joseph to O. H. Browning requesting professional services is published in Smith, History of the Church, 6:613.
13 Stephen Markham was born February 9, 1800, in Rush (later Avon), Livingston County, New York. He joined the Latter-day Saints while living in Chester, Geauga County, Ohio, in July 1837. A detailed study of his life is Mervin LeRoy Gifford, “Stephen Markham: Man of Valour” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1975).
ing, where he was supervising a Mormon supply station on the Green River, Markham told of his indictment in the *Expositor* case and of going, at Joseph’s request, to Carthage with others under the same charge and giving himself into the custody of General Miner R. Deming. This was June 23. Markham and his associates were confined in the jail, but the next morning were informed by Deming that the governor would not receive them as prisoners because Joseph and Hyrum Smith were not with them. Markham then left for Nauvoo and met Joseph and his group going the other way. Joining forces they continued on to Carthage.

Markham wrote that on the afternoon of June 26, a Mr. Southwick, a southerner interested in the Mormons moving to Texas, who had spent the night with the prisoners in the jail, attended an anti-Mormon meeting at Hamilton’s Hotel. The purpose of the gathering was to “take into consideration the best way to stop Joseph and Hyrum Smith’s career.” It was proposed that if Illinois and Missouri would join forces to kill the Mormon leader “they would not be brought to justice for it.” There were delegates at the meeting from “every state of the Union except three.” The gathering suddenly broke up when a guard reported Markham coming up the stairs. In the ensuing confusion, Southwick picked up the minutes of the meeting, later read them to Markham, and promised him the original after he made a copy. The next day, a few hours before the attack on the jail, Markham was forced to leave Carthage at bayonet point.\(^\text{14}\)

After gathering information from these and other widely scattered witnesses,\(^\text{15}\) there remained for George A. Smith the task of finishing the *History* to the end of Joseph Smith’s life — a job he described as “long, tedious, and difficult.” The emotional and mental strain of working the sources into a smooth-flowing narrative was severe. He found that an hour’s work invariably gave him a headache.\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{14}\)&^{15}\) According to Markham, in the afternoon of the 27th, Willard Richards became ill and Joseph asked Stephen, since he had a pass, “to go out and get the Doctor a Pipe & Tobacco to settle his stumack. I went out & got a Pipe from Sheriff Backinstoss & Bought some Tobacco in a store close by & was returning. John Eagle was in the store & threw out considerable Threats against the Mormons & in Particular against me. When Proceeding to the Jail I was asailed by a man by the Name of Stewart he called to me. Oid man you have got to Leave the Town in 5 Minutes I replied I shall not do it neither can you drive me you can kill me but you cannot drive me. then he Turned & charged upon me with his Baynot & I Paried it of with my Left hand & Nocked him down with my right he Hollowed & all the Carthage grays ralied round me with their Guns & Baynots & Told me I had got to Leave the Town forth with or I would be a dead man in a short time they making passes at me with their Baynots I Paried them of with my Left & Nockd them down to the amount of 10 or 12 with my right. then the[y] got so close that I had no chance Eagle in the gang urging them on. Hamilton the Inn Keeper came out & said I had better go home as I would only get killed if I remained. he said you can do the prisnors no good & I will bring you your Horse I told him I was not going home & not to bring him. he Cried & Brought my Horse up & they forced me on him with the points of their Baynots untill the Blood filled my shoes. they then formed a hollow square round me & Marched me to the Timber.” (Markham to Woodruff, June 20, 1856).

\(^{16}\)While the bulk of the source material for the history of Joseph Smith’s last four days came from Fullmer, Wheelock, Jones, Markham, and Willard Richards, the church historians also drew information from Dimick Huntington, Edwin Woolley, William W. Phelps, and John Smith.

\(^{16}\)George A. Smith to C. C. Waller, July 31, 1855; and George A. Smith to John Lyman [Smith], September 30, 1855, Historian’s Office Letterbook 1, p. 230; Historian Office Journal, August 26, 1854.
To complicate matters with the History, but no doubt presenting some personal relief, George A. was appointed to help draft a state constitution for Utah, and on March 27, 1856, was named, along with John Taylor, to present the statehood petition to the U.S. Congress. Upon Wilford Woodruff, designated assistant historian at the ensuing April conference, fell the burden of completing the History.

As Woodruff surveyed the source material he found numerous gaps and contradictions. To resolve this, he turned to John Taylor, at the time editing a New York newspaper and presiding over the church in the Eastern States. Having been wounded in the assault upon the jail, and being very articulate with his pen, Taylor was an important witness to the events at Carthage. Woodruff wrote him a long letter asking for specific information. "We are very busy writing the history of the latter days of Joseph, and we have a great many conflicting statements on the subject, which renders it necessary for me to call in the aid of an eye and ear witness to enable me to do justice to it. You are the only person on earth who can render me this assistance," he began. He then set forth a series of questions that needed clarification:

Who were the apostates staying at Hamilton's Hotel at the time in question? Joseph, Willard, and yourself tasted of the wine which was fetched by the guard just previous to the martyrdom; did Hyrum taste of it? Were you the mouth at prayer both evenings in jail? If not, who officiated the first night, if any: You sang "A poor wayfaring man of grief" at a quarter past 3 p.m. of the 27th; was it Joseph or Hyrum who requested you to repeat it? I have always understood that you had no sooner finished singing it the second time than the firing commenced; if so there must have been a considerable interval between the two exercises. What were the facts? Who washed the bodies in Carthage?

Of particular concern to Wilford Woodruff was the unintelligibility of parts of Willard Richards's diary while at Carthage. After presenting an extensive extract that appeared to be a meaningless jumble of words and phrases, focusing upon Joseph Smith's interview with Governor Ford on June 26, Woodruff wrote to Taylor, "You will no doubt be able to tax your memory sufficiently to fill up these blanks." And in conclusion, "I want you to describe the scenes in the jail with great care and minuteness; for as I said before you are the only man on earth who can do it."

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17 Wilford Woodruff to John Taylor, June 30, 1856, Historian's Office Letterbook 1, pp. 315ff.
18 Ibid. Woodruff quoted the Richards Diary segment as follows: "Thursday, June 26th, 1844, 9.27 A.M. Gov & Col Geddes arrived at the jail. Joseph stated the coming of the constable gave up called upon some 20 by-standers that we submitted but fear of life go before Esq. Wells go on prairie to Apenoose Habeas Corpus Letter to Gov wrote another Letter to Gov by James sent Hunter & Lewis Capt. Anderson certificate Proclamation Order of Lieut Gen to Dunham. Marshal explained about passes &c arrests Marshalled the Legion had no power anything further Gov acted on the state of the Habeas Corpus trial before Esq. Wells. Gov. thought sufficient time had not been allowed by the posse to get ready can be very safely admitted that your statements are true was satisfied now they had* said it would be unsafe for Joseph to come'"
To reinforce his urgent request of Elder Taylor, Woodruff wrote to his colleague, George A. Smith (by that time in Washington, D.C., working on the Utah statehood petition) asking him to personally contact Taylor and John Bernhisel, another Carthage witness and at the time Utah Territory delegate to Congress, to obtain the needed information. “I hope Bro. Smith you will lose no time in attending to this matter, as the History must in a manner remain open until we can get your answer; we wish you to question brothers Taylor and Bernhisel upon every point that you deem necessary for the history, and forward to us immediately.”

With this prodding, John Taylor produced a lengthy account of his Carthage experience. And in September 1856, George A. Smith reported that he had been with Elder Taylor a month. “He has made a rough draft, entirely from memory, as we are without documents. . . . It will be the most complete account of the martyrdom of the Prophet yet produced, or that probably ever will be, as it comes from personal observation & will read extremely well, as it is given in his natural style, plain and unvarnished.”

To avoid continual interruptions Smith and Taylor had retired to the secluded residence of Ebenezer R. Young, the branch president of the Westport and Norwalk Branch in Westport, Connecticut, where they devoted their full time to writing. The product was an impressive manuscript, eventually published in its entirety in volume seven of the History of the Church. Although John Taylor returned from the East on August 7, 1856, six weeks passed before he delivered his manuscript to the church historian. A short time later, a Historian’s Office clerk reported Wilford Woodruff “revising the history of [Joseph Smith’s] assassination and comparing [it] with John Taylor’s Ms.”

The John Taylor recollections, solicited as a yardstick to measure accuracy and fill gaps in other sources, reflect the dedication and commitment to record keeping of those who wrote the History. “I am anxious to preserve every item that can be obtained from those who participated in [Joseph Smith’s] transactions in life, and leave them on record,” wrote George A. Smith. And Woodruff echoed, “I deem it very essential to get every word and action of [Joseph and Hyrum Smith] . . . during the last days of their lives.” The contribution of Woodruff and Smith to Joseph Smith’s history cannot be minimized.

But considering that much of the source material they collected was produced a dozen years after the events described, it follows that recollections

19Wilford Woodruff to George A. Smith, June 30, 1856, Historian’s Office Letterbook 1, pp. 315ff.
20George A. Smith to Brigham Young, September 19, 1856.
21Ebenezer R. Young was born at Port Richmond, New York, November 14, 1814. He was the proprietor of the Star Cotton Mills in Paterson, New Jersey, when he joined the Latter-day Saints in October 1840. He later moved to Connecticut, where he continued his trade as miller. The Taylor manuscript is dated August 23, 1856, at Branch Mills, Westport, Connecticut. See also, “A Account of George A. Smith’s Mission to Washington, D.C.” Record of the Quorum of Twelve, pp. 82-83; and Historian’s Office Journal, September 26, October 5, October 20, 1857.
22George A. Smith to Cyrus Wheelock, March 28, 1855; Wilford Woodruff to George A. Smith, June 30, 1856, Historian’s Office Letterbook 1, pp. 151ff, 315ff.
giving extensive exchanges of dialogue would not present the Carthage scene as clearly as contemporary verbatim reports would have done. Nor is it expected that individuals writing about highly emotional experiences, even years later, could prevent their feelings from coloring their perceptions. For George A. Smith the return to Carthage was a severe emotional strain. "It is the most affecting piece of business I have ever undertaken. It makes me feel like swearing and all that restrains me is that I am not philologist enough to command words as fervent as I could wish, to do justice to my feelings."  

In comparing the original sources with the published History one finds that by the 1850s the memory of Carthage witnesses in certain instances had faded beyond recall, that sequences were jumbled, and that those who worked to correct these deficiencies succeeded only in part. For example, Dan Jones’s statement that in the night of June 26, 1844, the prisoners in the jail were awakened by intruders who came up the stairs to the door of their room and retreated when Joseph called out, "Come on ye assassins, we are ready for you," was apparently regarded as unreliable and left out of the History. Willard Richards’s diary reports that Southwick, the southerner, had gone to visit the governor "before 7 a.m." on the 26th, but gives no indication of what transpired. The published History, on the other hand, gives the details of the meeting in which the "delegates from every state of the Union but three" allegedly conspired to destroy the Smiths, as told to Stephen Markham by Southwick, but places the event at 9:40 a.m. on June 27.

In the case of Cyrus Wheelock smuggling a pistol into the jail on the 27th, the published History indicates that Wheelock "slipped the revolver into Joseph's pocket. Joseph examined it, and asked Wheelock if he had not better retain it for his own protection," ignoring Wheelock's statement that he accomplished his errand so secretly that Joseph himself did not notice the gun until apprised of it. John Taylor recorded the incident differently, noting that when Wheelock brought the pistol into the prison, he took it from his pocket and asked, "Would any of you like to have this?" Whereupon Joseph replied, "Yes, give it to me."  

One of the perplexing textual issues associated with the Carthage chapters of the History involves the credibility of the William Daniels material. In reconstructing the death scene of Joseph Smith, the church historian in 1856 combined the accounts of Willard Richards, who witnessed the killing from inside the jail, and Daniels, who viewed the scene from the outside. According to Richards, Joseph was shot before he fell from the window:

Joseph attempted, as the last resort, to leap the same window from whence Mr. Taylor fell, when two balls pierced him from the door, and one entered his right breast from without, and he fell outward, exclaiming, "Oh Lord, my God." As his feet went out of the window my head went in, the balls whistling all around. He fell on his left side a dead man.  

By contrast, Daniels, as published in 1845 by Lyman Littlefield, main-

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23George A. Smith to John Taylor, March 2, 1856.  
24Smith, History of the Church, 6:607, 7:100.  
25Richards, "Two Minutes in Jail," Times and Seasons 5 (August 1, 1844): 599.
tained that Joseph was not shot until after he had fallen from the window; and
that a spectacular incident occurred after the shooting:

General Smith, seeing there was not safety in the room, and probably thinking it might
save the lives of others if he could escape from the room, turned calmly from the door,
dropped his pistol upon the floor, saying, "there, defend yourselves as well as you can." He
sprung into the window; but just as he was preparing to descend, he saw such an
array of bayonets below, that he caught by the window casing, where he hung by his
hands and feet, with his head to the north, feet to the south, and his body swinging
downwards. He hung in that position three or four minutes, during which time he
exclaimed, two or three times, "O, Lord my God!!" and fell to the ground. While he was
hanging in that situation, Col. Williams hallooed, "shoot him! God d——n him! shoot
the d——d rascal!" However, none fired at him. He seemed to fall easy. He struck partly
on his right shoulder and back, his neck and head reaching the ground a little before his
feet. He rolled instantly on his face. From this position he was taken by a young man,
who sprung to him from the other side of the fence, who held a pewter fife in his hand,
— was bare-foot and bare-headed, having on no coat — with his pants rolled above his
knees, and shirt-sleeves above his elbows. He set President Smith against the South side
of the well-curb, that was situated a few feet from the jail. While doing this, the savage
muttered aloud, "This is Old Jo; I know him. I know you, Old Jo. Damn you; you are the
man that had my daddy shot."26 The object he had in saying this way, I suppose to be
this: He wished to have President Smith and the people in general, believe he was the son
of Gov. Boggs, which would lead to the opinion that it was the Missourians who had
come over and committed the murder. This was the report that they soon caused to be
circulated through the country; but this was too palpable an absurdity to be credited.
The deed was too bloody and cruel for even Missouri barbarism to father!

After President Smith had fallen, I saw Elder Richards come to the window and
look out upon the horrid scene that spread itself below him. . . .

When President Smith had been set against the curb, and began to recover, Col.
Williams ordered four men to shoot him. Accordingly, four men took an eastern
direction, about eight feet from the curb, Col. Williams standing partly at their rear, and
made ready to execute the order. . . .

The fire was simultaneous. A slight cringe of the body was all the indication of pain
that he betrayed when the balls struck him. He fell upon his face. One ball then entered

26. A copy of a letter dated October 14, 1844, by a Wm. Web purports to be written by the person
with the "pewter fife" who approached Joseph Smith shortly after he fell from the jail window. Web
writes that he came from Iowa to Warsaw three weeks before the killings at Carthage. "I was quite a
young man not over twenty (20) years Old and had not much experience in life, [Thomas] sharp
and some others persuaded me to call my name Boggs, A son of Governor Boggs of Mo. I agreed to
do so and then Sharp circulated all kinds of mean tales about the Mormons he often Said in my
presence, that there was a young man that Jo Smith had his Father Shot, which had a great
influence to rais the prejudice of the people against the mormons." Web was persuaded to join the
company that attacked the jail. After the Prophet fell from the window, he continued, "I ran down
the stairs to see where he was when I got to him he was trying to get up he apparred stunned by the
fall, I struck him on the face and said Old jo damn you where are you now. I then set him up
against the well kerb, and went away from him Hoake and some other person shot him, whether it
was Sharp or not I never could exactly learn but I presume it was." Web concluded, "I was led into
this mean act by sharp and others at Warsaw I can only say I wished they had given me a good
advise in place of that they gave, as it has caused me to be an unhappy man ever since." (William
Web to "Mr Editor," Carthage, Illinois, October 14, 1844. A "true copy" by Alex Mcqueen and
James Wareham. Another copy of the Web letter in the Edward Stevenson Diary, February 8, 1889,
obtained from James Wareham of Manti, contains the same certification by "McQuin" and Ware-
ham, but differs extensively in wording from the version quoted here.)

While the letter appears to be of nineteenth century vintage, internal inconsistencies raise a
question of its authenticity. In the opening lines of his letter (dated October 14, 1844), for example,
the author gives the impression he is writing to dissuade voters from supporting Thomas Sharp in a
congressional election. But Sharp was not a candidate for congress until 1856.
the back part of his body. This is the ball that many people have supposed struck him about the time he was in the window. But this is a mistake. I was close by him, and I know he was not hit with a ball, until after he was seated by the well-curb.

The ruffian, of whom I have spoken, who set him against the well-curb, now gathered a bowie knife for the purpose of severing his head from his body. He raised the knife and was in the attitude of striking, when a light, so sudden and powerful, burst from the heavens upon the bloody scene, (passing its vivid chain between Joseph and his murderers), that they were struck with terrified awe and filled with consternation. This light, in its appearance and potency, baffles all powers of description. The arm of the ruffian, that held the knife, fell powerless; the muskets of the four, who fired, fell to the ground, and they all stood like marble statues, not having the power to move a single limb of their bodies.

By this time most of the men had fled in great disorder. I never saw so frightened a set of men before, . . . Col. Williams saw the light and was also badly frightened; but he did not entirely lose the use of his limbs or speech. Seeing the condition of these men, he hallowed to some who had just commenced a retreat, for God’s sake to come and carry off these men. They came back and carried them by main strength towards the baggage waggons. They seemed as helpless as if they were dead.  

When the last chapter of Joseph Smith’s History was written in Book F-1 of the manuscript in the summer of 1856, the narrative combined elements of both the Willard Richards and William Daniels accounts in portraying the death of the Prophet:

Joseph, seeing there was no safety in the room, and probably thinking that it would save the lives of his brethren in the room if he could escape, turned calmly from the door, dropped his pistol on the floor, and sprang into the window, when two balls pierced him from the door, and one entered his right breast from without, and he fell outward into the hands of his murderers, exclaiming, “Oh Lord, my God.” He fell partly on his right shoulder and back, his neck and head reaching the ground a little before his feet, and he rolled instantly on his face.

From this position he was taken by a man who was barefoot and bareheaded, and having on no coat, his pants rolled up above his knees, and his shirt sleeves above his elbows. He set Joseph against the south side of the well curb, which was situated a few feet from the jail, when Col. Williams ordered four men to shoot him; they stood about eight feet from the curb, and fired simultaneously. A slight cringe of the body was all the indication of pain visible when the balls struck him, and he fell on his face.

The ruffian who set him against the well curb now gathered a bowie knife for the purpose of severing his head from his body. He raised the knife, and was in the attitude of striking, when a light, so sudden and powerful, burst from the heavens upon the bloody scene (passing its vivid chain between Joseph and his murderers) that they were struck with terror. This light, in its appearance and potency, baffles all powers of description. The arm of the ruffian that held the knife fell powerless, the muskets of the four who fired fell to the ground, and they all stood like marble statues, not having the power to move a single limb of their bodies.

The retreat of the mob was as hurried and disorderly as it possibly could have been. Col. Williams hallowed to some who had just commenced their retreat to come back and help carry off the four men who fired, and who were still paralyzed; they came and carried them away by main strength to the baggage waggons, when they fled towards Warsaw.  


This description of the death of Joseph Smith remained unchanged through the earliest publications of the history in the Deseret News and Millennial Star. However, when B. H. Roberts edited the work for publication in its present seven volume format at the beginning of the twentieth century, most of the Daniels material was omitted:

Joseph seeing there was no safety in the room, and no doubt thinking that it would save the lives of his brethren in the room if he could get out, turned calmly from the door, dropped his pistol on the floor, and sprang into the window when two balls pierced him from the door, and one entered his right breast from without, and he fell outward into the hands of his murderers, exclaiming, “O Lord, my God.”

Roberts regarded the incident pertaining to the sudden flash of light as “wholly apocryphal and questionable.” He argued, “It is inevitable, perhaps, that something miraculous should be alleged as connected with the death of Joseph Smith that both myth and legend, those parasites of truth, should attach themselves to the Prophet’s career.”

Considering the attention to accuracy by those who wrote the Joseph Smith History, one wonders what elements contributed to the credence of the Daniels statement in the 1850s. Did writing about the Carthage tragedy create such an emotional experience as to prevent the winnowing of unreliable information? Or did the earlier church historians know something that B. H. Roberts did not? Undoubtedly, as we have already seen, writing of the Carthage tragedy harrowed the feelings of those involved. But there is possibly more to the matter than this.

With respect to William Daniels it should be noted that the Littlefield


30Smith, History of the Church, 6:618. To further complicate the picture of the Carthage death scene, Thomas Dixon, an observer at the jail, testified in the 1845 trial of the Smith murderers that Joseph was shot before he fell from the window and after the fall he raised himself against the well curb drew up one leg and stretched out the other and died immediately. Dixon denied the Daniels statement about the “marvelous light” and that four men shot the wounded Prophet: “Did you occupy a position from which you could see him [Joseph Smith] plainly? He was about 10 steps from me. . . . If there had been any miraculous light that moment by Smiths body dont you think you would have seen it? I think I would for I watched him . . . till the last breath was out of him. If there had been 4 men parralized you think you would have seen it? I think I would. And you are very confident no such thing occured? I am pretty confident.” But when asked under cross-examination if he had seen “every body and every movement” that transpired at the death scene, Dixon replied, “No.” (People v. Aldrich et al, Mormon Collection, Ms., Chicago Historical Society; also Testimony of Thomas Dickson [Dixon], Transcript of Carthage Court trial, May 1845, Ms, by George D. Watt, LDS Church Archives.)

On the question of the number of times Joseph Smith was shot, Carthage Grey officer Samuel O. Williams, maneuvering his men near the jail at the time of the killing, saw Joseph fall from the window. He wrote that the Prophet “was shot several times and a bayonet run through him after he fell.” (Samuel O. Williams to John Pickett, July 10, 1844, Ms, Chicago Historical Society.) Prosecution witness Jonas Hobart reported examining the Mormon leader shortly after he died and stated that “he was shot in the right breast in the abdomen and in the left shoulder.” But Willard Richards, who was probably in the best position to know, having helped care for the bodies after the shooting wrote that “Joseph received 4 shots 1 in right collar bone, 1 in right breast, & 2 others [in his] back.” (People v. Aldrich, et al, Mormon Collection, Ms, Chicago Historical Society; Willard Richards to Brigham Young, June 30, 1844, Ms, draft.)

publication of his experience was used to destroy his credibility as a witness in the May 1845 trial of the men indicted for the murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Published shortly before the trial, the pamphlet was welcomed by the defense counsel. However, a reading of the Daniels testimony at the trial restores some plausibility to his story. When asked about the light, Daniels replied, “I suppose it will astonish you to tell you that I saw a light.” He added, however, that the incident was represented by Littlefield “rather different than what it was.” The exchange at the trial continues:

At what time did you see this marvelous light? I saw it at the place after the shooting. How long after? A short time after. Well tell us about that light. It was like a flash of lightning there at the moment. It was not like a stre[a]k then? It was like a flash. Was it about where his body lay? It past right by his body at one side. When he was shot did any person go up to him? Yes a young man attempted to get to him. Had he anything in his hand? He had a puter flute in his hand. Had he a bowey [k]nife in his hand? I did not see any. Did he get up to Smith? No. What stopt him? That light. How did it affect him? He did not go any further. Did he look frightened? I dont know I was very much frightened my self. Then you did not see him stand like a marble statue? No.

The lawyer then read from the Littlefield pamphlet the statement that the men involved in the shooting were paralyzed by the light “like marble statues not having power to move a single limb of their bodies.” To this Daniels responded, “I did not write that, neither did I authorise it to be written.”

While the question of Daniels’ credibility will probably not be entirely resolved, it should be remembered that Edward Bedell, when asked in 1854, regarded Daniels’ “main statements” as correct. And Daniels himself, while repudiating much that Littlefield had written, still claimed he saw a light. Searching for substantiation of this, an attorney at one point in the 1845 trial asked the young man if anyone else besides himself had seen the spectacle, to which he replied that he did not know.

Interestingly, Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, a Mormon woman living at Pontoosuc, Illinois, in June 1844, wrote that about the time Joseph and Hyrum Smith were arrested, men from her town formed a company and went to Carthage. The morning after the Smiths were killed, eight or ten of them came to her door. “They told us that the Smiths were killed and that a great light appeared at their death. I said that should prove Joseph a true Prophet of God. O no, said one, it would only prove that God was well pleased with those that killed him.”

In reviewing the process by which the Carthage chapters of Joseph Smith’s *History* were written, it is evident that history inevitably reflects the setting in which it is produced. With this in mind, there remains the question, how would the historian of our time deal with the challenge that faced George A. Smith and Wilford Woodruff in 1854? For one thing, after obtaining the source material and assessing its content, there would probably have been an effort to

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33 Testimony of William Daniels, Transcript of Carthage Court Trial, May 1845; Watt Ms.

34 Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner Journal, p. 24, Ms, Utah State Historical Society.
further interrogate the witnesses so as to resolve lingering areas of discrepancy and gaps in the record, and to supplant the existing source material with available non-Mormon sources bearing upon the subject — including court records and contemporary newspaper accounts. But perhaps the most marked difference in methodology would lie in the organization and presentation of the source material to preserve authorship with greater fidelity, adding footnote annotations that would clarify variations and problems in the text, and trace the origin of sources. Considering their training and editorial standards of their time, George A. Smith and Wilford Woodruff did the best they knew.

If our picture of Carthage appears a little distorted and incomplete, the reconstruction of the process by which the history of that event was obtained shows why. Those who traverse the frail pathway that leads into the past find it obstructed by an undergrowth consisting of fallible memories, missing information, and outdated and inexact methods of historical and editorial procedure. But the trip down that pathway to observe how those before us wrote our history is not fruitless. It answers important questions about the proximity of our written history to the events it describes; it reveals the desire and dedication of those who have gone before us to preserve a record of their times, and it identifies areas of the picture of the past that can be restored or clarified from the vantage point of new information and an improved historical and editorial craftsmanship. Finally, because devoted men of a hundred years ago found the commitment to work at the historical enterprise in the face of conditions that were not entirely satisfactory, we owe it to them to build upon their foundation.
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For matters of style, consult A Manual of Style (University of Chicago Press, 1969) and a recent issue of the Journal. Specific guidelines are available upon request from the editor.

Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles should be typed, double-spaced, with footnotes, also double-spaced, in a separate section at the end. Preferred length is fifteen to twenty-five pages, including footnotes.

Submit manuscripts to Dean L. May, Department of History, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah 84112.
Before 6:00 a.m. on May 29, 1897, the portly and veteran apostle Brigham Young, Jr., himself ailing due to an attack of dropsy, called at the Heber J. Grant household to pray a blessing upon his associate. He found that “Bro Grant . . . had a poor night but he was going to the hospital with firm faith that all would be well.” The day before Grant awoke with severe lumbar and abdominal pain. The doctors diagnosed a ruptured appendix and advanced peritonitis and advised immediate surgery. As the hour-and-a-half operation progressed, the nine attending surgeons found “extraordinary suppuration and commenced mortification.” After rotting the appendix and part of the colon, the infection had discharged a quart of pus throughout the stomach cavity. The chief surgeon turned to Joseph F. Smith, who was present at his friend’s critical hour: “My [Dear] Smith, you do not need to think of the possibility or probability of this man recovering.” Only the doctor who monitored Grant’s remarkably vigorous pulse disagreed.1

A fortnight later Elder Grant was propped on his pillows at the Catholic St. Mary’s Hospital, celebrating the miracle of extended life. His recovery had been extraordinarily rapid, and his personal crisis had brought him an unexpected tide of sympathy and well-wishing. There was an added reason for

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1Brigham Young’s observation: Brigham Young, Jr., Diary, May 29, 1897, Brigham Young Papers, Library-Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah [Library-Archives]. Details of the operation: Deseret Evening News, May 29, 1897, p. 2; Salt Lake Herald, May 29, 1897, p. 8; and Franklin D. Richards Diary, May 29, 1897, Library-Archives. Prognosis: Penciled Heber J. Grant Memorandum, undated, Heber J. Grant Papers, Box 177, Folder 19, Library-Archives.
rejoicing. His two visitors had a proposition which might mean the beginning of the end of his almost ninety thousand dollar indebtedness. The one with the dark mustache and slight Bristol accent began directly and hopefully. "Heber," Thomas J. Stevens said, "would you like to make $15,600?"2

Stevens was bishop of Ogden City's Fifth Ward and Grant's long-time friend and brother-in-law (both had married daughters of Briant Stringham). Stevens and his companion, Matthew Browning, were respected Ogden citizens, but more to the point, they were directors and members of the executive committee of Ogden's Utah Loan and Trust Company (UL&T). In addition, two days before Stevens had been appointed the bank's cashier or general manager. The UL&T was on the verge of failing, and the two men had come to Grant hoping that a mutually advantageous deal might be struck.

The bank had proven an albatross to its owners almost from its founding in 1888. Charles Comstock Richards and Franklin S. Richards, sons of Ogden's apostle and leading LDS citizen, Franklin D. Richards, had taken the lead in establishing the firm. Utah was then booming and a spate of new banks was organized throughout the territory. But a banking panic in 1891 burst the speculative bubble, and the UL&T paid its last dividend in 1892. The following spring a fire gutted the interior of its handsome, five-story building. Ogden's water pressure was so low and its firemen so inept that Salt Lake City firemen were summoned on special trains to save the structure. Several months later, the severe Panic of 1893 almost delivered the coup de grace. Nevertheless, despite the bank's shrinking deposits and the decreasing values of its investment portfolio, the Richards brothers and their fellow investors managed in the next several years to hold on.3

When Mormon apostle Abraham H. Cannon offered to buy controlling interest in the bank in June 1896, the Richards family breathed a grateful sigh and relinquished their controlling interest at sixty cents on the dollar of their original investment. The depressed Nineties had not been any more kind to Elder Cannon than to the Richardses, and he hoped to recoup his fortune by promoting a Salt Lake City to Los Angeles railroad which, by using the UL&T as its financial agent, would revivify the ailing bank. The details of the transactions reflected common desperation of both the buyer and the seller. To secure money to pay off the Richardses, the UL&T loaned Cannon $40,000 from its scanty reserves, with the apostle offering as collateral his newly acquired UL&T stock, along with some previously owned shares. As both partners in the transaction must have known, unless Cannon could quickly come up with money to pay off his debt, the deal seriously jeopardized the bank's liquidity.4

Six weeks later Abraham Cannon was dead, the result of ear surgery which

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2Thomas J. Stevens Diary, June 12, 1897, typescript, Library-Archives and Grant, "An Interesting Experience as Related by President Grant," p. 1, March 18, 1941, Grant Papers, Box 145, Folder 4.


4Charles Comstock Richards, Autobiography of Charles Comstock Richards, (n.d.: privately printed), pp. 178-80; Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, February
Walker: Heber J. Grant

brought a general inflammation to his head. Despite a $50,000 life insurance policy, his estate could not begin to pay off his many debts, most substantial of which was the UL&T note. Since its default promised eventual bankruptcy to the financial institution, the UL&T stock which supposedly secured the loan was itself worthless.

At least for the moment, Elder Cannon's posthumous insolvency was concealed from public view. However there was another, more immediate factor working to undermine the bank. Two employees, Leon Graves and Clarence Barton, removed $5,200 from its vaults and fled east. Although Joseph A. West, then serving as cashier, mortgaged his home and quietly replaced the money, Utah newspapers discovered the truth and made the theft banner news. As a result, rumors began to circulate that the UL&T was in distress, and a slow but accelerating run on the bank commenced.5

Stevens and Browning believed they had an instant solution. If Grant would assume Cannon's note, the bank could then borrow on the strength of his signature and relieve its difficulties. In return, Grant could have all of Cannon's forfeited collateral which, if the bank could be made sound, might be worth $15,600 more than the assumed loan. Grant expressed an interest. Despite his recent illness and short recuperation, he promised that he would soon go to Ogden and examine the matter more fully.

Grant seemed a logical candidate to help. Only his two families and a handful of intimate advisers knew the desperation of his finances. As president or director of at least a dozen Salt Lake City-based businesses, he appeared to the public to epitomize success. Besides he had built a reputation for being a Mormon financial Horatius-at-the-bridge, successively saving ZCMI, the Salt Lake Herald, and the Utah Sugar Company from their respective problems. He had also compiled a successful record of special fund-raising. In the late 1880s, he was one of five Saints who raised the legal and lobbying fees for Utah's statehood drive. Following the 1893 panic, when Salt Lake City's tax collector, who also served as an LDS bishop, mismanaged $32,000 in public funds, Grant had led the campaign to pay off quickly his debts without embarrassing the church. Indeed, when church leaders saw a special need for money, Brother Heber increasingly received their call.

Elder Grant described what he found in Ogden as "a paralyzer." After he and Stevens scrutinized the bank's accounts, they concluded at least $75,000 of them were uncollectable. The prevailing hard times made it difficult for even honorable men to meet their obligations, and the UL&T clearly had been less than tough-minded in demanding payments on its outstanding loans. Worse, Grant found that the Ogden bank's financial statement was grossly inaccurate. Directors had spent most of the institution's assets in erecting the Utah Loan

5, 1901, Library-Archives; and Grant, "An Interesting Experience," p. 1. While Franklin D. Richards, who owned a few UL&T shares himself, described the transaction as giving "a precious relief to a few who have borne the crushing burden in and during the past Financial Panic," the deal left the Richards family with heavy debts. In its aftermath the apostle sought personal financial relief from the church. See Richards Diary, June 1, 1896, and Richards to Presidents Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith, June 1896, Letterbook 1896–98, Franklin D. Richards Papers, Library-Archives; and Stevens Diary, June 17, 1897.

6Stevens Diary, March 27, April 26 and 27, and May 1, 1897.
and Trust Building, but during the depression, along with most other Utah real estate, the imposing landmark suffered a calamitous deflation in value. Nevertheless, the bank carried the building on its books at the original construction cost of $275,000, although its actual market value scarcely exceeded the $75,000 lien which David Eccles had carried on it since its construction.

"If I were as sure of getting to heaven as Dave Eccles . . . will get that [bank] corner," Elder Grant told his fellow General Authorities several weeks later in one of their Thursday meetings, "I would think I had a ticket paid for." The UL&T's reconstructed balance sheet bore out the likelihood of a foreclosure. Liabilities were listed at $162,000 and assets at $107,000, but half of the latter were judged to be of questionable quality. Grant reported that the bank's capital was "wiped off the earth" and that depositors were sure to lose most of their money.  

The Twelve did not immediately grasp how chilling this news actually was. Driven by his passion for building and protecting the material things of the kingdom, Grant had spent several days investigating before he himself had understood. He now shared his grim findings. A UL&T failure would bring great personal loss to its owners and depositors, and as these effects rippled outward, the result would be a sharp blow to Utah's already faltering economy. Moreover, while the church itself owned no stock in the institution, its interests and those of its leaders were very much at stake. Since its founding, the UL&T had been regarded as "a Mormon institution," one of Utah's private businesses which functioned in behalf of the church. Its officers, directors, and leading stockholders were a "Who's Who" of Ogden's LDS officialdom. In addition, General Authorities Joseph F. Smith and Francis M. Lyman owned stock and served as directors — Elder Smith in fact had briefly succeeded Abraham Cannon as president of the banking firm. The times were so precarious that a UL&T failure, to the great embarrassment of the church, would bring bankruptcy upon most of its Mormon shareholders as well as reveal the posthumous insolvency of Cannon.

Unfortunately, difficulties did not stop here. Since the early 1890s church finances had rested precariously upon the razor's edge, partly because of the earlier Edmunds-Tucker confiscations of Mormon property, but more importantly because the First Presidency had responded to the depression with a series of deficit-financed public works. Every several months and sometimes oftener, Mormon debt managers performed extraordinary feats just to meet payments and preserve credit. Now came the warning from the church's loan agent in the East that because of the Ogden bank's links with LDS officials, its failure would "almost sure" cause eastern bankers to demand payment on existing Mormon loans — a development tantamount to forcing the church into receivership. Grant would later learn something as explosive. Utah law made bank officers criminally culpable for receiving deposits after an institu-

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7 In addition to those already mentioned, Lewis W. Shurtleff, Charles F. Middleton, Nils C. Flygare, John Watson, Henry H. Rolapp, Frank J. Cannon, Ephraim H. Nye, Thomas D. Dee, James H. Moyle, and Daniel Hamer were at various times associated with the bank. The first three constituted the Weber Stake Presidency.
tion's liabilities exceeded its assets. While such a question lent itself to endless litigation, the statute exposed Smith, Lyman and virtually the entire LDS hierarchy in Ogden to criminal prosecution. Given the reigning Mormon-Gentile hostility in the "Junction City," with church opponents firmly in control of the levers of local power, the possibility could not be idly waved aside.8

Grant's grim and forceful report to the Twelve was convincing. On the following afternoon a committee of George Q. Cannon, Joseph F. Smith, Lorenzo Snow, Francis M. Lyman, John Henry Smith and Grant met for three hours to consider again the problem. The men finally agreed that "it would be a great misfortune if disaster should overtake the Bank" and if necessary church influence should be exerted to strengthen the institution. Four days later, the general authorities further embroiled the church. In case of failure, Stevens reported, "they promised to stand behind us . . . so that the depositors will be paid in full." Meanwhile the two Mormon banks in Salt Lake City, Zion's Savings and Bank and Trust Company and the State Bank of Utah, were to be asked if they would assume respectively the UT&L's savings and commercial banking business. What had begun as a possible private investment for Grant had become a project embraced by the church.9

Grant had discovered the UL&T problem and sounded the tocsin, but having done so, he temporarily, although involuntarily, retired from the field. About six weeks after his appendectomy, he contracted "pleuro-pneumonia." Again his friends feared for his life, and for three months the convalescing apostle retired from public affairs.

The UL&T crisis did not ease in his absence. Encouraged by promises from church headquarters, Thomas Stevens briefly stemmed the run on the bank's reserves by looking depositors in the eye and pledging the safety of their money. Still, his behavior did nothing to change the huge imbalance between the bank's assets and liabilities. Nor did the two Salt Lake City Mormon banks alter the situation. Neither Zion's Savings nor the State Bank, themselves but several degrees more robust than their sister institution, desired to sink under the heavy and perhaps fatal weight of the UL&T accounts. By August, President Wilford Woodruff admitted that the UL&T case was "not very encouraging," and offered as a hand-wringing expedient the formation of a two-man committee to study possible solutions.10

Former cashier Joseph West was the first to show how weak the bank really was. For several weeks he badgered the hard-pressed directors to reimburse him for the $5,200 which he had paid to cover the Graves-Barton theft. Frustrated by their lack of action and by his dismissal from the firm only hours before, he took the amount from the safe and was leaving town when his son,
Walker West, compelled the return of the money. If successful, the act could have brought an immediate closing.  

West's desperation was an indication of how difficult the times were becoming. The worst of the depression occurred in the winter of 1893–94, when Utah's urban unemployment exceeded 25 percent and some laborers in Salt Lake City marched to demand "bread or blood." At the same time 1400 unruly "Commonwealers" — out-of-work Californians traveling East to protest the prevailing scarcity — were camped in Ogden City. However, for many institutions and men, the years 1897–98 were almost as severe. Earlier they had been able to parry their debts, but as real estate and stock values continued to fall, they no longer had collateral to renew their loans. By late 1897 the church itself owed over two million dollars and was looking for another loan of like amount.  

Thus, the UL&T crisis peaked at the very time when the Mormon Church and its leading men were least prepared to deal with it. During the last week of January 1898, Stevens repeatedly importuned the Mormon First Presidency for something more than moral or makeshift help, but was turned away. A week later there could be no more temporizing. Stevens flatly told the Mormon general authorities that the bank could not open the next day without assistance. After protracted and agonizing discussion, aid was forthcoming. Zion's Savings loaned $5,000, and the church itself eventually took a $15,000 second mortgage on the UL&T building and apparently extended the bank about $7,500 besides.  

Everyone realized that such aid was a stopgap which ran the risk of throwing good after bad money. Grant, whose regained health and consuming interest won him his church's commission to resolve the UL&T problem, saw two possible long-range solutions. First, he hoped to interest enough public-spirited Mormon capitalists to buy the UL&T building at $150,000 or twice its existing value. While such a proposal made little sense to men used to maximizing personal profits, Grant reasoned that as the depression eased and property values rebounded, investors eventually would be out little and might receive a small return for their philanthropy. Meanwhile, the bank could use the money to cover its two mortgages (Eccles for $75,000 and the church for $15,000), pay off its other loans, and perhaps have enough working capital to ride out the rest of the hard times.  

Grant's alternative idea involved David Eccles, Utah's first bonafide ty-
coon. Son of a blind and impoverished woodturner, the handsome Eccles had his fingers in most every financial pie in Ogden. For four years he had served as president of Ogden's First National Bank, situated across the street from the UL&T building on 24th Street and Washington Avenue. Grant proposed that Eccles be allowed to foreclose on his mortgage and secure the UL&T building at a bargain basement price. In return, the First National Bank would assume its neighbor's accounts and allow it to retire honorably from business. For some time Eccles's bank had apparently thought of splitting off its savings business and starting a new institution. The splendid UL&T building would provide excellent quarters.15

Elder Grant vigorously pursued both options during the later winter and early spring of 1898. He repeatedly approached his friends to invest in the UL&T building, and in an attempt to provide financing for such a sale, he traveled to San Francisco and wrote letters to prospective lenders throughout the Intermountain West. In addition, he personally propositioned Eccles at his Baker City, Oregon, lumber headquarters. Unfortunately his work yielded little fruit. His drive to get $150,000 to purchase the bank building stalled one-third short of the goal, though Grant himself promised $10,000 and the church another $25,000. On the other hand, the canny Eccles, whose considerable charities never trespassed upon the bounds of "sound business," listened impassively to Grant's appeals. Barring something unforeseen, he knew he had the building already — without making further commitments. By April Grant was having trouble keeping lit the flame of his enthusiasm. "Looking at it naturally," he admitted, "there is little prospect of success crowning my efforts."16

Finally, another of the Ogden bank's intermittent crises broke the logjam. Anders Larsen, a disgruntled depositor who believed that his money had been negligently loaned, filed a lawsuit which declared the bank to be "utterly insolvent," with "no property with which to pay its debts." With confidence in the bank already fragile, Larsen's suit precipitated another run on reserves. By the first of August, Stevens was again before the General Authorities, hat in hand, pleading that without help he would be unable to open the next day.17

With three UL&T directors present, church officials now began their most decisive discussion of the question. "The object of the interview," the minutes recorded, "was to make a last representation of the bank's condition, in the hope — almost forlorn with these [UL&T] brethren — that the Presidency might be able to see their way clear to do something to save it." Joseph F. Smith began with an eloquent appeal for further church aid, but when President Woodruff refused to countenance the idea, Smith moved that the bank be


16San Francisco: Stevens Diary, February 21, 1898. Letters: Grant to J. A. Murray, February 26, 1898, Grant Letterbook 26:336, Grant Papers. Eccles: Grant to Utah Loan & Trust Company, May 14, 1898, ibid. 26:496. Little prospect: Grant to W. W. Maughan, April 20, 1898, ibid. 26:416.

17Suit: Anders Larsen v. Utah Loan and Trust, filed May 25, 1898, Case #723, Third Circuit Court, Utah State Archives; Middleton Diary, April 4, 1900. Bank reserves: Stevens Diary, August 7 and 8, 1898.
allowed to fail. Not wishing to appear self-serving or disloyal, he plaintively admitted: "We honestly put up our money and let us [now] take our medicine."\(^{18}\)

Grant's was the only voice which spoke against the overwhelming consensus. "I hope that no one will second that motion," he asked as he pled that the earlier comments of Smith and Woodruff be stricken from the record. His previous loan brokering in the East gave him a sense of the crisis which his colleagues did not have. Besides, he was always loath to abandon any fixed idea or determined project. Confronted by his strong opposition, the General Authorities moved to a middle ground. Rather than have the financially strapped church give aid to the bank, Smith proposed that Grant be deputized to solicit money from its most prosperous members. Grant willingly consented but believed he required help. He asked the First Presidency to call apostle Matthias Cowley to assist him and to sign a strongly-worded letter endorsing the project. He remained outspoken. "You can either sign," he said, "or let the bank go to pot." Accordingly, they not only signed the letter which Grant had written but also appended a paragraph which blessed those complying with its request.\(^{19}\)

Grant's demands were reasonable given the magnitude of his assignment. Earlier, he had attempted to organize a UL&T syndicate which promised investors the hope of a small gain. Now hardnosed businessmen, who were not disposed to cover the mistakes of others, were to be asked for gratuitous donations which would have to exceed $75,000. Furthermore, he was handcuffed by the demands of sensitivity and confidentiality. To reveal the actual condition of the bank invited additional pressure upon its deposits. Nor could he, without defeating his purposes, fully explain how the UL&T's health directly related to the reputation of some of the leading brethren and indirectly to the credit of the church. At best he could ambiguously appeal to patriotic

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\(^{18}\)Journal History, August 8, 1898, pp. 2–3; Grant, "An Interesting Experience," p. 2.

\(^{19}\)Grant, "An Interesting Experience," p. 2; Grant, "President Grant's Story About Saving the Ogden Bank," Memorandum in HJG Papers, Box 177, Folder 7; and Grant Typed Diary, August 8, 1898. All diaries suggest that the climaxing meeting of the brethren was held on August 8, 1898, although the extract in Grant's Letterbook 26:639–40 is dated two days later. The text reads as follows:

"This letter will be presented to you by Elders Heber J. Grant and Matthias F. Cowley, and we ask you to treat as confidential all communications which they may make to you.

"We have called these brethren on a mission to raise the funds necessary to save one of the institutions of Zion from making an assignment. We feel that it would be a great calamity to have it fail as it would injure the credit of the Latter-day Saints as a community, and to maintain the community credit is something that should appeal to the patriotism of every true Latter-day Saint.

"We appeal to you to render to these brethren all the financial aid that your circumstances will admit of, and also to assist them to the full extent of your ability to secure means from any of the saints residing in your Wards whom you feel are able to aid in this matter.

"We fully appreciate the fact that the saints have very many calls made upon them, but notwithstanding this, as sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven, we do not hesitate to appeal to you for aid in this matter, knowing that every sacrifice made in aiding any of the institutions of Zion will be sure to bring an ample reward from our Father in Heaven.

"We assure you that we shall appreciate very much indeed all you shall do to aid the brethren in making their mission a success."

Saints to maintain “an institution of Zion” or to sustain “the brethren.”

Before the meeting of the General Authorities adjourned, Elder Grant began his fund-raising. Hoping to realize a profit on the sale of his last remaining, under-mortgaged real estate, he personally pledged $2,500 and challenged his brethren to follow suit. President George Q. Cannon, whose Bullion-Beck and Champion Mine dividends made him more prosperous than the rest, promised another $5,000 and drafted a $2,000 check as first installment. Grant’s donation came at genuine financial peril to himself and his creditors. “I donated $2,500,” he recalled, “when all I had on earth . . . would not pay my debts within $88,800 and this donation made me over ninety thousand dollars worse off than nothing.” He spent the rest of the day gaining the approval of the men who had countersigned his many notes. Because of his donation, they stood one step closer to having to cover his debts.20

Within the week Grant was stalking his quarry. First he asked $2,500 from Alfred W. McCune, a successful mining speculator and soon to be a candidate for the U.S. Senate. McCune’s origins and wife were Mormon, but his moods and behavior were those of a sourdough miner who had found the proverbial rich strike. “Not one damned dollar,” was the rough-hewn miner’s first response. It was not that McCune was parsimonious; his lavish spending and occasional philanthropy fit into the Gilded Age’s high style. But he was deeply prejudiced against banks. He had never placed money in one and never expected to. Rebuffed, Grant tried to shift the question to high moral ground. He pulled the First Presidency’s UL&T letter from his pocket and in the name of McCune’s believing wife asked if he wished to deny the request of the Lord’s representatives?21

“O hell, you cannot scare me with a thing like that,” the mining man answered. He acknowledged his desire to be liberal but not to conceal the incompetency of a parasitic banker.

“Alf, I defy you to look me in the eye as man to man and tell me that you do not know the Gospel is true,” Grant replied. “You do know it. You gamble and swear when you get mad, and you drink whiskey and raise hell generally, . . . and you say there is nothing in religion. But I defy you to tell me that you do not know the Gospel that your father embraced is true.”

“I do not,” McCune began strongly, but then he mellowed. “I will make a confession to you. I will be honest with you. Damned if I am not afraid it is.”

Unfortunately McCune’s tepid confession failed to loosen his purse strings, and Grant resolved upon stronger measures. Like Nephi before the drunken Laban, he felt inspired to descend to a lower standard. “Abuse him,” his inner voice seemed to direct, “tell him he is not generous, that he is close-fisted, use his own language, go right after him in his own vernacular, and you will get your money.”

“You are a hell of a generous cuss,” the apostle began his assault with an

20Donations: Stevens Diary and Grant Typed Diary, August 8, 1898. Statement on debts: Grant to John Henry Smith, January 18, 1902, Grant Letterbook 34:267, Grant Papers. Clearing with endorsers: Grant to Anthony W. Ivins, August 19, 1898, ibid. 26:666.

21The following episode with its dialogue is preserved in Grant, “An Interesting Experience,” pp. 3–8; Grant, “President Grant’s Story About Saving the Ogden Bank,” pp. 3–6; Grant Typed Diary, August 15, 1898; and Grant to Rudger Clawson, July 1, 1903, Grant Letterbook 36:462–63.
idiom quite beyond his normal use. "The idea of you with all your money refusing to give me two days' income from one mine. . . . What am I doing? I am giving $2,500. How am I fixed financially? I am a hell of a poor manager financially. I have two wives, and neither one has a home. I have a home for my mother that is mortgaged. . . . I have the children of a dead wife to support and I am over $50,000 worse off than nothing, yet I am giving the equivalent of two years and a half of my net surplus. I am only earning a thousand dollars a year above my expenses, . . . and you are so generous that you won't give two days' income from one mine. You are a generous cuss."

"Damn you," McCune responded. "Tell that story over again." When Grant rehearsed his tale, which actually minimized his debts, the incredulous McCune called for his secretary to draft a check for $5,000. "Damned if I am not going to pay your donation and mine too."

For a moment Grant was elated by McCune's generosity and thanked the Lord for the unexpected aid. But he quickly changed his mind, reasoning that if he let McCune pay his own donation, he would lose the "power to appeal to others . . . and that the Bank must break." Despite feeling "a very great temptation," he refused the offer.

Claiming that Grant was "the strangest man he had ever met," McCune took the check from his secretary, briefly looked at it, and finally extended it. "You have a hell of a job on your hands, damned if I will tear it up. I cannot understand why you won't let me pay your donation. [But] give your bank the $5,000."

Later when Grant, in one of his few partisan ventures, stoutly campaigned for McCune's senatorial candidacy, there were rumors that he had been bought. But the apostle's politics were more than an appreciation for a $5,000 donation. Despite their polar differences in personality and character, Grant had found in their banter a human tie which, at least for the moment, made them friends.

Having done so well with McCune, Grant approached Jesse Knight. A short man with a walrus mustache and given to wearing Homburg hats, Knight was the son of two of Mormonism's earliest converts, Newel and Lydia Knight. However Jesse had waited until middle age to find his own faith in Mormonism, which was shortly thereafter followed by good fortune. Friends had cried "humbug" when Knight told of a voice directing him to stake out a mining claim which would save the church's credit, but in 1896 the appropriately named "Humbug Mine" assayed to be a bonanza. Obedient to his presentiment, he began to pay tithes and benefactions which in their time became legendary.22

But if Grant expected an easy touch he was mistaken. After listening to his impassioned recital of the UL&T's problems and his request for $5,000, Knight was unyielding. "Brother Grant, I do not think the Lord wants me to give anything to make good the mistakes of people who put their money in a bank and lost it. I am willing to help the poor and to pay an honest tithing, and to help

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in all things like universities [his donation to Brigham Young Academy in Provo kept the incipient institution alive], but I do not feel that I ought to do this. I won't give you a dollar.”

“Jesse, I will not take no for an answer. I shall come back again.”

“There is supper, bed and breakfast for you here any time,” the Provo resident responded, “Come along, but you won't get any money.”

During Grant's third interview with Knight in as many weeks, Reed Smoot was present. A young businessman-politician who was soon to be called to the Council of Twelve Apostles, Smoot was trying to pacify Grant with a $500 donation. “If you send me a check for $500, Reed, I shall send it back to you,” was Grant's reply. “I won't have it. This mission is a very hard one, and I cannot put you in the $500 class, you belong in the $1,000 class. . . . Let me give you some parental advice. When you get home tonight get down on your knees and pray to the Lord to give you enlargement of the heart, and send me a check for $1,000.”

Knight could not suppress his delight, and laughed. It was a relief to have someone else on Grant's skewer for a moment. He and Smoot were longstanding political opponents, and he felt a devilish relish in having his friendly foe under attack. But Grant's challenge to Smoot bothered the devout Knight. “Why didn't you ask me to pray?” he asked the apostle.

“I would if you had offered me $2,500, but what is the good of asking a man to pray who won't give you anything?”

Knight turned defensive. “Well, Heber Grant, I pray to the Lord, and I think the Lord has given me all that I have. I will pray, and I won't pray with my lips, I will pray with my heart to the Lord, and if he impresses me to give you $5,000 you shall have it as free as the air.”

“Jesse, I am just as sure of getting that $5,000 as that guns are made of iron, if you will honestly pray to the Lord about it.”

Two days later Grant received in the mail a check for $11,000; $10,000 from Jesse Knight and another $1,000 from Reed Smoot. Knight explained: “Heber, if you ever come to me again with a letter from the Presidency of the Church, calling you on a mission to raise funds, whatever you ask me for I am going to give it to you; I am not going to pray about it. When I got through praying, it rang in my head just like a tune, over and over again, 'give Heber ten thousands dollars; give Heber ten thousand dollars; give Heber ten thousand dollars.' I got out of bed and told the Lord that I was not praying about any $10,000. Heber hadn't asked me for $10,000. I went to bed again. 'Give Heber ten thousand dollars; give Heber ten thousand dollars; give Heber ten thousand dollars.' ”

With the refrain continuing to reverberate through his mind, Knight withdrew the bulk of his savings the next morning and successfully pressed Smoot for his $1,000. More than aiding the UL&T, their contributions came as a soothing balm to the "tired and nervous" Grant, who for the past week could sleep no later than 5 a.m. and was often up two hours earlier. “When I got your letter [and check] I could have shouted for joy,” he wrote Smoot and Knight. “I

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23 For the Grant-Knight episode, see Grant, “An Interesting Experience,” pp. 10–12.
have never doubted my ability to succeed in connection with Brother Cowley in making this mission a success. I have, however, looked forward with anxiety and dread to the labor ahead of us."\(^{24}\)

Having employed his persuasive powers to their fullest upon McCune, Knight, and Smoot, Elder Grant must have viewed William H. Smart's donation as latter-day manna. Smart was a thirty-six-year-old Idaho livestock dealer who had been called to preside over his church's Brooklyn Conference in the Eastern States Mission. When his niece Luella Cowley had written that her husband, Matthias Cowley, had been assigned to help save the UL&T, Smart offered between the wide range of $1,000 and $20,000. "I thank God He has made it possible for us to make this donation," he wrote in his diary, "but more especially do I thank Him for the faith He has given to prompt it." Smart eventually settled on $5,000 for his gift, half of which his business partner James W. Webster volunteered to pay.\(^{25}\)

At last, the tide seemed to be turning in the Ogden bank's favor. While the Smart-Webster contribution remained confidential at Smart's request, Grant used the gifts of McCune and Knight, as well as his own to build momentum and rally the Saints. The hundreds of letters which he and his wife Augusta personally typed, often working late into the evenings, asked prominent Mormons to follow their example. Even more effective were the entreaties of Grant and Cowley as they visited the stakes of Zion. After presiding over the meetings of a stake conference, Grant typically would invite church leaders and prosperous members to a special meeting. After reading the First Presidency's letter and touching upon UL&T matters (the comprehensiveness of his explanation seemed to vary with the occasion), he would then solicit an immediate and public response. "When my name was called," complained one participant who believed that he pledged beyond his means, "I did not feel like saying that I could not or would not do anything. Others had proffered to give one hundred dollars and I told Brother Grant that he might put $100 opposite my name." The hard-sell formula worked. "I am meeting with splendid success in getting the funds needed to save that Ogden business," Grant reported.\(^{26}\)

Many Saints didn't need any more persuasion than the news that the church was in need. "Brother Grant, don't you ever waste your time," Ephraim Ellison replied after the apostle personally requested his donation in Layton, Utah: "It takes you all day to ride up here and back again — two days. If you are ever called on another mission by the Presidency of the Church, if you feel that I ought to give you $200 or $300 or some other amount just write me a letter and I will give it to you. Do not take the time to come up." Another

\(^{24}\)No sleep: Grant to Spencer Clawson, September 3, 1898, Grant Letterbook 28:5, Grant Papers, and Grant to Jesse Knight and Reed Smoot, September 3, 1898, ibid. 28:1–2, and Grant Manuscript Diary, December 20, 1898, Grant Papers.

\(^{25}\)W. H. Smart to Matthias F. Cowley, September 7, 1898, Grant Letterbook 28:165–66; William H. Smart Diary, September 30, October 3, 10, 12 and 31, and November 1 and 22, 1898, Library-Archives.

\(^{26}\)Heber and Augusta letter writing: Grant Manuscript Diary, December 9, 1898 and Grant Letterbooks for the period. Complaint: William E. Bassett to Lorenzo Snow, George Q. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith, December 7, 1898, Lorenzo Snow Papers, Library-Archives. Meeting with success: Grant to Anthony W. Ivins, August 27, 1898, Grant Letterbook 26:678, Grant Papers.
churchman, John Scowcroft of Ogden, gave $500 and promised to double the amount if his new business prospered. Later the additional $500 was forthcoming without Grant's reminder.27

As usual, Grant was a forceful and determined campaigner. When the financially strapped George F. Richards offered $100 (to do so he was forced to sell 300 bushels of his stored grain), the apostle complained to Richards's ecclesiastical superiors that he was not doing his share to save the institution which his family had founded. Grant later apologized to Richards for presuming to prescribe the bounds of another's generosity. He was particularly scathing with UL&T stockholders who, until Grant strongly implored them, refused to give anything despite their liability for part of the firm's debts. And he was apoplectic when his old-time friend, George Romney, announced second thoughts about donating. After Grant's paroxysm of temper, Romney's business firm made good its $1,000 pledge.28

After five months of such fund-raising, Grant triumphantly paid off Abraham Cannon's note. Executors of his estate had scraped together $15,000, but the bulk of the money came from Grant's campaigning. "I have labored earnestly in this matter," Grant wrote Stevens, "and one of the main reasons for doing so has been my desire to maintain Abraham's good name. I feel confident that had I passed away from life, and he been permitted to live, that he would have labored with equal zeal to try and preserve my honor and good name in the community." Indeed, Grant's zeal in behalf of the UL&T owed at least some of its intensity to the realization that his own poor health and debts had almost decreed for him a similar fate.29

However, after his success with the Cannon note, the remainder of Elder Grant's crusade was entirely uphill. Earlier fund-raising had skimmed off most of the ready donations, while tight-fisted businessmen now used rumors of the bank's mismanagement to excuse themselves from making or fulfilling pledges. For instance, when one merchant grandiloquently promised "his time, his talent, [and] his substance" to the Kingdom in a public prayer, Grant immediately closed in for a donation. But the apostle soon learned that the man's dedication of means when the UL&T was involved "was done believing that the Lord would not come to ask for any part of it." Such categorical refusals became common. Instead of money, Grant complained he now received "insults and slurs," with some of his fellow church leaders speaking at cross-purposes behind his back. As a result, he frankly and dejectedly labeled his assignment as "one of the most unpleasant tasks of my life."30

With the bank losing customers and cash daily, Grant re-examined options. Eccles again refused any tangible help, citing the need to maintain

27Grant, "President Grant's Story About Saving the Ogden Bank." pp. 6-7.
28Richards's payment: George F. Richards Diary, October 10, 1898, Library-Archives and Grant to George F. Richards, undated, in Grant Manuscript Diary, October 8, 1898. Romney: Grant Manuscript Diary, December 15 and 17, 1898.
29Grant to Thomas J. Stevens, January 6, 1899, Grant Letterbook 28:524-25, Grant Papers.
30Merchant refusal: Grant, Improvement Era 42 (December 1939):713. Unpleasant task: Grant to Brother Cutler, July 28, 1899, Grant Letterbook 29:239, Grant Papers. Insults and slurs: Grant to Rudger Clawson, July 1, 1903, ibid. 36:459.
proper and conservative business dealing, but he did promise any buyer of the UL&T building a $5,000 discount on his $75,000 mortgage. As a year earlier, Grant could find no one with the money to purchase the structure or refinance it. In October 1899 there seemed but one remaining possibility. At great risk to himself financially, Grant offered to take over the business. The plan had nothing to recommend it save audacity, and like his Utah Sugar Company financing a half decade earlier, he was in effect laying everything he possessed upon the altar. “You and I are engaged in the work of the Lord,” he would explain later to a correspondent. “We are called upon from time to time to make sacrifices, and in no case where we do our duty will we fail in being rewarded.” However, he put the scheme aside upon realizing that if he should revive the business and make it profitable, some UL&T donors would suspect that he had used their money to enrich himself.31

In early 1900 Grant returned from an extensive tour of the Mormon settlements in Arizona and Mexico to learn the reality of his worst fears. The UL&T was once more on the edge of collapse, threatening this time to take with it the money Grant had so ardously raised. With his efforts appearing futile and misspent, he retired to the Apostles’ Room of the Salt Lake Temple to supplicate the Lord to save the bank. The bank examiner’s report showed good reason for prayer. For over a month the bank’s cash reserves had fallen well under the legal limit. “This bank ought to fix up its affairs,” the examiner wrote, “or go out of the business entirely.” Only his leniency forestalled immediate legal action.32

At the UL&T’s moment of final peril, the church’s new president, Lorenzo Snow, moved to rescue it. Snow believed that it was unthinkable to allow a failure, especially since the church had committed itself and its members in the semi-public efforts of Elders Grant and Cowley to assist it. Fortunately, he had the resources available to cauterize the long-festering wound. During his brief leadership, he had reduced ordinary expenditures, slashed at deficit-financed programs, and preached tithing with a fury. With his efforts happily coinciding with a general economic upturn, the church assumed a financial stability which it had not known for a decade.

As a preliminary step, President Snow requested apostles Grant and Smoot to audit again the Ogden bank’s books. Their report was an oriental dish of sweet and sour. Despite Utah’s worst to-date depression and the unpopularity of the cause among many businessmen, Grant and Cowley had raised over $50,000 in hard cash and estimated that at least $15,000 of the remaining pledges were good. However, after adding these figures to the bank’s $30,000 assets, the institution still lacked $30,000 of covering its deposits. President Snow promised to provide most of this figure if the pledges were vigorously prosecuted.33

“I will not know how to express my feelings of relief and gratitude if I am

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31 Grant to Joseph Howell, May 4, 1900, ibid. 30:561.
32 Grant Typed Diary, April 2, 1900 and Bank Examiner's Report of the Utah Loan and Trust, April 21, 1900, Bank Examiner's Reports, 1899-1900, Administrative Reports, Secretary of State, Utah Archives, Annex, Salt Lake City, Utah.
33 Grant Typed Diary, April 20 and May 18, 1900.
ever successful, in connection with my assistants, in honorably winding up this business," Grant lamented as he took again to the circuit. During the spring and summer of 1900, in the absence of Cowley who was elsewhere on assignment, Elders Grant and Smoot repeatedly traveled to Ogden to persuade the recalcitrant to donate and to manage the UL&T final act. The outstanding commitments were generally paid. The Browning family fulfilled its $5,000 pledge and Eccles, after three years temporizing, promised to do likewise contingent upon the bank's final closing. Ironically, the UL&T directors closed up the business and requested depositors to call for their money on the same day, August 31, 1900, that Thomas Stevens, whose probity and reputation had done so much to keep the bank afloat, died.34

With the exception of the UL&T shareholders who lost their investments, most of the participants in the crisis did remarkably well. Joseph West, who as cashier approved Abraham Cannon's loan and began the crisis, recovered the $5,200 which he had lent the bank, and after a lawsuit he apparently secured interest on the amount as well. David Eccles proved anew his Midas touch. Six months after receiving the UL&T property for his $75,000 mortgage, he had the opportunity of selling the building for a 20 percent premium. Within a few years, it was worth twice that amount. Grant also prospered, despite his three-and-a-half year preoccupation with the UL&T. By purchasing every option, future, and share of the rapidly appreciating Utah Sugar Company that he could get his hands on, Grant was solvent with a slight margin to spare when he sailed for his Japanese Mission in 1901. Finally, the Mormon Church, which spent $50,000 in subsidies and lost loans on the UL&T, paid a small price for rescuing its depositors, shoring up Ogden City's economy, saving the financial reputations of some of its leaders, and maintaining its own credit.

Fifteen years later Francis M. Lyman called Elder Grant into his office. Lyman was dying and wished to say good-bye to the man whom he believed would soon be Mormonism's President. "Heber," he said, "I have been reviewing your life and your accomplishments, and I want you to know that I owe my honor and my good name, and so does the prophet of God, Joseph F. Smith to you. . . . No matter whatever comes to you of importance, no matter what great labor you may perform, in my judgment you will never do anything greater than the saving of that bank, and having men put their money in a rat hole." Even though public subscriptions by themselves were inadequate, Grant's efforts had gained time and certainly the bank would have broken without him.35

During his later years as LDS President, Grant did not disagree with Lyman's estimate. He realized that he had saved Mormon finances and preserved the reputations of many friends, including three General Authorities whom he deeply respected. Moreover, he seemed to perceive how the episode had changed his own life. "I had faith that the Utah Loan and Trust Co. could be saved when I fear that every member of the Presidency and Apostles were lacking in faith," he concluded. "We are all made different and have different

34Ibid., April 30, August 31, and September 2, 1900.
degrees of faith on different matters. It takes all kinds for our quorum." Elder Grant had long felt apprehensive and even at times unworthy of his calling because of his financial and practical orientation. Because of his labors with the UL&T, he learned to accept his talents rather than to apologize or feel frustrated because of them.

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36 Grant to John Henry Smith, December 31, 1901, George A. Smith Papers, Western Americana, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.
Charles B. Thompson and
The Issues of Slavery and Race

By Newell G. Bringhurst

In the spring of 1860 as relations between the North and South were rapidly reaching the breaking point over the issues of slavery and race, a pamphlet, The Nachash Origin of the Black and Mixed Races appeared in St. Louis. In bringing forth this work its author, Charles Blancher Thompson, claimed that he was motivated by a desire to resolve North-South differences over the issues of slavery and race and thereby save the United States "from the horrors of a civil war." Thompson believed that his pamphlet would do this by making Northerners as well as Southerners aware of the "true" ethnic origins of the black race and the inherent master-servant relationship that existed between blacks and their white overseers.

In doing this, Thompson refuted the "abolitionist" and "free soil" contention that since "all men," black as well as white, were Divinely "created free and equal," black people were entitled to the same rights — including freedom from servile bondage — as their white counterparts. Thompson insisted that black people had not been created free and equal. Instead, according to Thompson, a careful reading of Hebraic scripture revealed to him that blacks were the product of a separate pre-Adamic creation and descended from a subhuman "superbrute" — the Nachash. The black descendants of this Nachash were intended by their Divine Creator to be servants to Adam and his descendants. Thompson believed that once all Americans — both North and South — became aware of these facts, all agitation to abolish slavery or to

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prevent its spread into new territories would cease. In fact, according to Thompson, Northerners would be so convinced by his arguments that slavery would “soon . . . be adopted by the present non-slaveholding states.” Thus, the issues of slavery and race would no longer agitate and divide the American people.\(^1\)

The emergence on the eve of the Civil War of Charles B. Thompson as a strong pro-slavery proponent through his propagation of Biblical polygenesis represents just one phase in the numerous adventurous wanderings of this colorful, flamboyant personality.\(^2\) Thompson’s background did not seem to predestine him to become ardent defender of the South’s Peculiar Institution. He was born January 1814 at Niskanna, Schenectady County, New York of Quaker parents. Thompson had a difficult childhood with his mother dying when he was three. Because of his family’s meager finances, Thompson was compelled to earn his own living by the time he was eight. At the age of fourteen, he was apprenticed to learn the tailor’s trade he used to support himself on and off for the remainder of his life.\(^3\)

Thompson was also a religious seeker. At the age of 18 he renounced his Quaker birthright and joined the Methodists. But within two years, Thompson withdrew from the Methodists and spent a year looking for the true “Church of Christ.” At this time he heard a Latter-day Saint elder preach and was so impressed that he traveled to Kirtland, Ohio to observe the Latter-day Saint movement first hand. In 1835 Thompson was baptized and ordained an elder by Joseph Smith.

Following his conversion Thompson devoted his full energies to promoting the Latter-day Saint religion. He returned to his home in New York on two occasions in 1835 and 1836 to preach the gospel of Mormonism. In 1836 he married, and the following year he returned to his missionary labors and organized a Latter-day Saint branch at Sandusky, Ohio. He then joined the main body of Saints encamped at Far West, Missouri in 1838. Tragedy then struck the family when Thompson’s wife died from exposure at the time of the Mormon expulsion from Missouri in 1838–39 leaving him with the responsibility of a five-month-old baby. In the wake of this personal trauma, he threw himself more than ever into his missionary labors. Thompson spent the next four years preaching in New York, baptizing 200 converts. He organized the


\(^3\)Marks, “Monona County, Iowa Mormons,” pp. 89–90.
Genesee Conference of Latter-day Saints and in 1841 published his *Evidence in Proof of the Book of Mormon*. Finally in 1843 he concluded his New York missionary labors and moved west, settling 20 miles from the main body of the Nauvoo-based Saints at Hancock, Illinois. He remarried in 1846.4

Following the death of Joseph Smith in 1844, Thompson's status within the Mormon movement changed several times. Initially, he cast his lot with Brigham Young and the Twelve. He even participated with his new wife in certain sacred ordinances being conducted in the Mormon Temple. However, in 1846 Thompson broke with Brigham Young. It appears that this break came over plural marriage, which Thompson came to despise with a passion. He then briefly associated himself with James J. Strang and his growing Mormon movement. But after moving to Cincinnati in 1847, he rejected Strang and returned to the tailor's trade. In 1849, Thompson moved once more, this time to St. Louis where he used the tailor's trade to support himself and his growing family.5

Thompson, however, was not content to remain just a tailor and in 1849 again focused his attention on religion. He claimed to receive a divine revelation showing him that the 1844 assassination of Joseph Smith had caused the Church to be abolished as a formal organization. But the Mormon priesthood remained intact with Thompson, who felt he was divinely commanded to direct its operation, gather a Mormon following, and prepare for the millennium. Thompson proceeded to set up "schools of preparation," beginning in St. Louis. In 1853 he moved his base of operation north and west to Monona County, Iowa where he gathered a following of "some fifty or sixty families" on several thousand acres. Here Thompson assumed absolute control over all the property of his followers until by 1853, he literally owned the clothing on their backs. However, resentments developed and in 1858 the besieged leader was forced to flee the wrath of his disgruntled followers, returning to his old home in St. Louis.6

During this same ten year period from 1848 to 1858 Thompson articulated his initial attitudes on the issues of slavery and race. There is a certain irony in that following his break with James J. Strang in 1848 the future anti-black, proslavery advocate apparently fell under the influence of William McCary, a self-proclaimed black-Indian prophet.7 It is not clear where the alleged interaction between McCary and Thompson took place. According to Strang, Thompson "commenced preaching under a colored man calling him-

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4Ibid., pp. 90—91.
5Ibid., p. 91. By this time in addition to his oldest daughter from his first marriage he had had a second daughter and was expecting a third child by his second wife Catherine. This according to 1850 census information on the Thompson family as given in a letter from the State Historical Society of Missouri to Newell G. Bringhurst, dated November 24, 1976 (original in possession of author).
6Marks, "Monona County, Iowa Mormons," pp. 91—114.
self Jesus Christ” while living in Cincinnati. A later account places Thompson and McCary in St. Louis where Thompson, under the “tuition” of the black-Indian prophet, “was instructed in the doctrine of transmigration.” This was the belief that the souls of certain Old and New Testament prophets and other righteous Biblical peoples had been transferred to or were “born again” into the bodies of individuals now living.

The doctrine of transmigration became an essential part of Thompson’s teachings. But it is not clear what impact McCary had on Thompson’s developing attitudes toward slavery and race, since Thompson himself discounted the influence of the “Pretended Lamite [sic] Prophet.”

Nonetheless, it is clear that Thompson expressed an interest in the issues of race and black people. Like his Utah-based Mormon rivals, he saw a relationship between an individual’s racial-ethnic background and legitimate priesthood authority. Thompson’s periodical, *Zion’s Harbinger and Baneemy’s Organ* declared that “the chosen seed are entitled to and have a right to priesthood.” Thompson through his doctrinal work, *The Laws and Covenants of Israel*, not only maintained that the “Keys of the priesthood” rested in “Isaac and his seed,” but believed himself to be “Ephraim the first-born . . . regenerated” among his followers.

In addition Thompson viewed the alleged ancestors of black people in largely negative terms. He articulated his views in his “Book of Enoch the Prophet,” a work remarkably similar in its structure and substance to the writings of Joseph Smith, particularly the “Book of Moses.” According to Thompson, Cain, as the ancestor of contemporary blacks, was “reserved in chains of darkness.” The Lord “set a mark upon the seed of Cain, that they might be known in all generations.” In addition “Enoch the son of Cain” was “disinherited of the rights of priesthood by the sin of his father.” This work also focused on past conflicts involving the descendants of Cain and Canaan. The “people of Canaan which dwell in tents” fought against and defeated the righteous people of Shem. As a divine punishment the Lord cursed their “land with much heat, and the barrenness thereof shall go forth forever.” A “blac-
ness” came upon all the “children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people.” This work anticipated future racial strife predicting that the “Seed” of Cain would ultimately “be destroyed from the face of the earth; until his seed perish from the seed of the human race.” It appears that these ideas were inspired by similar views in the writings of Joseph Smith.

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Papers; Nelson W. Whipple, “Journal,” October 14, 1847, Nelson W. Whipple Papers. All of these are in the LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City. Also see *Voree Herald*, October, 1846; *Zion’s Reveille* (Voree, Wisconsin), February 25, 1847, July 29, 1847; *True Latter Day Saints Herald*, March, 1861; and *The Gazette* (St. Joseph, Missouri), December 11, 1846.

8*Gospel Herald*, October 5, 1848; *True Latter Day Saints Herald*, March 1861.

9*Zion’s Harbinger and Baneemy’s Organ*, September, 1852; Charles B. Thompson, *The Laws and Covenants of Israel Written to Ephraim from Jehovas the Mighty God of Jacob* (Preparation, Iowa: Book and Periodical Office of Zion’s Presbytery, 1857), p. 58.

10*Zion’s Harbinger and Baneemy’s Organ* (St. Louis, Missouri), October, November, and December, 1852. Compare this account with Holy Scriptures, Genesis 5:25, 27, 28; 7:6–10 or Pearl of Great Price, Moses, 5:37–40; 42–43; 7:6–8.
Thompson was, moreover, influenced by Joseph Smith's attitudes towards slavery. In his Proclamation of 1849 he echoed Joseph Smith's famous 1832 "Revelation and Prophecy on War." According to Thompson the bonds of national union between the North and South would be broken by rebellion in South Carolina followed by a fierce and bloody civil war. The South would then become so intent on conquering the North that they would "martial and discipline their SLAVES for WAR, who will, in many instances turn their weapons upon their own masters."¹¹

Following the path earlier taken by Joseph Smith, Thompson assumed a strong anti-slavery position after he established his Monona County settlement. According to one observer "many" of Thompson's "religious writings were against slavery." By 1857–58, Thompson's anti-slavery sympathies were apparently so strong that he sent two of his principal followers south into Virginia and Kentucky to petition the legislatures of these two slaveholding states to abolish black involuntary servitude; warning these Southerners that if they did not do so "the vengeance of the Lord would be upon them."¹²

However, this strong anti slavery position was shortlived the same way that Joseph Smith's anti-slavery position had been shortlived during the 1840s. Following the collapse of his Monona County religious community and his return to St. Louis, Thompson assumed a militant proslavery position which was most forcefully articulated in his work The Nachash Origin of the Black and Mixed Races, published in 1860. This work tried to prove that "the negro race was created to occupy the position of subjects to the white race." Blacks were the product of "an inferior creation" known as the Nachash, "a living creature" with an immortal spirit or soul who was a servant to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. However, this Nachash "seduced" Eve into partaking of the forbidden fruit, precipitating the Fall.¹³ The Nachash then "fled from his master" and became a vagabond.¹⁴

At this point Thompson brought Cain and his descendants into his history. Cain took a wife from the "fugitive Nachash" or "vagabond race" following the murder of his brother Abel. The mixed or "mulatto" descendants of this "unnatural matrimonial alliance" were a low degraded race known at Enoshmen who stood in contrast to the Adam men or untainted descendants of Adam.

However, in time, the Enoshmen so corrupted the earth through inter-

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¹¹This was initially published as part of "A Proclamation" in Zion's Harbinger and Baneemy's Organ, January, 1849 and later in Thompson's The Laws and Covenants of Israel, as Chapter III. Italics in original. Compare this with Doctrine and Covenants 87, particularly verse 4 which states "And it shall come to pass, after many days, slaves shall rise up against their masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war."

¹²Marks, "Monona County, Iowa, Mormons," pp. 106, 110–11; Also see "Charles Blancher Thompson," Recollections of Monona County Pioneers. According to this account, Thompson sent his followers to Virginia and Louisiana (rather than Kentucky).

¹³Thompson, The Nachash Origin of the Black and Mixed Races, pp. iii, xi, xiv-xv, 35, 38–39, 48. Thompson, in the way he described this incident within the context of being "seduced," "seducing" and "seduces" indicates a preoccupation with the sexual overtones of the relationship between Eve and the Nachash.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 48, 60–66.
marriage that the only “uncorrupted” pure seed of Adam remaining were Noah, his three sons, and their wives. In response to this situation, the Lord brought on the Great Deluge in order to destroy the entire “accursed Enosh race”15 and forestall the complete “corruption” of the human race.15

The flood, however, did not spell the end of the servile Nachash race. Just before the deluge, Noah gathered and placed on the ark some pure, unmixed Nachash creatures who were domesticated as servants in the household of Ham and became known from then on as Cushites. Although Ham had a white wife by whom he fathered five white sons, he also sired four “half-breed” sons, namely Canaan, Phut, Mizraim, and Nimrod, through an “illicit” union with “Cush,” a female Nachash servant.16

Thompson’s work also promoted a strong pro-slavery position in describing the fate of slavery that awaited not only Ham’s half-breed descendants, but also the all-black Cushites. Thus the “brown, red, and tawny” descendants of these sons, particularly the Canaanites, Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans, despite their efforts to build up mighty empires and dominate the light-skinned chosen people, were destined to be servants.17

According to Thompson, slavery was advantageous to both blacks and whites. Blacks would benefit from slavery because that Peculiar Institution would allow them to maintain the level of “cultivation” or civilization they had achieved since their arrival from Africa. If freed they would retrogress and assume “habits and appearance ... scarcely ... above their brute creation.” However, under the continuing ruling dominion of the white man ... “seasoned with mercy and benevolence,” blacks were “capable of attaining ... a high state of cultivation.” When black people realized that freedom would harm rather benefit them, they would be “content to serve” their masters “in obedience.”

Indeed, even those blacks

who have not masters will so appreciate the relation of servant to the white man, that they will petition to be thus adopted into respectable families that they may thus fulfill the purpose of their creation and be happy.18

Non-slaveholding whites would also benefit from the universal enslavement of all black people. Under such an arrangement northern farmers and capitalists could utilize black slaves to perform the menial tasks involved in farming, industry, and commerce rather than “hired servants of the sovereign [white] race.” Thus all whites could assume “their rightful dominion” as members of the white master race. Indeed, Thompson looked forward to the day when “every white man shall possess an inheritance of lands, cattle and servants.”19

This ideal situation of universal white ownership of black slaves was tied up

15Ibid., pp. 62, 71, 79.
16Ibid., pp. 35, 44, 61. This was in conflict with the standard biblical account which had Cush as a son of Ham and the father of Nimrod. See Genesis 10:6-8. According to Thompson this account was inaccurate because of the mistranslation of the original texts.
17Ibid., pp. 45, 63-65, 73-74, 79.
18Ibid., pp. xvi, 75-76, 84.
19Ibid., pp. 76-77. Thompson pointed out, moreover, that southern black slaves were “better provided for by far than” white “hired servants in the North.”
with America as an expanding nation destined to dominate the “red-skins,” Mexicans, and Cubans. Ultimately, America would prevail over “all the Kingdoms of mixed blood.”

America’s destiny to dominate all non-white peoples had strong millenarianist overtones. The United States in establishing its control over nations “corrupted by the blood . . . of the Nachash,” whom Thompson characterized as “Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth,” would act as a divine instrument in ushering in the millennium. This would lead to the Second Coming of Christ, who would then destroy the devil and make his kingdom universal.20

Following the publication of The Nachash Origins, Thompson publicized it in several ways. He sent copies of the book to newspapers throughout the country, including such diverse publications as the pro-slavery New Orleans-based De Bow’s Review, the Republican free-soil Daily Intelligencer and the St. Louis Christian Advocate — the official organ of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.21 Thompson also approached a number of prominent individuals, including Dr. Samuel A. Cartwright the New Orleans-based pro-slavery polemicist and Jefferson Davis, then a United States Senator from Mississippi.22

In August 1860, Thompson commenced the publication of a periodical The Nachashlogian in order to further publicize his book and its ideas. The Nachashlogian set forth Thompson’s philosophy of “Nachashology” and advertised his book as “a logically argumentive, philological, and historical work,” selling for 25c a copy. The Nachashlogian also called for the formation of “Nachashlogian Associations” throughout the United States to promote the “new Biblical philosophy” of Nachashology and to counter or “check the progress of abolitionism, now so potent for evil in our country.” The initial August issue of this periodical was described as a “mere prospectus of the forthcoming paper” which would be “of respectable size and issued regularly as soon as a sufficient number of subscribers” could be “enrolled . . . to warrant its publication.”23 This apparently did not happen and there is no indication of further issues of The Nachashlogian beyond the August 1860 prospectus.

For the next several years Thompson remained in St. Louis.24 By 1867 he apparently moved to Philadelphia25 where he wrote and published his Great Divine Charter and Sacred Constitution of IABBA’s Universal and Everlasting King-

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22See letters from Samuel A. Cartwright to C. Blancher Thompson, June 5 and June 28, 1860 as reprinted in The Nachashlogian (St. Louis), August 1860. Also see De Bow’s Review, August 1860.
23The Nachashlogian, August, 1860.
24This according to information cited from St. Louis City Directory for 1864 as given in November 24, 1976 letter from State Historical Society of Missouri to Newell G. Bringhurst (original in possession of author).
25This according to A. T. Andraes, Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa, 1875. However Dale L. Morgan in his “Bibliography of the Churches of the Disperation,” p. 263, has been unable to place Thompson in Philadelphia before 1879.
dom. This work was published in 1873 in conjunction with the author's renewed efforts to establish a religious society — one based on essentially the same concepts of slavery and race that he had held some thirteen years earlier. Thompson's *Great Divine Charter* insisted that the black race or "Cushites, the children of Nachash" should be "the domestic subjects" of the white race despite the abolition of black slavery in the wake of the Civil War. It insisted that each white citizen within his religious society would "receive under his dominion as many black domestic subjects as he could manage upon his inheritance." Thompson prohibited blacks and other non-whites from being "admitted as citizens of the civil government" within his religious society. This refusal to grant blacks citizenship within Thompson's religious society even after the Civil War and during Reconstruction paralleled the continuing refusal within the Utah Mormon Church to admit blacks to its priesthood and stood in contrast to the open priesthood policies within the recently formed Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Thompson's attitudes toward the issues of slavery and race after 1873 are more difficult to trace. Throughout the 1870's, Thompson continued to try and build up a religious following in Philadelphia. He managed to publish a periodical, the *Cyipz Herald and IABBA's Evangel*. As late as 1892, Thompson was listed in the Philadelphia city directory as the Reverend of "the Cyipz Peoples Church of the Kingdom of God." Thompson's activities after that date are not clear.

Thompson's shifting attitudes toward the issues of slavery, race and status of the black people which accompanied his geographic moves represent an interesting and colorful odyssey which make him a noteworthy individual for several reasons. First, Thompson's attitudes were clearly influenced and conditioned by Mormonism and as such represent an alternate, forgotten path Mormon thought took following the death of Joseph Smith. In addition, Thompson's ideas, as indicated in this study, were similar to those articulated by Joseph Smith in his "Revelation and Prophecy on War" and in the Book of

26There is, however, some confusion concerning both the title and date of publication. The LDS Church Historical Department gives the title as *Great Divine Charter* and *Sacred Constitution of IABBA's Universal and Everlasting Kingdom* (Philadelphia? 1873) while George B. Arbaugh in his *Revelations in Mormonism* cites it as *Stewardship of the Shiloh* (St. Louis, 1858–59). I find the 1873 date more convincing because Thompson's ideas on race as contained in this work appear to have been developed after rather than before those contained in his earlier 1860 work *The Nachash Origins*. Also within the work itself Thompson cites 1873 and 1877 as dates on which imminent future events will take place.


31Although according to the Dale L. Morgan Papers in the Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California, he apparently lived in Philadelphia beyond 1892.
Moses. They were even closer to the concepts promoted by Brigham Young and his Utah Mormon followers. While there are obvious differences, Thompson's ideas are notable from the vantage point of Latter-day Saint history in that they represent the most extreme expression of Mormon racist ideas and concepts.

Thompson's racist ideas were notable for other reasons. The extent to which he was influenced by the issues of slavery and race in American society at large dramatizes the pervasive influence that these issues had on all Americans during the ante-bellum period. Thompson's initial Proclamation of 1849, expressing alarm over the explosive potential of the slave issue and the possibility of civil war, came at a time when sectional tensions were running high as a result of the national debate over the status of slavery in those western territories recently acquired from Mexico. The man's apparent anti-slavery actions during the mid-1850's were possibly influenced by his move to Iowa, a state where slavery was prohibited. In turn, his assumption of a strong pro-slavery position followed his move in 1858 to Missouri — a slave state.

In articulating his pro-slavery and anti-black attitudes through The Nachash Origin of the Black and Mixed Races, Thompson was influenced by similar ideas expressed in the Dred Scott decision. In addition, the pamphlet written in 1860 on the eve of the Civil War indicates his acute awareness of the serious nature of the impending sectional crisis. This work represents a sincere, albeit warped, effort to find a solution and thus avoid the "irrepressible conflict." Likewise, the pro-slavery and anti-black tone of Thompson's 1873 Great Divine Charter indicates that he, like most Americans both North and South, remained "un-reconstructed" in their negative attitudes toward black people, despite the formal abolition of black slavery.

Thompson was also significant for the role that he played in promoting Biblical polygenesis as a racial ideology during the late ante-bellum period. The emergence of Biblical polygenesis represented an effort by certain Americans to reconcile polygenesis — the idea that the various races of men had emerged from diverse origins — with the Biblical story of the creation as contained in Genesis. Thompson's primary effort in this direction, The Nachash Origin of the Black and Mixed Races received wide notice in the Southern press and from various Southern spokesmen and writers. At about the same time that

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33 Thompson in his developing anti-black attitudes was possibly also influenced by such attitudes in Iowa and other northern regions during the ante-bellum period. For a discussion of Northern anti-black attitudes see Eugene H. Berwanger, The Frontier Against Slavery (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1967).
34 Thompson, Nachash Origin of the Black and Mixed Races, p. 84. Thompson's concern in this regard is evident throughout this work. See especially pp. iii–iv, v, vii, xi, xvi, 76–77, 84.
37 See above notes 21 and 22.
Thompson's pamphlet first appeared in 1860, Jefferson Davis and Dr. Samuel A. Cartwright, the Southern pro-slavery polemicist, emerged as prominent proponents of Biblical polygenesis. Like Thompson they used it as a means to defend the South's Peculiar Institution. While the precise influence of Thompson on the emerging theories of Biblical polygenesis articulated by Davis and Cartwright is not clear, both of these men did read and were familiar with Thompson's work. Davis' and Cartwright's racial theories, moreover, emerged at a time when most Southern clergymen seemed to reject polygenesis as heretically against their views of a single Adamic creation for all mankind, blacks included.

Thompson was noteworthy in that his theories on race and slavery interfaced with a strong sense of millennialistic anticipation, evident in both the North and South during the late ante-bellum period. Thompson saw a link between the increasingly acute sectional crisis and the coming of the millennium. Other millennialistic-minded people, particularly in the North, expected the conflict over slavery to lead to immediate North-South warfare, widespread destruction and the apocalypse. This would in turn usher in the millennium and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the ashes of the old order. But Thompson differed from those millenarians who longed for a cataclysm to erase a world they rejected, in that he was a "progressive millennialist." Thompson looked toward "reform" through the universal adoption of slavery, which in turn would lead to the millennium and the Second Coming. Thus Thompson subscribed to the pro-slavery millennialism held by many churchmen in the South during the late ante-bellum period. At least one scholar has pointed out that such "progressive millennialism" among pro-slavery advocates has been overlooked by those interested in the history of American millennialism.

Finally Thompson is significant in that his life represents a case study of the interrelationship between an individual's precarious socio-economic status and the propositions of Biblical polygenesis and millennialism.

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38See for example De Bow's Review, August 1860 and speech of Jefferson Davis in U.S. Senate April 12, 1860 as reprinted in Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist: His Letters, Papers and Speeches, ed. Dunbar Roland, 8 vols., (Jackson, Mississippi: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1923)4:231, 233, 235.

39As indicated by remarks of Samuel A. Cartwright in The Nachashlogian, August 1860 and by the content of Jefferson Davis' remarks before U.S. Senate. See note 38 above.

40I tend to believe that Biblical polygenesis had only a limited appeal in the South. I base my tentative conclusion on a preliminary examination of various contemporary southern writings and on the arguments of William Stanton in The Leopard's Spots (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 112, 164-68 and William S. Jenkins in Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1935), p. 279. This runs counter to the arguments of George M. Fredrickson and Dwight W. Hoover who maintain that the southern acceptance of Biblical polygenesis was widespread. See note 36.


42This can be seen in the attitudes and behavior of such northern "millenarians" as William Lloyd Garrison and John Brown. It was also evident in the South in the behavior of Nat Turner.

and willingness to embrace pro-slavery and anti-black attitudes. Thompson's lower socio-economic background and continuing difficulties in supporting himself and his family apparently influenced the formation of his pro-slavery and anti-black attitudes. In this Thompson was not unique. It has been suggested that "white people in the lower socio-economic levels are, on the average, more bitterly anti-Negro than white people at the higher levels." Thompson's socio-economic status was very precarious and in fact declined following the collapse of his Iowa-based Mormon colony after 1858. He then lost all his property as the result of a lawsuit pushed by his former followers. "Downwardly mobile individuals" or groups exhibit a "greater" degree of ethnic "prejudice" than those moving up or remaining static. As for Thompson, it is evident that his socio-economic position changed following his move from Iowa, a free state, to the slaveholding state of Missouri in the late 1850's. It appears moreover that people whose social position changes tend to conform to the norms and prejudices of the group or society which they have just joined.

Thus, even though Charles Blancher Thompson himself was a minor figure within the context of Mormonism and American society at large during the ante-bellum and post-Civil War periods, this colorful individual through his attitudes toward slavery, race, and black people articulated Mormon racist ideas in their most extreme form and at the same time reflected many of the attitudes held by contemporary non-Mormon Americans.

44According to at least two accounts. See George B. Arbaugh, *Revelations in Mormonism*, p. 171; *History of Monona County*, p. 273.


THE T. EDGAR LYON MORMON HISTORY AWARD

The Mormon History Association is pleased to announce the T. Edgar Lyon Mormon History Award, created to memorialize the life and contributions of the late Dr. T. Edgar Lyon and perpetuate the high standards of historical scholarship which he followed in his work.

A $400 cash award, given by the family of T. Edgar Lyon, will be awarded at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association commencing in 1982 for the best published article in the field of Mormon history.
"Between Two Fires":
Women on the "Underground" of Mormon Polygamy

By Kimberly Jensen James

Reflecting on his mother Flora Snow Woolley's experience as a plural wife fleeing from the "Raid" on Mormon polygamy in the 1880s, Herbert Elliot Woolley created an especially appropriate characterization of the "underground" years in Mormon history. "It strikes me as the greatest game of hide-and-seek ever played," he recalled, "certainly the most serious." During the 1880s, in a response to the anti-polygamy Edmunds Act of 1882 and the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, members of the Mormon community sought shelter and gave sanctuary to those "hiding" from the Federal marshals who were "seeking" to arrest them for prohibited cohabitation.

The "Raid" era has been a subject of study by historians and others for decades. Most every survey of Mormon and Utah history contains some detail about this era and the underground that it fostered. Historian Gustive O. Larson, for example, in his Americanization of Utah for Statehood, discusses the impact of the underground on Church leaders and government in the context of relations with the larger American society. Larson views the tensions of the years of living underground as an important catalyst for the 1890 Manifesto, which officially discontinued the practice of plural marriage in the Church.2

James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard in their The Story of the Latter-day Saints explore the dilemma faced by Mormons who felt it their duty to follow

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1Herbert Elliot Woolley, "My Reflections," Woolley-Snow Collection Manuscripts, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, hereinafter cited Special Collections, p. 4.
their religion's "higher law" as opposed to the laws of the land which prohibited the practice of plural marriage. Allen further discusses this issue of civil disobedience and the anti-polygamy legislation in his case study of "‘Good Guys’ vs. ‘Good Guys’: Rudger Clawson, John Sharp and Civil Disobedience in Nineteenth Century Utah." Stanley Ivins postulates that the external stress of legislation and the activities of the Federal marshals prompted the Mormons to intensify the practice of plural marriage during these years.

Perhaps the most detailed study of the underground is included in sociologist Kimball Young's work on polygamy entitled Isn't One Wife Enough? Here he outlines the methods and circumstances of many individuals, both men and women, who participated on the underground, and the problems, dilemmas and stress involved in their experiences. Although the work is somewhat limited historically by his use of pseudonyms, the Hulet interviews which form a basis for the study contain valuable primary information, and Young's conclusions are important additions to the study of the underground years.

Though many biographies and autobiographies have been written, no major interpretive study of the experience of women on the underground has been previously undertaken. Because the nature of the underground was different for women than it was for men, a study of their particular problems and ways of dealing with life on the move and in hiding is of value, as well as the effects their experiences had on their personal lives and on the Mormon community.

Women were traditionally given the primary responsibility for the care of children, and this restricted freedom of movement and the possibility of secrecy, both vital to successful underground life. Plural wives (especially if pregnant) and their children were the obvious evidence of the "cohabitation" prohibited by the Edmunds and Edmunds-Tucker Acts. Under these laws, women could be subpoenaed to testify against their husbands. Often, then, women eluding the marshals were pregnant or had small children, thus reducing their physical stamina and mobility. And while there were few impediments to an assumed bachelorhood, pregnancy could not often be disguised.

Sarah Edwards O'Donnell Hutchings, herself a participant, described the

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6 Kimball Young, Isn't One Wife Enough? (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1954) The author was able to examine James Hulet's interview notes and oral history interviews housed in the Huntington Library at San Marino, California. These were conducted in the 1930s, and provide valuable information from wives and children who were participants in the underground experience.

7 Nancy Tate Dredge published "Victims of the Conflict" in Claudia Bushman, ed., Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah (Cambridge, Mass.: Emmeline Press Ltd., 1976): 133–55, yet this study was based almost entirely on the Kimball Young work, using his pseudonyms, with little original research. The subject matter was an important addition to the collection in Mormon Sisters.

8 Since plural wives were not considered to be legal wives, they were considered by the officials in the cases to be competent to testify against their "husbands."
drama of underground life as living “between the fires.” While individual situations varied, all women on the underground faced this common dilemma: home and a stable life were no longer secure, yet to protect that life by hiding meant loneliness, stress and hardship.

The sacrifice on the part of women, after all, was an altruistic one. Though in a general sense the Mormons were protesting laws they felt to be unjust by going underground while retaining their polygamous bonds, on a personal level a woman went into hiding to protect her husband. While his imprisonment would hurt her personally through disruption of family life, and while his absence would be detrimental to finances and stability on a long-term basis, the underground itself brought about these same conditions. And even though a woman could be imprisoned for refusing to testify under the Edmunds and Edmunds-Tucker Acts, she was in no danger if she did testify. Thus the very motivation for going underground was different for women than it was for men. Men went on the underground to avoid their own imprisonment, women to protect their patriarchs.

In a letter to Moses Franklin Farnsworth in May of 1882, Wilford Woodruff counseled:

Concerning your families, I think it would be wisdom for our brethren to have one wife under the roof where he lives, if his circumstances will permit it. But we do not intend to cast off any of our wives and children because of the Edmunds Bill, or any other Bill, but to exercise what prudence and wisdom we can in these matters.

Levi Savage reported to his diary on 20 February 1885: “Bro George Spilsbury said that the word from Authorities in St. George was for all those that had plural families to get their wives out of the way, and then get out of the way themselves.” These messages and others like them were clear in their purpose, yet they did not detail exact methods for “getting out of the way.” These decisions were left up to individuals and to families, who by “what prudence and wisdom” they could were to avoid arrest.

What followed, then, was an enormous variety of methods that women used to elude the Federal marshals who were seeking them in connection with charges of cohabitation against their husbands, and a variety of experiences depending upon circumstances, finances, and personalities. Yet there were some common denominators. Basically a woman had two options for “getting out of the way.” One was to remain at home, going into hiding periodically when the need arose; the other, to relocate on a more permanent basis. Both called for vigilance and great secrecy, and in this way the underground interfered with two of life’s most important milestones, or “rites of passage” — marriage and birth. The underground also affected the lives of “first wives.”

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10Material dealing with the underground experience of Moses Franklin Farnsworth and his plural wife Lovina Jane Bulkley may be found in Carter, *Our Pioneer Heritage* 3 (1960): 194–96.

11Levi Savage, Diary, 1877–1897, February 20, 1885, typescript, Levi Savage folder, Box 2, Kimball Young Collection, Uncatalogued Manuscript, The Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
Channels of support and family routine were also disrupted by the underground experience, and many women found themselves in changed circumstances. Whatever the individual situation, the underground in general was a time of stress, and it was the anxiety, loneliness and frustration that underscored the underground years for most women involved. The years preceding the 1890 Manifesto and the events contained in these years became, for many, the crucible for personal lives as well as for the practice of plural marriage itself in the collective life of the Church.\(^\text{12}\)

The decision to experience underground living by remaining at home and going into periodic hiding had its positive aspects. A woman could stay close to her family and friends, gaining comfort from them and having their protection. She could maintain a somewhat normal routine, continuing in either an occupation or family chores, and keeping children together in familiar circumstances. Yet remaining at home also meant that a woman was well known, that her activities and her secrets were more apt to be public knowledge. Each family's situation, including finances, health, and the way they made their livelihood, weighed with the above considerations in the balance, determined whether a woman would combine underground conditions with life close to home.

Women who found themselves in these circumstances had to remain alert, take precautions for their safety, and when warned of the marshals' approach quickly had to hide away. When marshals were spotted on the road approaching her Mill Creek farm, Eliza Cannon used the willows near her home as a retreat.\(^\text{13}\) Hannah Terry and her children hid away on the beaver dams close to their property.\(^\text{14}\) Other women fled to nearby mountains for a refuge.\(^\text{15}\) Women clearly made do with what they could in order to protect themselves from detection, and the nearest ditch or willow patch was often their shelter.

While living close to home a woman's security often depended entirely upon quick thinking and action, and taking responsibility for her own welfare. Clawson Cannon Sr. recalled the day that his sister Mame heard of the marshals' approach. Unable to run away in time she "put on a work garb and did her hair up . . . she got on [a] ladder and was dusting up there when the

\(^{12}\)Many of the men, women and children of the underground years sought refuge in Mexico and Canada, where they could practice plural marriage outside the borders of the United States. Since lives there did not require such rigid secrecy, since they were not "underground" lives, that part of the polygamy story will not be treated in this work. Many of the women studied eventually went to Mexico or Canada with their families as a solution to the stresses of underground life, but their underground lives will be focused upon here. Research also indicates that the patterns of underground life and underground communities established in the decade of the 1880s continued on after the 1890 Manifesto. The focus of this study, however, will be the years preceding that event.

\(^{13}\)Clawson Cannon Sr. Oral History, Interview by Jerry D. Lee, 1974, typescript, p. 39, Mormon Families Oral History Project, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

\(^{14}\)See "Mary Ann Pulsipher Terry," a biographical sketch in "Pulsipher Family History Book," p. 85, Film 920 #5, Harold B. Lee Library.

\(^{15}\)The mountains were a popular retreat. See for example the incident involving Jane Barnum in "A Short Sketch of Martha Ann Pulsipher's Life," "Pulsipher History," p. 107.
deputies came so they wouldn't arrest her." Taking care of oneself often meant removing obstacles from before one's path, as evidenced in the story of this participant:

Marshall Armstrong had a brother who was a good Latter-day Saint who worked on the temple (in St. George). This brother had a daughter who embraced polygamy. Her uncle was determined to arrest her. On one occasion he succeeded in catching her, and when he undertook to arrest her she said, "You can't arrest me!" She caught a good hold on him with strong arms accustomed to hard work and which possessed good strength, and threw him down on the ground and mauled him good.

With the positive side of living at home, the proximity to family and friends and the continuance of routine, there was, as mentioned, the negative side. Living in constant readiness and anxiety, having to hide in willow patches and beaver dams, all discouraged many from continuing to live at home. As Frances Grant Bennett, daughter of Emily Wells and Heber J. Grant, phrased it: "In those days they sometimes had to hustle them [the women] out of the house and put them over the fence and do all kinds of things to get away from the officers. [Father] didn't want this to happen [to Mother]. He didn't want her to be bothered." Compounding the negative effects of distasteful conditions, living at home could, in some cases, give the family a false sense of security. Laura Ann Keeler Thurber recalled that in 1886, "there had been yarns afloat about the officers being after Joseph [her husband], and he was on the watch for them. Slept out to the stacks for awhile, but they put off[f] coming until we got kind of careless about watching, and they came in on us one morning the 2nd of November 1886 and found us all in bed."

Perhaps because they had heard about an experience such as Laura's, or perhaps because they didn't want to jump fences, many women sought for more seclusion in choosing the other underground alternative — relocation on a more permanent basis. Thus many women, circumstances permitting, endeavored to remove themselves as far as possible from the heat of the fire of the "Raid," going underground in a more permanent sense by relocating themselves with perhaps some or all of their children, or alone. Some took refuge in a neighboring town or state; others went overseas. Some found shelter with family or friends; others went to communities where they were not known and could not be identified.

A privileged few of these women were able to have relative comfort in their exile. Martha Hughes Cannon, for example, spent part of her time underground on a tour of Europe in 1886 and 1887. Heber J. Grant sent his wife

18Frances Grant Bennett Oral History, Interview by Marlena Ahanin, 1976, typescript, p. 7, Oral History Program, Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, hereinafter cited as LDS Archives.
19Laura Ann Keeler Thurber, Autobiography, November, 1886, Special Collections.
Emily Wells Grant to England to live with her father Daniel A. Wells who was then the president of the European Mission of the Church. Emily toured Europe visiting museums and galleries, augmenting her interest in the arts while away from home.\(^{21}\) The wives of Carl C. Amussen were also financially able to seek exile in Europe. To avoid detection they traveled a great deal, finding that mobility insured greater secrecy. Barbara, the third wife, posed as nursemaid for the children of the first wife Anna.\(^{22}\) Carla Cannon, plural wife of George Q. Cannon, spent a great deal of her seclusion in San Francisco with her sister and fellow-exile Emily Clawson, living in a two-story house overlooking the bay.\(^{23}\)

These women were part of an elite, a minority whose husbands and families were in favorable financial positions and who could afford to send them away from the “Raid,” and provide amply for their physical comfort. Most women, however, could not afford the luxury of a comfortable exile. Some were in particularly distressing situations. Jane Campbell, for example, recalled that her mother hid out in a mine shaft near Minersville, Utah before the birth of her first child.\(^{24}\) Rhoda Bybee Stowell took the train as far as Milford in June of 1889, and then went to a “very retired spot in a precipitous mountain canyon. She felt there that she would be entirely out of the way.”\(^{25}\) Emma Ashworth spent time living in the church steeple in Holden, Utah. The whole time, she recalled, “I was cooped up in the steeple, not daring to go out.”\(^{26}\)

Many women went to communities just outside of Utah’s jurisdiction: Preston, Clifton, Whitney and Paris, Idaho; Star Valley, Wyoming; Manassa and Mancos, Colorado; Fredonia (“free women”), Pipe Springs, and Moccasin, Arizona; surrounding the state in clusters of “safety zones.” Emily Wells Grant spent part of her exile in Manassa, Colorado, an underground community typical of the many others which sheltered those eluding the marshals. In Manassa, as in the other “safety zones,” there “were a lot of polygamous wives that were taken there [and their] husbands weren’t there, of course. Nobody knew where their husbands were . . . Everybody knew that each wife had a husband somewhere, but they didn’t know who they were.”\(^{27}\)

To Flora Snow Woolley, Pipe Springs, Arizona, the location of her exile throughout the later 1880s, was anything but hospitable:

In after years, when the raid is written for history, MEN will be the principle martyrs, and we shall be the victims, I suppose. I was exiled, banished, or imprisoned — any one of the terms will fit the case. I choose the latter, as I have good authority for considering

\(^{21}\) Bennett Oral History, p. 8.

\(^{22}\) Heber J. Amussen Oral History, Interview by James Hulet, 1937, typescript, p. 1, Carl C. Amussen folder, Box 1, Kimball Young Collection.

\(^{23}\) Clawson Cannon Sr. Oral History, p. 5.


\(^{25}\) Cynthia Jane Park Stowell, Autobiography, p. 3, Special Collections.

\(^{26}\) Emma Ashworth Oral History, Interview by James Hulet, 1935, typescript, p. 1, Emma Ashworth folder, Box 1, Kimball Young Collection.

\(^{27}\) Bennett Oral History, p. 7.
Pipe Springs equal to the State Prison, as one who had served a term of six months there told Mr. Woolley he would rather be penned up in the State Prison than to have to live at Pipe Springs any length of time. And let me add here that this gentleman was out there visiting his family.28

One of the paramount considerations of underground life was secrecy: it was, indeed, the very purpose behind the hiding, the relocation, all the activities of the underground experience. For most women, the new lifestyle engendered by the underground gave them the opportunity to create a new, or at least secret, identity. In the fall of 1886, for instance, Fanny Coombs Harper "left Payson to take a position as a telegraph operator at Beaver City, Utah. No one except the Stake President, John W. Murdock, who had known her family well, knew that she was a plural wife or even her real identity as a Coombs. She passed in the community as Mrs. Clayburn."29

For some women, at least, the assumed identity made it easy to put aside some of the obligations and responsibilities of the real one, as evidenced in the remembrances of Sigrid Skanchy. While Sigrid "kept pretty much to herself" while living underground in Salt Lake City in the late 1880s, she had "heard some of the girls were going buggy riding and to dances, and she had opportunities, but she was married and didn't think it was right to behave so."30

Communication on the underground was also a dangerous risk to secrecy, and called for thoughtful security on the part of underground women. Mary Elizabeth Cox Lee, fearful that her handwriting would be recognized, had a friend of the family who was a recorder at the St. George Temple address the letters that she wrote to her husband.31 An interesting illustration recalled by Orville Cox Day demonstrates the lengths to which some participants carried their precautions:

I remember mother [Elvira Cox Day] got a letter from father [Eli E. Day], and I watched her read it; and when she got to the end — read the last word, she opened the stove door and held the letter in the heat. And gradually some brown words appeared, and she read the rest of the letter. Then she wrote a letter to father and signed her name. When she was through writing she took a teaspoon full of skim milk and wrote on the bottom of the letter. I couldn't see a thing, but I knew where the brown writing came from.32

The need for communication was perhaps most acutely felt by those women who were far away from home and loved ones, far enough away to exclude the possibility of occasional clandestine visits from husband or family. Yet even when in England, Martha Hughes Cannon felt the importance of maintaining secrecy in her correspondence. Martha used code words in her letters to her husband, Angus M. Cannon. She referred to plural wives as

30Sigrid H. Skanchy Oral History, Interview by James Hulet, 1937, typescript, p. 6, Anthon Skanchy folder, Box 1, Kimball Young Collection.
“Evening Stars,” or “Stars,” and to the Cannon ranch as “the other side of Jordan.” Martha, on the other side of the “Herring Pond” (the Atlantic Ocean), named herself, reflecting upon her frustrations in exile, “Bitter, Rebellious Star of the Sea.”

Levi Savage recorded in his journal of Friday, 6 March 1885: “Bro Negel started to the Buckskin Mountain, his ranch with two of his wives, leaving his Regular wife in at her home in Toquerville.” While not outside the law, and while not always in hiding themselves, many first wives played an important role in the underground experience, and certainly most, if not all, felt its losses and attendant stress. Their contact with the underground was often of a different character than the exile of plural wives, yet the difference did not mean less hardship.

Perhaps the most common experience of a first wife during the underground years is illustrated in the remembrance of a daughter of Elinor Angelina Hoyt Chamberlain. “Mother had naturally to bear the brunt of the work in the home,” she recalled, “since the other wives needed to keep in hiding.” Women who had been used to a working routine which had depended on sharing the work load or specialization of functions now had to do the work themselves. Many missed the companionship of both husband and sister-wives. As in the case of Negel’s “Regular wife,” the sought-after husband and plural wives shared their exile together, while she remained at home alone.

These women were viewed by the external society as legal wives, and their homes were often the sites of searches and uncomfortable confrontations with the marshals. Often, then, first wives met with the task of facing rather than running from pursuing authorities. Catherine Scott Brown remembered that the marshals “would come in the middle of the night sometimes. I remember my mother having to carry the oil lamp around the house to try to find out [for the marshals] if he was in the house or if his polygamous wife, Rosila Alexander was there.”

Although plural wives could be viewed by first wives as usurpers, and even as the cause of all the trouble, many first wives made strong and loving efforts to protect their husbands’ other wives. Melissa Riggs Stewart, for instance, brought her husband’s second wife Eliza back to her home in Provo after the second marriage in September 1885. At times her husband Andrew would live in the upper part of Melissa’s home while Eliza was hidden there. One evening, Melissa “drove all night with a buggy and horses” to warn Andrew and Eliza that the marshals were “on their trail.”

Conditions of underground living brought about changes for women, especially in two important areas of women’s lives. The significant milestones,
or “rites of passage” surrounding the important events of marriage and birth would ordinarily be marked with open celebration as times of joy and festivity, times in which both family and community joined in commemorating meaningful steps in life. Yet the circumstances of underground life would hardly permit the very acknowledgement of these events, let alone their celebration.

Plural marriages contracted during the turbulent years of the “Raid” were against the law, and therefore most of them followed a standard pattern that insured the greatest amount of secrecy. On her wedding day in June of 1885, for example, Mary Elizabeth Cox Lee dressed in the early light while her sisters and other St. George Stake Conference guests with whom she shared the room were asleep. Mary’s mother, aware of her daughter’s errand that day, had concealed Mary’s temple clothing in a bundle. While walking alone to the St. George Temple carrying her package she “walked in a stooped and unsteady manner as if she were an old lady,” to further obscure her identity. She had been instructed to meet President J. D. T. McAllister at the little-used south door, to escape even the notice of the guards placed at other entrances. After the ceremony, performed by McAllister, Mary met for a few minutes with her new husband, and then both went their separate ways.\textsuperscript{38}

George Pond recalled the circumstances of his mother’s wedding day as a second wife on 31 December 1885. “They arrived in Logan just in time . . . for Mother to go through the temple. Dad let her out and went downtown.” George then recalled that his father returned for a noon ceremony, and then after the marriage the couple started for Richmond, the bride’s home. “When they got to Richmond, it was past midnight. Dad pulled up to the front gate of my Grandmother Whittle’s and let Mother out. Then he came home and stayed with his first wife. That was some honeymoon for them. My mother didn’t see him again for two weeks.”\textsuperscript{39}

Annie Clark Tanner, after being similarly “deposited” at her father’s house on 27 December 1883, had occasion to reflect upon the significance of the day:

As I sat down to a glass of bread and milk the thought came to me, “Well, this is my wedding supper.” In those few minutes I recalled the elaborate marriage festivals which had taken place in our own family, of the banquets I had helped to prepare and the many lovely brides among my friends. I even began to compare their wedding gowns. I was conscious of the obscurity of my own first evening after marriage.

“What a contrast,” I said to myself. “No one will ever congratulate me.”\textsuperscript{40}

Many women who had been secretly married remained at home with their parents, or otherwise continued their same premarriage lifestyles. Elizabeth Francis Fellows Critchlow continued to teach school, as did Annie Clark Tanner. Rhoda Young, after her secret marriage to Brigham Young Jr., remained at her work as a seamstress with her mother. Fanny Coombs Harper kept her

\textsuperscript{38}Gardner, \textit{An Inspired Principle}, pp. 16–18.


\textsuperscript{40}Annie Clark Tanner, \textit{A Mormon Mother} (Salt Lake City, Utah: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1969), p. 66.
job as a telegraph operator. 41 As illustrated in the experiences of these women, it was necessary to present a facade to the world, and in many cases to friends and family, that one's plural marriage had not taken place.

A plural wife was most obviously a wife when she was with child or had small children, even if her lifestyle did not betray her identity. Indeed this change of status was the best evidence of cohabitation for watchful spotters and marshals. While in more settled times a woman could anticipate the birth of her child with confidence and could share her joy with friends and family, a pregnancy for a plural wife on the underground signaled her departure, or at least more rigid confinement.

Jane Campbell's mother, expecting her first child as a plural wife in hiding, lived in a mine shaft until just before her child was born to conceal her condition from the community. Reflecting upon her mother's experience, Jane remarked: "That was the only place that would keep him [her father] from jail. . . . She was the victim." 42 Jane Barnum was followed into hiding and took to the canyon near Hebron, Utah to elude the marshals. She was "heavy with child but she took her shoes off so they couldn't track her . . . and climbed up the side of the mountain [where] they couldn't see her." 43

Sarah Edwards O'Donnell Hutchings left her small children with her family in Beaver and traveled to Salt Lake where she could live more anonymously during the remainder of her pregnancy and for her delivery. Sarah blamed the stress she experienced for the premature birth of her twins, one of which died. 44 Similarly, Caroline Poulson Woolley lost both of her twins while in exile in Pipe Springs, Arizona. Rachel Woolley, a child at the time of their birth in 1889, recalled that Caroline stayed in seclusion in an adobe house, never remembering her to have left the house at all. 45 The necessity of secrecy thus placed these women in the most danger when they were in need of the most comfort and safety.

Another way in which women's lives changed during the underground era was in their support and lifestyle. Those women who combined underground conditions with life close to home were in a relatively easy position to maintain their family routine and keep open their usual channels of support, as their lives remained relatively normal with periodic interruptions of hiding. Family businesses, farming and other routine pursuits could be carried on in what approached a normal way.

Other women who continued their employment as teachers, seamstresses, hired girls and in other areas, insuring a more secret identity as a plural wife, could also then assume the responsibility for their own support and perhaps

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42Jane Campbell Oral History, p. 4.
45"Notes from Rachel's Letter," p. 2, Rachel Woolley folder, Box 1, Woolley-Snow Collection, Special Collections.
also the support of other members of the family. These and many other women thus found themselves in a position in which they had to depend upon their own talent and hard work to provide for their physical needs.

There were many women whose husbands were also in hiding, and this made for a difficult maintenance of family financial security. Olive Andelin Potter worked for her board at the home of her husband's relatives, took in washing and worked as hired help while her children stayed with their grandmother. Emma Ashworth, finding similarly that she needed to provide for her own support, moved to Provo and ran a boarding house. During the time that Orson Smith was in hiding, his wives did anything they could to support themselves. His first two wives Caroline and Sarah ran the farm "practically unaided," while the third wife Mary was sent to Canada. One of the wives also taught school for a time to augment the family income.

Many underground women found their needed support from the larger community in which they lived. Emma Nielson reported, for example, numerous occasions in which her neighbors and friends brought her foodstuffs and other supplies. Women such as Margaret Ballard opened their homes as "nests" for underground participants, offering needed sanctuary. Ann Jane Peel Noble's home was open to those in need, as was Margaret Salmon's. "Our house," she recalled, "was always a refuge for the oppressed."

In St. George, according to Douglas Cannon, "they had a secret telegraph system. . . . You could depend on it. If somebody down the street hung their wash a certain way, that was supposed to tell you [that] somebody was in town and [you] had better be watching out."

The Paris, Idaho community and the surrounding Bear Lake area had a systematized early warning arrangement to protect those who were in hiding there:

One or more men were kept stationed at Montpelier to observe if the deputies got off the train and if so, a horseman was immediately dispatched to Paris, ten miles away, to give the alarm, whereupon some Paris resident would get out on the street with a tremendous horn about five feet in length, having a diameter at the far end of eight or ten inches and equipped with a nickel mouthpiece, and would blow it lustily . . . the scattering was (then) prompt and complete.

The support received by those in hiding was conducive to a feeling of comfort, and even confidence, in a shared experience, with the knowledge that there were those in the community who were watching out for their welfare. Even those who did not practice plural marriage themselves lent it their tacit support.

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47 Emma Ashworth Oral History, p. 4.
48 Margaret Smith Watson Oral History, Interview by James Hulet, 1937, typescript, pp. 2–4, Orson Smith folder, Box 2, Kimball Young Collection.
49 Emma W. Mecham Nielson, Diary 1887–1897, 12 August 1887 and 15 August 1887, Special Collections.
approval by taking part in these warning systems or other means of support, or at least by their silence in the goings-on in the community.

The underground experience was different for each participant. Indeed, it was an experience which depended upon the personality, status, and circumstances of each woman involved. Yet whether a woman went into hiding close to home or at intervals, whether she was far away in Europe or in a neighboring state, whether she was the first wife or plural wife, whether she supported herself by working at an occupation, or whether she was supported by a generous allowance from her husband, in short, whatever her experience, the element of stress was ever-present in the life of an underground woman. It was this aspect, more than any other, that made underground life an experience of living "between two fires."

What Clawson Cannon Sr. termed the "terrific pressure" of the era had a personal dimension in the lives of women involved. Favor Squires received a divorce as a means of physically removing herself from what were for her the unbearable frustrations of the underground. Other women, in dealing with the stress, found themselves divorced from their former selves. Annie Clark Tanner and Annie Waldren Clark, to name but two examples, found their views toward marriage and family changed perceptibly after passing through the underground experience. Both began their married lives during the underground era, and at first lived almost solely for the sporadic visits of their husbands. In the years that followed, they came to view their own achievements, as well as their children's successes, as indicators of achievement in their personal lives, rather than looking to their husbands as they had once done.

Many women were forced to make decisions in areas in which they had had little previous experience, as this letter received by Sarah Turley in 1886 from her husband Isaac illustrates:

> now Try to doe the best you can and the Lord will bless you if you will Try Watch the patatoes and turnips and all the feed dont waist it Try to keep the cows around Turn one of the best steer Calvs in Tithing dont turn Heiffer Calves into the heard doe the best you can

For women like Sarah, the underground era was a time of personal maturation. Women found various ways to deal with the pressure they encountered in their everyday lives. Some felt that because they were obeying what they considered to be a commandment from God, they would receive divine protection and guidance. Flora Robertson Brimhall considered herself to be among the "valient few among the Mormons who had courage to brave Patriarchal marriage," and saw the "valient" as being tried by persecution to prove their faith. Others relied on a sense of humor to get them through the hard times. For many women, their own determination and good spirits kept them above

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54 John Paternoster Squires, Journal 1820–1901, see March 22, 1885 through May 31, 1888, Special Collections.
55 See Tanner, A Mormon Mother and Annie Waldren Clark, Journal, copy in author’s possession. The author is indebted to Jessie Embry for this source.
56 Isaac Turley to Sarah Turley, December 19, 1886, Snowflake, Arizona, LDS Archives.
57 Flora Robertson Brimhall, Autobiography, p. 4, Special Collections.
the stress that so quickly could pull them down. As Mary Woolley Chamberlain stated:

I took the step which placed me there deliberately, and willingly, feeling that I was directed aright, although I knew many and severe trials lay in my path, and that it would require unbounded courage and fortitude to fight my way through. I determined to make the best of what ever came my way (and plenty came)58

Mary’s description of Fredonia, Arizona and the women living there during the 1880s illustrates this determination on the part of underground women. Some came to Arizona and built comfortable frame homes and continued to live there for many years. These were the women who wanted to make the best of their lives in exile, to live as comfortably as possible. “Others,” she recalled, “lived in wagon boxes under willow sheds, etc., until the raid was over and they could return to their homes.”59 These women were optimistic that the life and dislocation of the underground would soon be over for them, and that the time would come quickly when they could return to their regular lives. Both are expressions of a determination to overcome the stress that the underground put upon their lives.

The underground experience was indeed a crucible for polygamy — both in the personal lives of its participants and for the Mormon Church as a whole. “It is a trying time,” read Ann McAllister in 1888, “and men and women must prove themselves worthy of each other, all must sacrifice . . . God will open up the way by and by.”60 The Church responded with the Manifesto of 1890; individuals had a variety of responses. Some were relieved that plural marriage, which had taken them through some extremely hard times in their underground experiences, was not to be performed in the future. Some, mindful of their sacrifices for the practice, could not accept the idea that those sacrifices were to be of no avail. These continued to live underground lives for that practice for which they had lived “between two fires.”

58Mary Woolley Chamberlain, “My Life’s Sketch,” in Esplin, One Hundred Years of Chamberlains, p. 167.
59“Notes from ‘Life of Mary Woolley Chamberlain’ as she wrote it,” p. 2, Mary Chamberlain folder, Box 1, Woolley-Snow Collection, Special Collections.
60John Daniel McAllister to Ann McAllister, October 18, 1888, LDS Archives.
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Some Comparative Perspectives on the
Early Mormon Movement and the
Church–State Question, 1830-1845

By John F. Wilson

"Thus were we persecuted on account of our religious faith — in a country the Constitution of which guarantees to every man the indefeasible right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience — and by men, too, who were professors of religion, and who were not backward to maintain the right of religious liberty for themselves, though they could thus wantonly deny it to us." 1

In this poignant passage in the History of the Church, Joseph Smith, Jr. indicates that religious liberty, or more generally the relationship between religious convictions and political rights, was a burning issue for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from its earliest years. In this particular passage, the Prophet was reflecting on the "molestations" he experienced at Colesville in 1830; his frustration was with treatment he and friends received at the hands of Presbyterians. Other incidents make it plain that members of numerous other denominations as well were involved in what Mormons perceived as denial of rights to members of the church — precisely because they were members of that church. The range of occasions on which persecutions took place in time, location, and circumstance, indicates that this broad issue was enormously significant in the first years of the church.

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1Joseph Smith, Jr., History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1961), 1:97.
Of course, it is conventional to identify the Mormons with the church-state problem in American society. The *locus classicus* is considered to be the issue as it arose because of the practice of plural marriage, an issue posed directly by the entrance of Utah into the Union as a state. Thus Reynolds v. United States (1879) is ordinarily taken to be the first clear interpretation of the church-state question involving the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. No doubt that case, and other subsequent ones, were of great significance in beginning both the accommodation of the church to American society and the formal exploration of what the religion clauses of the First Amendment to the Constitution might actually mean as applied to specific issues.

We tend to forget that, aside from this foray into the church-state conundrum in the late nineteenth century, the Supreme Court generally managed to avoid interpretation and application of the relevant clauses until a first tentative venture with the "religious liberty clause" in the 1930s and 1940s and then an initially bolder address to the "establishment clause" which came in the 1940's, 50's, and 60's. One of my chief points is that the confused and confusing welter of issues that comprises the church-state problem was actually very much a part of the collective life of the new nation from the outset, although formal attention to it came only later. The experiences of the Prophet Joseph and his followers provide us with a lens through which to view the early national period in an especially intense light. That is the perspective in which we shall explore the first period of Mormonism, that is, the years until the death of the Prophet, as a means of reflecting upon the church-state problem in American culture. Thus, I hope we may gain insight into both the early Mormon movement and church-state aspects of American society.

In order to avoid confusion, let me make one other point at the outset. My title proposes comparative perspectives upon our subject and it is important to be clear about what I mean by that. Specifically I will try to interpret relevant characteristics of early Mormonism in relationship to those of religious movements more generally. While doubtless it would be interesting (and desirable) to compare Mormon experiences with respect to religious liberty and church-state issues in the United States with Mormon experiences in other societies and cultures, as well as with other American movements, that was not part of my original intent and in any case was beyond the scope of what has proved to be possible. By means of this comment let me signal that it would be desirable to explore these further dimensions of comparison while making it clear that the primary framework in which we shall here undertake comparison concerns the movement itself.

Ideally it would be useful to trace these considerations beyond the period of the Prophet's life. But this terminus is at least defensible on the objective grounds that in the existence of the movement circumstances changed significantly in the resolve to undertake the trek to and the building up of the Mormon empire in the West. There is an additional subjective or attitudinal reason for treating this initial period as separate and subject to analysis in its own right: a fundamental recasting of Mormon collective self-understanding in relationship to the United States seems to have occurred as result of the Prophet's death.
At least through April 1844, shortly before his faithful submission to arrest and jailing in Carthage, the Prophet continued to believe that in some sense "Zion" would embrace (or at least arise throughout) America, perhaps at many points. And although by August 1843 exploration of the possibilities and prospects for removal further west had become important within the movement, at that very time Orson Pratt in a meeting of the Twelve in New York City still held that the Book of Mormon revealed the "final fate and destiny" of the United States. "By reading [it], you can clearly see what will befall this nation, and what will be its final end." 2

Of course the point of view I am advancing would not be challenged by consideration of subsequent periods of the movement — on the contrary. But the frame of reference becomes so very different both objectively and subjectively that confinement of this discussion to the early period is a proper limitation.

A selective discussion of points at which the early Mormons experienced frustration in relationship to governmental authorities, and the religious interpretations of the claims they made, initially requires us to ask some questions about the characteristics of the movement in this period. More especially it poses a question: What kind of movement was it in its early years? What were its characteristics as a religious movement?

Here we encounter a problem that all historians learn to live with — but never take for granted. Between 1830 and 1845, shall we say, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was "coming to be." Often in the perspective of 1900 — or 1950, or 1980 — it seems inevitable that the movement should have gone through building up the isolated basin kingdom in the West, and then a subsequent development out into American society, not to say the world. But of course that outcome might not have materialized. We have already remarked upon the assertions made by the Prophet that the whole of America was to be "Zion" — even while tentative steps were being taken to explore western migration. As historians, we must resist the natural inclination to view the past which we know to have taken place as if it had been foreordained as the outcome of yet earlier eras. So rather than assume that what did happen was inevitable — inappropriate within the framework of conditionality espoused by the church in any case — we should attempt a fresh look at salient features of the Mormon movement in the context of that era.

At this point let me refer briefly to a recent article by Nathan Hatch of Notre Dame. It explicitly traces the development of the "Christian movement" in the early years of the nineteenth century — a topic directly relevant to interpretation of the context of Mormon origins. 3 The broader significance of

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2Ibid., 5:552. Editorial comment in the History of the Church observes that this statement of the elder's views is "doubtless faulty." More likely, the views of the Church leaders were subject to change within the early movement. The concern expressed by the editor is that the salvation of America, in line with the conditional framework espoused by Mormonism, depended upon its repentance — so that such a forthright prophecy as Elder Pratt seemed to find in the book would be out of the question. The most telling point to me is the pattern of dispersed meetings of the Twelve, which indicates deep belief in the redemption of the whole nation.

Hatch's argument concerns the cultural conditions at large. In this essay he takes a position on the era very close to that advanced by Gordon Wood in last year's Tanner Lecture.\(^4\) Hatch argues against the view that the Second Great Awakening was a conservative response to social change. Rather, he believes attention should be called to "the intensity of religious ferment at work in a period of chaos and originality unmatched, perhaps, since the religious turbulence of seventeenth-century England." This was "a religious environment that brought into question traditional authorities and exalted the right of the people to think for themselves."\(^5\) Thus Hatch would have us look at the context of popular culture as the matrix in assessing the emergence of Joseph Smith, Jr. as Prophet, as well as the jelling of the movement that responded to him.

If we posit this kind of open, even seething, democratic culture as background and context — a setting in which all authorities were uncertain — the critical years 1830-1845 may come into somewhat different focus. Simply put, the culture at the popular level ought to be seen as protean and capable of yielding to direction. In a broader perspective, that is what new religions do — they propose the organization or the reorganization of existing and unsatisfying cultural experience.

From such a point of view, and in a comparative religious framework, as opposed to a theological one, certain basic characteristics of the early Mormon movement stand out very clearly. Let us direct our attention to four elementary characteristics common to comparable periods of religious generation that would mark Mormonism as effective in this kind of cultural context. This set is not complete or exhaustive, but does indicate some primary issues: first, the figuralist cast to the symbolism of the movement; second, its strong millenarian component; third, its ecstatic aspects; and fourth, its improvising or inventive organizational thrust. These sum to describe a nascent and potentially strong (and durable) religion in its early stages — but they do not characterize a developed church in a technical sociological sense.

First, the figuralism. We owe current use of this term to Erich Auerbach, who thus described the characteristics of the literature of ancient Israel in contrast to that of classical Greece.\(^6\) But he went on to identify it as a strand or thread in western literature generally, certainly of tremendous significance in the interpretation of the Bible until the Enlightenment introduced a critical approach which recast our understanding of it. Hans Frei has recently picked up this insight in his phrase "the eclipse of biblical narrative," under which he traces the loss of the figural mode in understanding scripture as the enterprise of technical criticism developed in the eighteenth century.\(^7\) Auerbach most succinctly describes this tradition in terms of the action of biblical figures taking


place in two realms — in both their own times as literal events and simultaneously shadowing forth more fundamental realities of a deeper realm in relationship to both the current period and future generations. Figuralism thus stood behind not only the complex, many-leveled interpretations of scripture in the Middle Ages but also the Protestant, and especially the English Puritan, reduction of interpretation to a single literal level which yet permitted typological readings.

This insight has recently been developed with respect to American Puritans and their literary successors by Sacvan Bercovitch and his collaborators. This school has helped us recognize how marvelously plastic and constructive interpretation of scripture could be — even while interpreters were fundamentally limiting themselves to an ostensibly literal or historical sense. At the hands of someone like Jonathan Edwards, the types rise out of extrabiblical sources, indeed even from nature. Thus the connection on to Emerson at the level of high culture is very clear. In this sense we have recently come to a renewed scholarly appreciation for the formative role of scripture in the shaping of the culture at large. At its most basic, this was a deep understanding of history which gave to those standing in the tradition a direct warrant for action and thus utmost confidence in their undertakings.

These brief introductory comments to a complex and highly significant development in understanding the role of the Bible in American culture provide a bridge over into the topic at hand. As we read the materials of the early Mormon years, it seems absolutely clear that Joseph Smith, Jr., his collaborators, associates, and of course his family members were grounded and rooted in the soil of this broadly figural understanding of scripture. Their “world” was patterned and structured in terms of outsized biblical figures and events in the life of Israel. These provided not so much reference points or literary allusions as fundamental warrants, indeed compelling and urgent models, for their own lives. Their actions all took place with reference to that “other world” as well as this one — Auerbach’s characterization of the figural mode. This is so unself-conscious on their part that it pervades their consciousness, setting the terms in which their thought occurred. Occasionally it comes to consciousness as in a passage which identifies an early vision of the Prophet’s as a “transcript from the records of the eternal world.”

We could readily set illustration upon illustration to make this point secure. Under the limitation of time I hope one will suffice — although the perspective applies to virtually all the direct autobiographical reflections upon early Mormon activity, and it certainly identifies the framework in which the collective decisions were taken and official explanations of the movement given. One superb example is provided by Lucy Mack Smith as she recounts the removal to Kirtland. She describes her role in these words: “I then called the brethren and sisters together, and reminded them that we were traveling by the

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commandment of the Lord, as much as Father Lehi was, when he left Jerusa-
lem; and, if faithful, we had the same reason to expect the blessings of God." 10
Those of us infected with modernity tend to read this as a nice figure of speech,
an apt metaphor, a powerful image, a stirring allusion. I suggest it was much
more than that. The actions of Joseph and his associates were a living out on the
American stage of roles identified in and sanctioned by God's disclosure of the
eternal world through ancient Israel. The fundamental figura for the Mormons
were first set forth in the Old Testament and secondarily replicated with special
reference to America in the supplementary scriptures vouchsafed to the new
church. Of course, it is this latter point and only this latter point (the secondary
replication of types and the assumptions which went with it) that set the early
Mormons apart from their contemporaries in the period of origin of the
movement.

A second characteristic of the early movement has also received a great
deal of attention in recent scholarship on the era. This is the millenarianism
that has come to be invoked as explanation for so much that is otherwise
inexplicable about the period. So pervasive was it in the cultural medium in
which Joseph Smith and his associates came to consciousness that we would
have to explain its absence if it were not present. My point is not simply its
presence, however, but the special characteristics it takes within the movement.

We are deeply indebted to Klaus Hansen's identification of the "political
kingdom of God" as an emerging objective that continued to play an important
if covert role in the movement for many years. No doubt he is correct in
pointing out that by the second decade, that of the 1840s, a special develop-
ment has taken place in Mormon millenarianism. 11 In the development of the
concept of a political kingdom of God, emphasis shifted to the role of human
agency in preparing the way for the emerging millennium. This is, of course,
a particular form of post-millennialism in which the gradual development of the
kingdom, without dramatic divine intervention, usually postpones a specific
return of Christ to the end of the millennium when the last judgment occurs. 12
In light of the Hansen study, and the more general recent attention to millenar-
ianism in nineteenth-century American culture, I will not dwell upon this
characteristic of the movement except for two points — one which concerns its
interpretation and the other regarding the data available to us.

First, if figural elements are a part of the movement's self-understanding,
the degree of dependence upon human initiative required to secure the king-
dom should not be overinterpreted. This is to say, if the Prophet and his
associates viewed themselves as, so to speak, acting out revelatory roles in this
world written in another and transmitted through scripture, the degree of the
"initiative" they were required to take would seem to be less striking than it is

10Lucy Mack Smith, Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and his Progenitors for Many
Generations (1853; New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 173. See also other literature such as Parley P.
Pratt, Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, ed. Parley P. Pratt [Jr.], (1874; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book
Company, 1970), passim.
11Klaus J. Hansen, Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon
12See Smith, History of the Church, 1:337, for an indication of the centrality of millennial beliefs.
ordinarily held to be. I think that, insofar as their activities were authorized and rendered coherent by convictions they held about the millennium, their actions were not only their own but understood to be divinely inspired and directed throughout.

The second point concerns certain developments of the period in question. In reading the materials of the 1830s and early 1840s, I think that the millenarian convictions were protean, in that they were being formed and were not yet exclusively focused in what we might term the political kingdom of God mode. For example, references to the Indians suggest this. The Zion’s Camp expedition to Missouri also appears fully in line with such a perspective. At the point of termination of the expedition in early July 1834, the high council is organized as a vehicle for receiving disclosure of divine will — implying that confusion in determining the latter may have plagued that exercise. Shortly thereafter it inadvertently comes out that September 11, 1836 is projected as “the appointed time for the redemption of Zion”; its location is to be Jackson County, Missouri. Over a year later that hope is still very much explicitly espoused, at least within the inner circle, although the “land of promise” is not so specifically located at that point. In the months preceding the September 11th in question, the historical report becomes extremely thin — although it may be significant that apparently in anticipation of that event, Joseph undertook a mission to the Boston region, specifically Salem. The mission terminated only at an unspecified “time in the month of September.” The silence about the eschatological disappointment may say as much or more than extensive records would, for it is clear that the Prophet’s energies immediately turned to the building up of Kirtland.13

In July 1839 Joseph addressed the Twelve and prophesied imminent wars and the necessity of fleeing to Zion. To this end no effort ought to be spared in building her up as a refuge. His dark and somber visions of destruction suggest that a new interpretation has been placed upon this rich symbol. Evidence for further reflection about and transformation of the kingdom symbol may be found in the synopsis of a sermon the Prophet delivered in January 1843. At the same time there is evidence that the Twelve experienced confusion about its interpretation, as suggested by the minutes of a meeting set in New York City in August of the same year. Finally, as late as April 1, 1844, a general conference pronounced explicitly that “the whole of America” is Zion, requiring the building up of stakes “in the great cities, as Boston, New York, &c.”14

I am certainly arguing for the centrality of millenarian convictions to early Mormonism in line with Klaus Hansen’s interpretation. But I am also suggesting that the specific content of, and references to, Zion as the master symbol probably shift and metamorphose in the course of this period. This is in line with the extraordinary direction and redirection of energies throughout these years. Probably all the particulars of these changes of reference are beyond recovery, for they are veiled and in some respects even intentionally obscured. But especially in periods of severe stress and rapid change, religious symbols do

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13Ibid., 2:145, 294, 466.
permit this multiplicity of meanings. That is why they are so valuable. They enable a community to cope with the uncertainties of life while retaining what is of most value to it — namely its continuing existence as a community. We would find the same features in seventeenth-century England or during the struggles of the Reformation era on the Continent — or within the data on early Christianity. So from the point of view of analyzing early Mormonism as a religious movement in comparative perspectives, the elusiveness of its millenarianism is a typical characteristic and not unexpected.

Two other salient features of this subject are significant for our purposes. The early Mormon movement exhibits pronounced ecstatic displays. It is important to stress this point because current stereotypes of Mormons emphasize industry, business acumen, etc. — and no doubt these can be traced back into the community-building impulses of the early years. Of course, ecstasy has not been emphasized as a general aspect of religious movements in the American culture. A case could be made that this oversight and neglect has led to significant misperceptions of Puritans and Shakers, of Awakeners and Revivalists, of Pentecostalists and Charismatics. I think that there is evidence that the early Mormon movement should be seen in this light.

One locus classicus for discussion of this phenomenon occurred at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple on March 27, 1836. In an evening meeting with the quorums after the main event, Joseph Smith, Jr. positively encouraged "spiritual manifestations." At this point he reports the whole congregation, "simultaneously arose, being moved by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels." Later that week a veritable pentecost occurred when an eight-hour service of exhortation, prophesying, and speaking in tongues finally ended at 5:00 a.m.\(^ {15}\) In one perspective the increase in spirit manifestations, and glossolalia in particular, is surely linked to the belief in the impending coming of Zion — then anticipated in September of that year. With respect to glossolalia, it seems clear that it was continued within the corporate life of the group — and especially adapted to mission ventures where its use was explained on the model of Pentecost in early Christianity — as an answer to the problem of the many human languages spoken by the converts. Of course in this case an institutionalization of the spirit impulse is occurring within the religious community.

I think we should also see these spiritual manifestations as underlying more individual phenomena. This may be a promising perspective on the emphasis given to the marriage covenant and its eternity, which comes out explicitly in the revelation of July 12, 1843.\(^ {16}\)

This particular point is less important, however, than the more general one that spirit infusion is a central ingredient in religious movements and that the latter must simultaneously foster and yet contain it. Prophecy, glossolalia, and espousal of sexuality are all classical expressions of ecstasy in religious

\(^{15}\)Ibid., 2:428, 432.
\(^{16}\)Ibid., 5:501ff.
movements. But unless brought to serve the purposes of the group they will unleash forces that will surely destroy it.

This leads directly to the fourth characteristic to which I wish to call attention, the invention of organizational structures. From the perspective of our time, Mormonism developed a marvelously complex set of structures for its inner life as a community and a church. At once simple — in the universality (at least for men) of the priesthood — but complex in its hierarchy and procedures, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a fine exhibit of what the sociologists with some admiration call a "church-type" organization. In the perspective of the early period of the movement itself, however, this modern outcome seems to have been less foreordained. In many respects one marvels at the inventive or improvisational skill of the Prophet. He was gifted with an ability to make use of the diverse talents of others to the fullest, while never relinquishing his final authority. At the same time he created what appear to have been redundancies — should we call them competing structures of authority? — that probably evolved in unforeseen ways.

My point is to focus our attention on the fluidity and flux of this early period. With the Prophet's death and the emergence of Brigham Young, a task orientation focused the objectives of the movement and directed all energies to its one overriding goal, the removal to and building up of the great western kingdom. But to my reading, the prior period is much more confused and confusing. Not in a disrespectful way, we could say that the Prophet repeatedly started something which seemed always on the verge of getting out of control and that the improvising of structures contained but did not control the movement.

In directing attention to these four characteristics of early Mormonism, we confront characteristics that dominate the period of origin of most vital religious movements, at least in western societies. And religious movements in their early years literally envision and advocate a new world — that is, conditions of life and a culture very different from what prevail. The conventional differentiations that characterize normal life do not exist within such a movement. What is "religious," as opposed to "worldly," when a mission is involved? What is "political," as opposed to "religious," when Zion's Camp is to be organized? In short, early Mormonism, like early Christianity and a host of other vital religious movements in their years of origin, did not rest content with the conventional lines of distinction it might establish between itself and the whole society and the culture. In the urgency and compellingness of a new movement, conventional distinctions are unimportant and thus disregarded. The categories of the old world are literally rendered anachronistic — and that is precisely why the church-state or religious liberty-governmental authority formulations of the society have little claim in the experience of the members.

This discussion of the early Mormon movement in terms of some particular features of religious movements generally, and those in ante-bellum American society in particular, directs attention to its dynamic and changing aspects, and it suggests the power of the movement to enlist believers and behavers in new patterns of life. Of course it also suggests that at the same time a power exists sufficient to stimulate opposition. In a larger perspective, I can think of
no such vital religious movement — at least in western culture — that has failed to arouse hostility in just these terms. And the reason is clear. For claims are being made that, so to speak, the world is divided into realms of good and evil, and, furthermore, that some persons possess knowledge of this division of the world and have benefits as a result of it, while others are to bear the consequences of either their fate or their obstinacy.

Religiously-based claims such as these are incendiary. No matter that comparable claims, though often softened by time or hidden under familiar symbols, are made by others, and that some version of such claims may be linked to political power, perhaps even through informal religious establishments that may tacitly encourage persecution of dissenters. This ancient dialectic in American history is nowhere more strikingly exhibited than in seventeenth-century New England, where those who had been persecuted in Old England readily adopted the role of persecutors in the new world. I am not defending the persecutions in seventeenth-century Old England or New England, nor in nineteenth-century Missouri or Illinois. I am insisting that the early Mormon movement willy-nilly found itself necessarily having to come to terms with what in shorthand fashion we term the church-state problem: how does religious authority, especially when so pre-routinized and still essentially charismatic, relate to political authority structures — in this case also relatively protean?

Perhaps it is worth offering a brief digression to comment on why I pose the problem in this way — how the religious authority relates to the political, rather than vice-versa. In general it seems to me (at least with respect to the federal government, but I also think the state jurisdictions as well) that the category “religion” has been problematical before the law from the outset.

The clauses of the First Amendment, while explicitly only a limitation on legislative power, are framed in such a way as to suggest the deeper problem. The American solution has been to pretend that no problem existed. “Congress shall make no law as respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” (Article 6, the only point at which the Constitution proper mentions religion, is in no sense a positive construction of the category: “No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office.”) Even in form this is not strictly parallel to the other more substantial “rights” conferred less equivocally and interpreted more fully within the Bill of Rights. Certainly at the federal level, and very largely at the level of the states, there has been a prevailing inclination to avoid religion as an operative social category. Of course when the Supreme Court has interpreted the religion clauses in the mid-twentieth century, it has with remarkable frequency sought to locate other grounds than religion — rights of property, speech, assembly, etc. — on which to adjudicate cases.

In short, while the interests of religious groups and the rights of religious individuals have been thoroughly a part of politics in the United States from the outset, the federal government has not, in spite of Jefferson’s misleading phrase about the “wall of separation,” conceived of an alternative authority structure — the church or even churches — to which to relate as a rival or subordinate. Nor has it undertaken to dominate such bodies where they might
exist. In this sense our national history would have benefited from appropriation of Madison's image — tracing a line between the rights of religion and the civil authority with sufficient distinctions to avoid collisions and doubts in unessential points — in preference to Jefferson’s.

But if from the side of government the church-state issue in terms of competing authority structures has not existed, from the side of vigorous and vital religious movements it certainly has. For to take the case of early Mormonism, while the government authorities refused to admit that the conflict generated might raise church-state issues for those suffering appropriation of property and denial of personal rights, the only “cause” the subjects admitted was their religion. For this reason I think it was inevitable that within the early Mormon movement there should have been direct concern about the church-state problem — the issue of how religious authority related to political authority. Indeed we find explicit reflection on this issue by Joseph Smith, Jr. as early as 1834. For the next decade, in varying specific contexts, different formulations of the issue appear. While to my knowledge they do not appear systematically formulated in any one place, the separate positions taken — chiefly by Joseph Smith, Jr. — do in general cohere. I will try to analyze the general position on that basis. Given the manifest claims of authority on the part of the Mormon movement, then how was its relationship to the American government understood?

First, the most basic assumption is directly appropriated from the traditional Christian position that there is a fundamental division between this world and the next. Of course, in sayings attributed to Jesus like “My kingdom is not of this world” and “Render unto Caesar,” etc. there is identified the foundation for development of the whole church-state tradition in the West. A particularly explicit discussion of this premise occurs in a communication sent early in 1834 to the Mormons displaced from their homes in Jackson County, Missouri. In this long epistle written at Kirtland, the Prophet explored the nature of the law, and, more particularly, the relation of human law to the law of heaven, a subject of intense relevance under the circumstances. The general framework advanced is that obedience is owed to both sets of law; although the law of heaven is coherent, existing in one version, human laws are diverse and the governments of men dissimilar. In effect, Joseph Smith, Jr. argues that while the realm of divine law is unitary and that of human law plural and dissimilar, God authorizes both sets of law. God’s law is established directly and unequivocally, human law indirectly and for instrumental purposes: “God is the source from whence proceeds all good; and if man is benefited by law, then certainly, law is good; and if law is good, then law, or the principle of it emanated from God; for God is the source of all good; consequently, then, he was the first Author of law, or the principle of it, to mankind.”

This is the classical Christian position that, religiously speaking, human law serves an end that is good in God’s eyes — ordering human community — but does not itself serve a positive function in relationship to salvation. The

17Ibid., 2:8–9, 13.
Prophet stops short of explicitly addressing the difficult issue of what should happen if human law contradicts divine law. He does refer to the trials and tribulations experienced by Saints "keeping the commandments of the Lord" and walking "in His statutes" and the glorious kingdom promised those who are faithful. Indeed, in the day of judgment, just deserts will be awarded all. This significant declaration occasioned by the first Missouri persecution indicates how thoroughly the early movement was committed to a framework in which there were two orders of obligation — the one eternal and divine, mediated through the church, the other temporary only, pending the completion of the great plan of salvation, an instrumental authority granted to the government of society.18

It is interesting to set beside this document from the hand of the Prophet, occasioned by the troubles in Missouri, an article written by Oliver Cowdery "Of Government and Laws in General." This document was composed to be incorporated into the Doctrine and Covenants in August 1835.19 In any case it is a more systematic statement and did not arise out of such immediately difficult circumstances as the elders' statement to the scattered Saints in Missouri. This declaration unequivocally asserts that governments — all well as laws — were instituted by God for the benefit of human society. Of course, however, religion was also thought to be "instituted of God." Men are responsible to God through conscience for the exercise of religion — "unless their religious opinions prompt them to infringe upon the rights and liberties of others." In a nicely balanced statement Cowdery declared:

We believe that rulers, states, and governments have a right, and are bound to enact laws for the protection of all citizens in the free exercise of their religious belief; but we do not believe that they have a right, in justice, to deprive citizens of this privilege, or proscribe them in their opinions, so long as a regard and reverence are shown to the laws, and such religious opinions do not justify sedition or conspiracy.20

Furthermore, explicit counsel was given against the mingling of religious influence with civil government. In sum, the declaration traced a line of separation between religious institutions and civil governments that echoed precisely the cultural assumptions of the early national period. In passing we might note with Mark De Wolfe Howe that this particular set of assumptions was biased directly toward the broadly "congregational polity" characteristic of Protestant movements in the early nineteenth century.21

A further clause is worthy of note, the claim to a right of defense of "selves, other friends and property, and the government from unlawful assaults and encroachments"22 when immediate appeal cannot be made to the law courts and relief afforded. The immediate relevance of this claim is clear to those familiar with the early years of the movement.

18Ibid., 2:19ff.
19Ibid., 2:246–50. Note that Section 134 has the status of "a declaration of belief," not a revelation. In addition, it was accepted by the general assembly when the Prophet was not present.
20Ibid., 2:248.
22Smith, History of the Church, 2:249.
One question arising in the determination of the relation between religious and political claims is the means of authority presumed by the church in the discipline of its members. Since the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was committed to religious liberty as a principle, it could not logically look to civil means for the enforcement of ecclesiastical discipline, an ancient pattern still thought appropriate in Puritan New England. Explicitly in the 1835 declaration, and implicitly elsewhere, the sanctions appropriate to the Church were identified as those of disfellowship or excommunication. The more interesting question, of course, concerns the attitude toward, and expectation placed upon, the civil government.

The general position espoused by the early movement echoed St. Paul's words, "the powers that be are ordained of God." In many sub-traditions within Christianity this text and the attitude it expressed led to an indifference toward the form of government under which the faithful lived. In extreme cases, of course, there has been an assumption that the more severely hostile the regime, the more likely believers would be harrowed and therefore true in their convictions.

The early Mormon movement, however, in spite of its international thrust through missions abroad, including that to Palestine, was not indifferent to its American location. Indeed its deep allegiance to the United States government, in spite of the latter's failure to provide relief from suffering and restitution for losses, is noteworthy. A striking exhibition of this attitude occurs in the letter the Prophet and his fellow prisoners wrote from Liberty Jail in Clay County, Missouri in March 1839. Toward the close of a long document, freedom of religion for groups as well as individuals is explicitly espoused. Because Smith believed this principle was enshrined in the Constitution, he termed it "a glorious standard; . . . founded in the wisdom of God." Indeed, it is elevated into select company: "We say that God is true; that the Constitution of the United States is true; that the Bible is true; that the Book of Mormon is true; the Book of Covenants is true; that Christ is true; that the ministering angels sent forth from God are true; etc."23 Clearly their experience of the inadequacy of the American polity in protecting their interests did not diminish apparent Mormon loyalty to the higher standard it was thought to embody.

This idealistic attitude was at least an element in the Prophet's journey to Washington beginning in November 1839 and continuing well into the early months of 1840, in an attempt to appeal against the outrages the Saints experienced in Missouri and their failure to obtain redress under local and state jurisdictions. Of course the report of the Senate Judiciary Committee illustrates precisely the larger point I have argued: that certainly the federal government (and also the states) had been extremely reluctant to use religion as a category from which rights derive or obligations flow. Indeed, the Prophet's high estimate of the Constitution was contradicted by his experience in seeking redress for the Saints. It is at least a matter of historic interest that the Nauvoo city council did adopt an ordinance on religious liberty approximately one year

23Ibid., 3:289ff. Quote is from p. 304.
later which gave a positive grant of religious liberty to all citizens. The initial issue of the *Nauvoo Neighbor* explicitly reiterated support for this position. 24

In the report of a sermon Joseph Smith, Jr. preached on October 15, 1843, it is clear that his experience with the shortcomings of government under the Constitution had rankled the Prophet. He identified very precisely what he termed the Constitution’s defect, its failure to provide for what might be termed positive religious liberty. His own recommendation was that “The Constitution should contain a provision that every officer of the Government who should neglect or refuse to extend the protection guaranteed in the Constitution should be subject to capital punishment.” 25

In some ways Joseph Smith’s view of the Constitution seems to change in these years. In the position we reviewed at the outset, the movement seemed committed to a broadly Pauline view that human law is indeed of God, even if particular laws may not be, and that the provision for laws in the United States is unparalleled. By 1843, a significant development appears to have taken place in the Mormon self-understanding. We might call this a shift to an enabling view of the Constitution: “The Constitution is not a law, but it empowers the people to make laws.” And again “the Constitution is not law to us, but it makes provision for us whereby we can make laws.” Is it too much to see in this shift to an emphasis upon the people making laws for themselves under the Constitution at least one key to the Prophet’s active interest in politics that developed soon afterward? 26

By early February 1844 Joseph Smith, Jr. had issued his “Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States,” which can only have been a declaration of his own readiness for a political career. 27 It should be seen as an indication of his willingness to accept the authority of the governmental realm to use the Constitution to make more adequate laws. We could propose that the evolution of the Prophet’s attitude toward government represented a diminished emphasis on the transcendence of the religious kingdom over and beyond earthly regimes — in short, that the millennium was nigh. I do not think there is sufficient evidence to make that a sure case. It does seem clear, however, that given the fluidity of the early Mormon movement, such shifts of emphasis and objectives are entirely plausible — indeed, to be expected. In any case, in April of 1844 at a conference of the Church, the Prophet gave a ringing endorsement of religious freedom. This is evidence that he remained committed to these principles whatever other changes were taking place in his thinking. 28 Of course within a very short period of time the phase of the movement we have been discussing was brought to an end by the murder of the Prophet.

My objective has been to explore the characteristics of the Mormon movement in its early years. Let me summarize briefly the chief points:

First, certain basic characteristics of Mormonism in its period of origin are

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25Ibid., 5:298.
26Ibid., 6:197ff.
very much like those of other religions at comparable points in their development. Especially prominent in the Mormon case are strong figuralism, significant millenarian convictions, pronounced ecstatic elements, and inventive or improvised organizational forms. We should properly interpret Mormonism as a new culture-in-the-making. A new social world was in the process of being defined, and thus the old world was outmoded for those who became committed to it.

Second, under persecution the Mormon movement wrestled with and developed a general position on the relationship between religion and government. The starting point was the two kingdoms or two realms pattern which is so deeply embedded in the Christian tradition.

Third, adoption of this two-fold pattern as a means of defining church-state issues often means devaluation of this world in comparison with the next, or de-emphasis of the realm of governmental affairs in relationship to the religious realm. This devaluation does not take place in the early Mormon movement. Indeed, loyalty to the United States remains strong and religious liberty is emphasized at Nauvoo.

Fourth, in the early 1840s, even after the Mormons experienced frustration with the government, their emphasis began to turn to the possibilities of using the government and directing it toward the realization of religious ends through a new interpretation of the Constitution.

I think that a review such as this helps us to see more clearly the characteristics of the particular movement, on the one hand, and the whole society and its culture on the other. No doubt Mormonism as a religious movement was securely a part of that environment. Indeed, the elements of figuralism, millenarianism, ecstasy, and inventive organizational structures were all characteristics shared to a lesser degree with other groups seeking salvation and pressing for a more satisfactory culture. Certainly no other movement of the period, however, combined them in such a way that a self-sufficient and vigorous separate culture and secure church were the outcome. Of course, the dramatic martyrdom of the Prophet served as a catalyst in this case.

It is also clear that the religious reality of the Mormon movement inevitably raised those classical church-state or religion-government issues that we Americans like to think were effectively separated and resolved at the outset of the national life. The Mormon case makes clear that they were scarcely separated and resolved by the 1830s and 1840s. I do not think they have been in the intervening decades either, and they certainly are not in our own time. Because these issues can be brought to some degree of focus through reviewing the period of Mormon origins, that case ought to help all of us Americans better understand our common present as well as the past we share.
Mormon History Association

SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING

Weber State College
Ogden, Utah
May 6–9, 1982

Program Committee: Dennis Lythgoe, Massachusetts State College, Bridgewater, chairman; Judy Dushku, Stanford J. Layton, Kenneth W. Godfrey, William D. Russell, Grethe Peterson


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Plan Ahead for Future
Annual Meetings

Eighteenth Annual Meeting: Council Bluffs, Iowa/Omaha, Nebraska, 1983
Where is the historiography of Mormonism going? Where should it be going? Rarely in recent years have these basic questions been more urgently posed than in ongoing discussions of Mark P. Leone's *Roots of Modern Mormonism.* At meetings of that extraordinary guild of scholars specializing in Mormon history the book has provoked heated disagreements. What is most odd about these arguments is that most scholars agree that the book as a whole is very weak. Even more odd is the belief of many pious Mormons that the work is viciously anti-Mormon.

Can any of this hubbub be explained? Probably. But it requires a detailed examination of Leone's work and an excursion into the strange world of scholarship that is divided into Mormon and non-Mormon. This two-party group of scholars exists nowhere else. But neither party has been able to deal with the continued and growing vitality of the historical phenomenon, religion, and way of life loosely called Mormonism. Their failure is apparent despite a welcome tide of fine new books and articles. Their scholarly sins have not been sins of laziness or sloppy research, but of thought: of questions not asked. The fascinated ambivalence of their reaction to Leone's work and the failure of scholarship are related.

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Leone is a non-Mormon historical anthropologist bent on explaining how an earlier Mormonism, originally communal, socialist, and egalitarian, became, after 1890, "modern" Mormonism: individualistic and capitalistic; how a dynamic Deseret that was peculiar and independent became Utah, a colony dependent on eastern capital; how, after 1890, a vibrant sect, prophetic, and impelled by the sacred, became just another denomination, secularized, and pragmatic, coexisting with Gentiles. Mormonism's accommodation to the beliefs of the majority culture began in earnest with the church's disavowal of polygamy in 1890, making Mormonism "a more openly American" religion. The last of the famous Mormon "peculiarities," the exclusion of Blacks from the priesthood ended in 1978 by means of a revelation given to the president of the church. Official persecution and public prejudice had persisted well into the twentieth century, but complete accommodation and total social acceptance were a reality by the 1980s. Mormonism, in trying to save itself by conforming, destroyed itself. In short, we have the old, ironic tale of how a sect became a denomination — but with several additional ironic twists.

Except for a brief nod at what Gustive O. Larson called the "Americanization of Utah" Leone ignores the well-worn political story, dwelling instead on the ideas (the "belief system" of the anthropologists), economics, and social customs of the Mormons. In a surprising reversal of the already intrinsically ironic sect-church-world (state) sequence of classical sociology he writes that "after 1890 Mormonism turned from a state into a church . . . endorsing an ideology of acceptance of American society" and abandoning the "socialist society" of 1847–1890 (p. 27).

A final fundamental transformation of Mormonism took place between 1930 and 1980. During the past half-century the church consolidated the conservatism that began to appear in the 1890s and by 1980 made a spectacular comeback in status, wealth, and membership.

Leone's chronology is not as clear as my summary implies — and it is in fact a bit confusing throughout the work. It appears mostly in a wide-ranging historico-theological introduction that starts with Mesopotamia (a Mormon-like "temple state"). The bulk of the book is topical, dealing with rituals, tithing, irrigation, and the judicial system in the late nineteenth-century Mormon settlements along the Little Colorado, and then taking off again in a sometimes brilliant analysis of Mormon methods of constructing history in the twentieth century.

In organization, structure, and documentation, Roots leaves much to be desired. Even one of his better-documented chapters, that on tithing, dwells, both in discussion and sources, on the period after 1890 — not exactly the "roots" Leone had in mind — chiefly the period 1847–1890. Oddly in this lack of concern with careful periodization Leone is guilty of one of the defects he ascribes to Mormon culture: Mormons are unable to see their past in rational segments, incapable of perceiving change through periodization. They are memoryless, without a true sense of history. Much the same point can be made about most radical sectarians and utopians, and had he taken such groups into consideration, Leone could have strengthened his argument and at the same
time tempered his readiness to view so much of Mormonism as unique. As for
his own lack of precision in dividing history, that doubtless stems from his
anthropological outlook, which despite recent development of "anthropolog-
al history" and "sociological history," is essentially static. Periodization as a
premise for defining and explaining social change is less important to him than
theory and categorized data.

The Roots of Modern Mormonism thus sounds like a typically dull academic
product. Yet, in April of 1981 a Mormon citizen of Dubuque, Iowa, asked that
Leone's book be banned from the city library. The petitioner asserted that the
work is "filled with lies" and portrays Mormons as "disloyal to the United
States." The city library director at first rejected the request, but was soon
pressed to appoint a five-member review panel, the first in Dubuque in more
than a decade.

At the other end of the spectrum was a review (to be discussed below) by
the late Fawn M. Brodie, who was distressed at what might have been a brilliant
book. Others, querulous or annoyed, are not far from Brodie. Still others miss
Leone's main points altogether. Some neutral observers of Mormonism do not
hesitate to praise it. What are we to make of this curious reception? Is the book
full of lies? Laced with brilliance?

II

Part of the problem is that in addition to his overall thesis that Mormonism
has totally accommodated itself to American culture (hardly "disloyalty"!),
Leone argues a series of subsidiary theses — swift, sleek gerbils running amok
in Dubuque.

One of these is related to the anthropological concept of the temple-state.
In such a state belief in "the sacred," e.g., belief in the truth of a sacrament even
if its effect cannot be seen, can be used as a social, political or economic lever.
Thus a Mormon priesthood meeting could be used to back up local regulations
concerning irrigation. Leone quotes theorist Roy A. Rappaport's definition of
"the sacred" as referring to the quality of "unquestionable truthfulness im-
puted by the faithful to unverifiable propositions (p. 84)." Leone and Rappa-
port both use the words "sacredness" and "sanctity" interchangeably.

Certainly Leone is convincing on the Arizona Mormons' use of the sacred
as a secular lever. (The Arizona field-based chapters were the only ones that
thoroughly pleased Fawn M. Brodie.) The religious institution of tithing, for
example, was the chief means of capitalizing the primitive desert economy
before the arrival of eastern capital. It was also (1) indispensable to pious
Mormons hoping to attain a high position in the next life; and (2) was a key to
success in this life. Religions, writes Leone, reaffirm their sacred propositions
by means of "the liturgical aspect of religious ritual." Rituals can be used to
sanctify economic arrangements or religious authorities. He goes on to show,
very effectively, how rituals "reinforced pragmatic decisions" through the
tithing system.

The tithing system provided capital to start new settlements. It provided
ongoing bank-like functions which helped keep the Arizona settlements alive
through many years of crop failures, burst dams, Gentile attacks, and the
oppression by the railroads — which cheated the Saints on their wages and bilked them of their land. Using ritualistic statements, sermons, and prayers at quarterly stake meetings, church authorities gave moral support to the many Saints who came long distances from isolated settlements; for the meetings combined religious fellowship with social and economic communication. Through ritual they also directed everyday tithing policies, enforced sanctions against delinquents, and so on.

Leone is less effective when he brings in his thirteen zones of "ecological variation," e.g., a lumber zone or a hay zone. He sees the tithing system as "the key to harnessing [i.e., capitalizing] ecological variation . . . and the key to the tithing system was its place in Mormon religion (p. 53)." He shows that ritual powered the system of tithing, which supplied capital to an economy that was undercapitalized. The success of the system reinforced the Mormons' faith in the "veracity" of their doctrine of tithing. Leone concludes:

the use of power derived from imaginary sources created the material success. . . . Success happened by making economic and political decisions . . . calling them religious necessity and defining the resultant material success as religious experience (p. 85).

A believing Mormon intellectual might balk at this.

I have dwelt on Leone's secular-functionalist explanation of tithing because it is the locus of most of his original data and the object of all his main social science theories about paradigms, rituals, ecologies, sect-to-church secularization, and so on. But Leone is also very instructive on water control and ecclesiastical courts.

In their irrigation policy the Saints sanctified decisions about water (locating ditches, for example) by linking water control directives to religion. This was a daring thing to do, because telling people where to put their ditches could be viewed by some believers as a matter of political power rather than religious duty. It could and did dilute the sense of the sacred. God did become, according to Leone, a "handy" instrument, and a changeable one. Leone overstates, albeit in a stimulating way, the economic explanation. He asserts that religion ruled the economic life of the Mormons from their arrival in the West partly because they deliberately fostered such a primitive way of life in the technological sense that religion was the only available source of power, and partly because nobody knew how to farm a desert (p. 88).

It would be more accurate to say that religion ruled the economic life of the Mormons because it had done so from the beginning, mainly as a form of communism, later modified to cooperation. But, like most students of Mormonism, he downplays the early period of New York and Ohio. Genetic studies of any historical topic are quite unfashionable at the moment and have generally earned their low esteem, but a close look at the beginnings of any institution is indispensable.2

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2For an excellent recent argument for the importance of that early period see Leonard J. Arrington, "Mormonism: From Its New York Beginnings," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 13 (Fall 1980): 120–35. As noted at the beginning of this essay many fine articles and books on early Mormonism have appeared in recent years. One could list at least twenty, but to do so would be unfair and misleading. In my own efforts I have found the work of Dean Jessee, Marvin S. Hill,
Leone's memorylessness about the 1830s is also evident in his important and otherwise valuable bridge chapter on ecclesiastical courts, which documents the adoption of Gentile values like capitalism, the separation of church and state and the weakening of Mormon community boundaries. Glancing forward toward his philosophical chapters, Leone tries to show that "inspiration (as a court decision) required short memory" and that a church government which "used sanctity to rule forgot its own history (p. 146)." The long-range consequence of the memoryless habit of mind was that the Mormons could not segment their past into coherent periods. Eventually this led to the dissolution of Mormonism's historic critique of contemporary society and to a population without an effective collective memory... (and) produced one of modern Mormonism's chief traits: a rational population without a memory (pp. 146–47).

Once again the student of early Mormon history must point out that the Mormons first lost their historical "memories" not in Utah but in the East, back in the 1830s. At that earlier time Mormon authorities had already institutionalized the use of inspiration or revelation to persuade the Mormon people to accept change without reference to precedents. Indeed, ignoring precedents is one element of any definition of radical sectarian religion.

Leone is, of course, not alone in giving the 1830s short shrift. The habit pervades the historiography of Mormonism, including that of both Mormon and non-Mormon writers. It might be termed a form of historiographical memorylessness, and is now changing. Still, no previous historian has tried to penetrate the Mormon ethos so well or so daringly.

Before moving on to his final, more philosophical and diffuse chapters, Leone employs a rather orthodox economic interpretation of the American West as a colony of the East. According to Leone the eastern capitalists of the late nineteenth century mounted an attack on the political and economic power of the church. Polygamy was merely a "surface target." The easterners and other outsiders found allies among the leaders of the church, especially after the compromise on polygamy in 1890, and in the course of the next forty years non-Mormons quickly took over the economy. Deseret the Theocracy became Utah the Colony, and colonial status persisted into the 1940s. By the 1970s (just as Leone was finishing his research) the rise to affluence and political representation of the Sun Belt made it possible for Utah to begin cutting off the eastern bankers.

There is considerable truth to the colonial thesis, but documentation, weak throughout the book, is particularly thin here. Except for a curious quotation from an anthropological article about "Cloth and Its Function in the Inca State," everything is based on Leonard Arrington's standard economic history of the Great Basin.

Leone would have been more persuasive had he (1) shown the reader that

James B. Allen, and Larry C. Porter particularly helpful. Of recent works I have found Porter's dissertation the least encumbered by "truth questions." That is perhaps to be explained by its encyclopedic form of presentation. But it is indispensable. See Porter, "A Study of the Origins of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints..." (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1971).
he was aware that he was not simply repeating the old Populist chestnut about the eastern capitalist "Octopus"; and (2) pointed out the fact that orthodox Protestant anti-Mormons used the charge of economic "monopoly" and political tyranny as a weapon to assault the real target: the lewd, barbaric Mormon Antichrist.

III

The last three short chapters of *The Roots of Modern Mormonism* are essentially philosophical essays on the nature and condition of Mormonism in the twentieth century. Modern Mormonism, Leone believes, is a memory-less, history-less religious culture, one that has no genuine role for professional historians and theologians. He asserts that there are very few Mormon professional theologians and historians, but this is true only of theologians. Mormon "historians," as we ordinarily use this word, are in fact very numerous and well trained; and several, perhaps a majority, specialize in the history of Mormonism. Leone, however, has some very special, perhaps Collingwoodian, meaning of "historian" in mind:

The processes of nature can . . . be properly described as sequences of mere events, but those of history cannot. They are not processes of mere events but processes of actions, which have an inner side, consisting of processes of thought; and what the historian is looking for is these processes of thought. All history is the history of thought.

But how does the historian discern the thoughts which he is trying to discover? There is only one way in which it can be done: by re-thinking them in his own mind.3

These reflective, non-empirical chapters of Leone make for interesting reading and include, here and there, suggestive ironies and arresting observations; but these later sections are too incompletely worked out to be satisfying, and they doubtless contributed strongly to the annoyance and hostility of many reviewers and readers. Historical persuasion demands a specificity utterly lacking in the last chapters. Moreover, the argumentation is not consequential and the documentation is sparse. Insights and dicta a la Tocqueville are not enough.

Leone argues, for example, that Mormons believe in the enormous illusion that their doctrine is centralized and clearly defined; whereas in reality, he states, it is diffuse and varied — the composite result of a do-it-yourself theology. He points out that every Mormon is a theologian. This is largely true, but Leone goes beyond this to say that each Mormon creates his theology day by day, providing great adaptability to changes in the present. Thus ordinary Saints, living far away from the central authorities who enforce orthodoxy are able, in their daily life to modify the racist, "central," received doctrine that Indians, cursed in their skin color, are inferior. His evidence for this alleged modification comes from notes he took in 1969 as a participant observer of one Sunday sacrament meeting "talk" (a Mormon word for a short spoken part of this ritual). The talk was delivered in the Holbrook (Arizona) ward chapel by the representative for one of the car and truck dealerships in Holbrook. The

dealership was dependent on the business for Navajos on the abutting reservation, where pickup trucks were the standard form of transportation.

The car salesman's sacrament talk was pro-Indian. He told the congregation that the Navajos were as likeable and trustworthy as anybody else: in short, the talk represented a practical, individual, positive Mormon "theology" of Indians (pp. 174–77). For the Mormons of Holbrook the

Indians are in fact the base of much of the Mormon economy, so old-fashioned Indian hating does not put bread on the table or money in the bank. It therefore behooved this audience to hear from a couple who had solved some major problems during their long practical experience of living and working among an Indian population whom everyone knew to be crucial to the local economy (p. 175).

The Holbrook incident, in a chapter on "Creating Mormonism," purports to show how ordinary, individual Mormons create their religion day by day. But in the very next chapter, which is equally stimulating, Leone returns to the "Indian hating" interpretation of Mormonism. He points out that Mormons invent their own history by ignoring the fundamental premise of true history, namely that "events are not random but are part of a naturalistic pattern that can be identified and explained (p. 202)." Quite logically he takes up the central document of Mormonism, the "historical" story of the Indians in the Book of Mormon. This second passage, in the following chapter on "The Uses of History," touches upon so many issues in the historiography of modern Mormonism that it is worth quoting at length:

Most Mormons have no idea that there is an alternative explanation outside the Book of Mormon for the peopling and history of the New World before the arrival of Columbus, and that it was not all Nephites and Lamanites... They are unaware of what the rest of the world has concluded.

Categorizing Indians as descendants of those who failed to keep God's word and who were punished with red skins — whether assuming that they will one day become white and delightful or that they are all alike and have always been an undifferentiated mass — is a way of using a supposedly objective past to perpetuate present social relations. To say that belief in the Book of Mormon rationalized present attitudes and practices toward Indians misses the point; it actively reproduces and extends them... Educating hundreds of Navajo at Brigham Young University, placing thousands of them in Mormon homes while they attend boarding school outside the reservation, and sending missionaries to their reservations are programs that stem from injunctions to preach and convert the Indians. All these efforts nonetheless assume Indian inferiority, which is overtly expressed as a spiritual lapse vis-à-vis the role played by ancient Indians in the Book of Mormon. Mormons perpetuate this inferior relationship in their very efforts to overcome it. For in preaching inferiority, they come to believe in it; and their overly religious programs derived from the historical mission set out in the Book of Mormon, draw Indians into their own economic and political orbit. Converted Indians thus automatically maintain their sense of inferiority because they see themselves in Book of Mormon terms and, as Mormons, remain Indian on Mormon terms. For both Mormons and believing Indians, the history of the Book of Mormon expresses objective truth and, in expressing it, brings it into being. In this way history duplicates and thus perpetuates current social reality.

Given how Mormons build their individual histories (i.e., Mormon "temple work" or genealogy) and how they use histories like the Book of Mormon, it is no wonder that the church has discouraged any intellectual tradition that would interfere with disguising historical factors or with maintaining much of the social reality through the uncritical way lay history is done. Both the church's treatment of intellectuals and Mormons'
anti-intellectualism are complementary examples of how the do-it-yourself revisionism of Mormon history is sustained while hidden from view. "The intellectual is not at ease in Zion," concluded Davis Bitton, a Mormon. . . .

There are few active historians within the church, and until recently a Mormon historian was an apologist or outcast. Although the last decade has seen a healthier group of historians, lay and professional, in the ranks of Mormonism, the number is still small, and they are unsure of how their church regards them. The most obvious reason for this is that a corps of professional historians and intellectuals could challenge the fictional, uncritical, and adulatory aspects of lay history (pp. 204–05).

Leone seems to be unaware in these two passages that he has presented the reader with two contradictory types of "modern Mormons": the pragmatic Indian-lover in Holbrook and the principled Indian-hater everywhere else. In the context of their chapters each view is valid. On the one hand, in the chapter on Mormon do-it-yourself theology the individual car salesman in Holbrook can dilute the "central" power over doctrine in Salt Lake City. The story of one isolated salesman’s need to accommodate his beliefs may not be sufficient evidence, but a reader can be persuaded that there is a streak of practical adaptability in Mormon theology. On the other hand, the second type of modern Mormon in the long passage quoted from a succeeding chapter on uncritical, do-it-yourself history, strongly supports the view that the undiluted doctrine of Indian racial inferiority is still nourished by that central, communal document, the Book of Mormon. No pragmatism here. The mythical Book of Mormon version of Indian history dictates the wisdom of bringing Navajo children into Mormon homes to help them overcome their accursed skin color.4

When considered together, the two views, while they may be valid separately, contradict one another, and this contradiction should not be ignored. I think most scholars would agree that the explanatory problem can be resolved by stressing the ambiguity of Mormon attitudes. One Saint can harbor conflicting views, but in so doing will inevitably suffer the psychological tension that any religious believer encounters when forced to harmonize his or her experience with faith. Thus the Book of Mormon leaves the believing Saint with the picture of the Indian as morally inferior, while experience leads him to encounter morally equal Indians. A similar tension existed among liberal Mormons concerning Blacks prior to the promulgation of the "Black Revelation" of 1978 admitting Blacks to the Mormon priesthood. Since the middle of the nineteenth century most reasonable Americans have paid lip service to the equality of Blacks; and in the 1960s and 1970s even politicians (including George Romney, the Mormon bishop and former governor of Michigan) accepted the basic proposition of the Declaration of Independence. Nevertheless, for 148 years there were no Black priests (with one or two exceptions) among the Mormons and thus no real Black rights in the church. By 1978 this had become an almost intolerable interior conflict for Mormons of good will.

How each educated Saint has coped with the racist tensions in his own heart is beyond the ken of scholarship. But scholars certainly can describe and

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analyze the ambiguity that always appears when any honest religious believer is forced to confront experiences that question the truth of his faith. Davis Bitton is right to say that intellectuals are “not at ease in Zion.” But they are not at ease in any religion with pretensions to a rational theology. Davis Bitton was only echoing what Thomas O'Dea said in his classic sociological study of Mormonism; but few realize that O'Dea said it with equal vigor of Catholic intellectuals. Fear of intellect is ecumenical.

As for the mass of believers, it is not uncommon in several religious traditions for the faithful to trim their “central” (or peripheral) doctrines to acquire some peace of mind or get along in the world. Many Jews who consider themselves Conservative or Orthodox compromise traditional rabbinical counsels on how to keep holy the Sabbath. Well over seventy percent of all married Catholic couples used contraception as early as 1965, years before the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* on birth control.6

What has weakened Leone's analysis of the role of history and theology in modern Mormonism is the very quality that makes the book so valuable in other respects: the creative use of anthropological perspectives. In one place he is tempted into a positive interpretation of Mormon attitudes toward the Indians because he was following Robert Bellah's theory about a trend in the late 1960s toward individual do-it-yourself theology (pp. 6–7, 170–71); on the other hand, he presents the reader with a negative, conventional, Book of Mormon interpretation of Mormon attitudes because it fit another social science theory about kinship. His left theory did not notice what his right theory was doing.

No scholar should leave contradictions unexplained. Leone’s indifference to our need for connectedness of discourse, our need for synthesis, results in a work that, in spite of its virtues, in spite of its grand analysis, is less than grand.

The ways Mormons use history or create theology are for Leone aspects of his overall general thesis that, in the course of the twentieth century, the doctrine as well as the economy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have been desacralized, diffused, and decentralized, losing all their uniqueness. He states that if a group of Mormons were asked what they are required to believe, there would be “no unanimity” beyond the two critical points that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that the church he founded is a true church (p. 191). Leone might have added that modern Mormonism shares this theological illiteracy (of the laity) with the most orthodox of Christian denominations.

IV

When one turns from matters of interpretation to Leone’s style of presentation, one encounters three shortcomings. These shortcomings are an

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5 The standard account of the uneasy situation of Mormon intellectuals is to be found in Thomas O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), ch. 9.

6 Andrew M. Greeley, *The American Catholic: A Social Portrait* (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1977), p. 142. One of Greeley's main theses is that the most important factor in the continued decline of Catholic devotion and practice during the 1970s was the centralized, papal attitude of hostility toward the practice of birth control. A comparison with the degree of Mormon conformity to their anti-birth-control doctrine would be instructive.
open invitation to those who would want to beard Leone for writing a naturalistic account of Mormon religion.

First there is his infrequent citation of evidence. As Fawn M. Brodie pointed out, Mormonism is a controversial field and requires footnotes. Even when he makes a fundamental, brilliant point about the anti-historical nature of the Mormon mentality he scants the empirical evidence and his formal documentation is absurdly thin. There is no excuse for this: we are not dealing with the undocumented lives of Merovingian queens. Mormonism floats on one of the widest rivers of historical sources ever loosed by a social group in all recorded history. The Prophet established the high office of church historian and enjoined his followers to keep diaries and other records. Because of their immensity and, in some instances, their inaccessibility, Mormon sources are hard to deal with. But to sail over them is indefensible. And the book was published by a rich and prestigious press which did not even bother to demand a minimal bibliography or a better-than-farcical index.

Lapses of clarity are another source of annoyance. The same lively imagination that can reach into unfamiliar cultures for enlightening comparisons can also lead into crucial statements that are not entirely clear. Most of these important statements occur toward the end of each chapter. Some are positively Orphic in tone, leaving one impressed, perhaps instructed, but also somewhat puzzled. Leone can bring a reader up short with: "After Mormonism lost its independence, it achieved ecological stability but lost its economic stability (p. 210)."

A third helpmate for hostile readers is Karl Marx, whom Leone quotes. He does not exploit Marxian theory in any systematic way. He makes an innocuous appeal to the authority of the Master to validate some conclusions, but even this will raise some eyebrows among the pious.

One can hardly complain about the aptness of the quotations. Marx, for example, helps Leone's general thesis about the collapse of transcendence in Mormonism after 1890. "Karl Marx predicted," writes Leone,

that those who preferred utopia to the class struggle and revolution as a way out of the Industrial Revolution would ultimately become "mere reactionary sects." To some degree, this can be interpreted to mean that the outcome of Mormonism was inevitable, given the remedy it chose. The last century was full of utopias in this country and abroad. All died out or were, like Mormonism, transformed. The members of most utopias were reabsorbed into society after having populated some frontier or performed some social experiment that society was later willing to undertake itself in an altered form (pp. 213–14).

Religious believers on the frontier, whether Methodists, Mormons, or Spanish Jesuits, did, as Leone noted, scout out and settle the land, usually with some sense of utopian transcendence. Then, after they had done their little utopian dance, the central secular government inevitably stepped in and reabsorbed the community, calling it the colony that it was. . . . Thus the development of Mormonism was a part of a worldwide process which was accelerated, if not initiated, by the Industrial Revolution. One side of this process was the growth of colonialism through the expansion of countries and the growth of empires adding to the territories. The other side was the growth of cures for the worst aspects of industrialization. One cure was Mormonism. The two sides, industrialization and its remedies, played them-
De Pillis: Bearding Leone

selves out on the North American frontier and included Mormonism's growth, transformation, and misanalysis of the factors responsible for its own existence (pp. 217-18).

The "misanalysis of the structure of capitalism" is apparently a phrase from Marx (Leone, p. 214). And the phrase "worldwide process" puts one in mind of the most influential of the present-day historical anthropologists, Immanuel Wallerstein.

To see Mormonism placed into these larger perspectives is very stimulating, if not always absolutely convincing. (But how many pieces of more conventional history are absolutely convincing?) Especially suggestive is Leone's point that reabsorption (i.e., twentieth-century Mormonism) meant loss of creativity (early Mormonism). Joseph Smith and other earlier pre-Utah Mormons, had shared with Marx — their contemporary — a belief in the dynamic nature of material and social reality, a belief in "the createdness of truth." Leone also sees Smith sharing this point of view with Darwin, Freud, Einstein, and Heisenberg. The reabsorption of Mormonism was complete when the Saints rejected their last sectarian symbol of peculiarity and opposition to the world, the exclusion of Blacks from the priesthood by the "Black Revelation" of 1978.

From Marx to Smith to Heisenberg is one of the better executed of Leone's intellectual swan dives — the kind of performance rarely observed in the writing of American history. In the end, concludes Leone, "Mormonism's most successful adaptation is its present ability to produce colonials: changeable people without memories (p. 226)."

The Roots of Modern Mormonism is one of the few original historical analyses of Mormonism ever produced, even though it is seriously marred by a lack of internal unity, by poor documentation, and by patches of high fog. Leone also delivers himself of a few bold but simplistic statements, partly, I think, for rhetorical effect. All in all, Leone's ability to pick significant questions and deal with them imaginatively, together with his intellectual keenness, saves his book from its defects.

V

The question now arises whether the weaknesses of this long-awaited book — none of them fatal — are sufficient to explain the curious reception accorded it. A good place to begin looking at this question is the review written in the Western Historical Quarterly by the doyenne of the historiography of Mormonism, the late Fawn McKay Brodie. Brodie started out as follows:

This is an ambitious book, which sets out to define the uniqueness of Mormonism and the nature of the evolutionary changes in the society from 1830 to the present, especially the image the Mormon has of himself in history. The idea has great potential, only partly realized in what is an original, provocative, and sometimes confusing volume.7

Brodie thought that in his anthropological field descriptions of Mormon towns in northern Arizona Leone wrote "as a disciplined ethnologist [and generalized] about the nature of Mormonism, old and recent, with fresh and engaging insight." But in the later "philosophical and historical [chapters he is] given to

sweeping generalizations, without much supporting data.” Actually, it can be argued that these later chapters are the valuable ones, in spite of the weaknesses I have discussed in detail above. Like most of us, Professor Brodie picked up items of particular interest to her: Leone, she thought, exaggerated early Mormon radicalism; Joseph Smith was, she asserted, no critic of industrialism. Moreover, Leone ignores changing Mormon attitudes toward Smith. These are all useful criticisms, but Professor Brodie did not deal directly with Leone’s book as a whole — which is about modern Mormonism. Take, for example, what seems to be her most telling point: that Smith was no socialist critic of industrialism. In a literal sense this is true. But the Prophet was quite aware of the evils of his day, even if he masked his criticism in apocalyptic language. The world will end and the millennium will come, states the very first of his more than 130 revelations, because the “inhabitants of the earth . . . have strayed from mine ordinances.” As Brodie herself pointed out in an oft-quoted passage about the ideas of the Prophet:

the book can best be explained not by Joseph’s ignorance nor by his delusions, but by his responsiveness to the provincial opinions of his time. He had neither the diligence nor the constancy to master reality, but his mind was open to all intellectual influences, from whatever province they might blow.

One of the opinions of his time was not at all provincial: utopian socialism, or what he later repudiated as “common stock.” Attacking the fee-simple empire of the American frontier, he tried, through his semi-socialist United Order of Enoch, to achieve economic equality among Mormon families. The unbridled power of private ownership and wealth in that early industrial society (still dominated by land-greedy farmers) and the economic inequality from which his own mother and father suffered so much must have formed a nonreligious part of his rationale for the United Order — even if, unlike secularists like Albert Brisbane and Robert Owen, he did not have an explicit economic theory.

In short, the most influential historian of Mormonism missed the larger point of a “big” book. Why? To answer this question it is worth glancing at one or two other reviews. One, by a nonhistorian in the Anthropological Quarterly, was friendlier, but still complained, as all reviews do, about the lack of clarity in parts of the philosophical chapters, or about Leone’s hyperbole in asserting that Mormons are a “people without a memory.” Unfamiliar with the primary sources in American social history, let alone of Mormonism, the anthropologist sees virtue in the wrong parts of the book, but concludes that “it will remain for some time one of the few worthwhile pieces on Mormonism.”

In the Journal of American History another reviewer, F. Ross Peterson of Utah State University, recognizes (unlike Brodie or the anthropologist) that there is “nothing new or especially revealing” about the essays on Arizona, but agrees that Leone “comes close to brilliance” in the chapter on the “Uses of History.” Brodie couldn’t make much sense of this chapter, but Peterson comes

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up with the indefensible assertion that historians write either to praise or to discredit.\(^9\)

This for-or-against mentality permeates the consciousness of everyone connected with Mormon studies. It helps explain why the historiography of Mormonism, vast as it is, contains little worth reading. It also explains why Brodie missed Leone's larger points, choosing instead to underline (a) the Saints' changing attitudes toward Joseph Smith and (b) the inadequacy of speculation in history. For those historians who, like Brodie, are still enmeshed in the for/against trap, the speculative chapters could never be worth much, for they do not prove or disprove the "truth of Mormonism." Similarly, she seized on Leone's treatment of Joseph Smith, noting that Leone does not deal with the changing attitudes of the Saints. Yet, Leone does deal with changing attitudes among the Mormons in his important sub-thesis arguing that modern Mormons make their own history and theology. Furthermore, Joseph the Prophet plays but a minor part of *Roots*; among most historians of Mormonism, however, Smith looms very large, because these historians are still concerned, often unconsciously, with the "truth of Mormonism." If biblical scholarship were still stuck with the question of the "truth" of the synoptic gospels, New Testament scholarship would not be worth much.

VI

It can be argued that it has been outsiders, not Mormon insiders, who have done the most to bring scientific history to bear on the study of Mormonism. During the last forty years these outsiders have helped move Mormon studies away from the central theme of for-or-against toward the scholar's goal of true understanding. During the 1970s some younger historians questioned the old ideal of an objective scientific history on various ideological grounds. Much of the impetus came from neo-Marxians, who argued that "value-free" social science was impossible. No historian was objective or scientific. Historians must write with a bias in favor of the people. This is not the place to deal with this interesting historiographical development, but there is little evidence that historians of Mormonism took any notice of the debate. The increased use in Mormon studies of quantified evidence and social science theory is an unrelated phenomenon having more to do with methodology than with philosophical outlook or ideology.

The new methods do not in themselves force the historian to have an "acceptable" bias, nor do they guarantee the posing of intelligent questions. It is not inconceivable, one hopes, that some day a Latter-day Saint historian will do a study of the early history of his people "from the bottom up."

Back in 1976 William Mulder joyfully noted that "the fiddles are tuning in Mormon historiography." By this statement he seems to mean that "the fiddles, in Mormon historiography, are tuning up." He hailed the remarkable "new

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professionalism," the new "objectivity and composure" which Latter-day Saints were then bringing to the study of their own extraordinary history.\footnote{Mulder, "Mormon Angles of Historical Vision: Some Maverick Reflections," Journal of Mormon History 3 (1976): 13–14.}

During the past five years his judgment has found ample confirmation in the scores of professionally researched books and articles — many of them written by non-Mormons as well as believers.

Among these writers, Jan Shipps, a committed evangelical, is the only "Gentile" scholar who seems to have thought in a serious, even personal way about the hidden Mormon/anti-Mormon dynamic of Mormon studies and about the everyday attitudes of Mormons and non-Mormons. She has coined the term "insider-outsider" for her position, a position which is heuristic as well as personal.\footnote{Shipps, "An 'Insider-Outsider' in Zion," forthcoming in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought.} While her stance is useful, it is limited; for it too clearly invites a religious rather than a secular mode of analysis. One side of the term clearly implies some kind of belief, or at least strong emotional involvement, with the group or the religion under study. Her own article on "An 'Insider-Outsider' in Zion" is highly confessional in tone. This article reflects the last dozen years of confessional style in the United States, whether in the poetry of Sylvia Plath or in the journalism of Norman Mailer or in the recent memoir of World War II in the South Pacific by William Manchester,\footnote{Manchester, Goodbye, Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1980).} or in the "committed history" (including interviews with historians) in the Radical History Review. But it also reflects the depth of her sympathetic involvement. To be sure, most good historians end up being sympathetic to their subjects; many even start out that way — like the fine (or "evangelical"?) history of fundamentalism by fundamentalist George M. Marsden.\footnote{George M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870–1925. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).}

Insider-outsider Shipps is very persuasive in her major thesis that Mormonism is a "new religious tradition" in its own right, like Judaism or Protestantism. To arrive at this extreme position Shipps must discard the classical models of sect, cult, and denomination (all of which dwell on origins and early development — and therefore the "truth of Mormonism"), and must focus instead on twentieth-century Mormonism as a fully completed religious tradition. She asserts that Mormonism is not a "subdivision of Christianity" and "most assuredly not Protestant."
Is this view defensible? Only in small part. Admittedly, Mormonism has an impressive unity that is at once universalist and different. But the old categories of cult and denomination, stale as they are, are still indispensible, even if they lead to an overemphasis on the early period of Mormon history and thus to questions of the "truth of Mormonism." There is a way, of course, in which Mormonism has maintained a sect-like zeal and voluntarism that is very different from the comfort of being born into the religion of one's fathers. (My own theory is that the Mormon requirement that all young men go on mission at one's own expense for two years is like joining a sect for the first time.) A second thing that cannot be discarded in studying Mormon history is its residual Protestantism.

Shipps explains that she acquired this larger view by becoming an insider while remaining an outsider. This meant "keeping truth questions bracketed out through all my years of study." Up to a point this is a useful scholarly strategy to gain the distance needed to be analytical. But no steadfast outsider, whether readers or writers of history, will stand still for that. The outsider wants to know whether the Mormon formula "Mormonism is true" can stand up to the canons of scientific history. For the scholarly outsider Mormonism is a well-documented historical phenomenon. This is no "Moonie" sect based on the secretive operations and charisma of one man. It is this very demand of the outsiders (most of the people of the world) for an assessment of "truth" that gives Fawn Brodie's classic biography its astonishing vitality. (According to Shipps, Brodie's book has the same lewd fascination for insiders: as late as 1960 the Mormon controlled Logan Public Library kept No Man Knows My History behind the desk, along with sex manuals and Juanita Brook's Mountain Meadows Massacre.)

Yet, there is a way in which Shipps is right to try to keep away from testing the truth of Mormonism: the enterprise is no longer interesting to serious non-Mormon historians. All non-Mormon historians are anti-Mormons in so far as they reject that truth, and this rejection must, in my opinion, be related to a skeptical attitude toward all the primary sources for all of Mormon history. Certainly the participant observation of Leone and other historical anthropologists is no free ticket to the inside, because as Shipps observes, anthropologists have a necessarily superficial encounter: "a limited field work exercise with a beginning and an end, or a clearly defined project."

Indeed it is puzzling that Shipps could go so far inside and retain her evangelical Methodism and maintain her composure and objectivity. Though Collingwood would not have thought it necessary, the logical extension of his position is to go as far inside as possible in order to comprehend fully the thought processes of Mormon leaders and followers — though he did not think it necessary to comprehend them "fully." Like the pro-Mormon/anti-Mormon distinction the insider/outsider contrast harbors a latent or hidden conflict.\footnote{I dealt with this issue long ago in an obscurely printed essay: "Hosea Stout and the Hidden Rhetoric of Mormon History," Southern California Quarterly 48 (June 1966): 195–201. My remarks about reading between the lines went unnoticed at the time. Klaus Hansen later made this practice fundamental to his study of the secret activities of the Council of Fifty. Secrecy is often an unconscious stance enforced in part by years of persecution. Though I have}
It is possible for the outsider to live her/himself into the sources, so to speak, and do it deeply enough to find hidden meanings. A few insiders and outsiders like Davis Bitton, Fawn Brodie, Klaus Hansen, Lawrence Foster, and Jan Shipps have managed to do this.

VII

The unique position of Mormonism as a “fourth religion” was argued vigorously and, I think, very persuasively, as long ago as 1966. But that argument, in the first and second issues of Dialogue, rested not on “participation” — personal or anthropological — but on the psycho-theological appeal of Joseph Smith’s teachings. Those teachings, it was argued, emerged not in the overemphasized Book of Mormon, but in the Doctrine of Covenants: the collection of revelations issued by the Prophet during the fifteen turbulent years during which he and his followers tried to survive the persecution and deep social and economic change of the Jacksonian period. This slighting of the importance of the Book of Mormon displeased Latter-day Saints, but two important events have since confirmed the centrality of the revelations. First, in 1978 President Spencer W. Kimball issued the so-called “Black Revelation,” which admitted Blacks to the Mormon priesthood by nullifying, in effect, parts of the Pearl of Great Price. Second, in September of 1981 the same president approved the correction of a “typographical error” in the Book of Mormon. In the old edition the Indians were to have become “white and delightsome” with conversion to Mormonism; in the new they become “pure and delightful.”

These were not trivial events. They go to the very heart of Mormon religion. They also have two implications for the writing of Mormon history. One is that Shipp’s argument that Mormonism represents a new religious tradition, a position which I have long defended myself, now appears weakened. Can a major religious tradition alter its own supposedly central scripture? Can that alteration “follow the election returns,” that is, the civil rights movements of the last twenty years? Are we not witnessing a continuation of that late nineteenth-century accommodation to American culture argued by Leone? Is not the Book of Mormon, with its history of the Lamanites, less central than the Doctrine and Covenants, which contains so many guides to Mormon life and beliefs concerning birth, education, priesthood, marriage, and the afterlife? And if I am right in saying that the Book of Mormon is less important as a guide than it is as a kind of public symbol, was it not easy to declare the “cursed” dark skins of the Indians as a typographical error?

arrived independently at my theory of latent, persisting pro-Mormon/anti-Mormon bias, the eminent Jewish philosopher, Leo Strauss, outlined a similar theory in the early 1950s, applying it to the primary sources of persecuted peoples like the Jews. In an instructive remembrance of his mentor, Perry Miller, Edmund Sears Morgan gently complained of the way Miller read between the lines. But sometimes a historian has no other choice.


16With a stroke of the pen, President Kimball has removed one of the most popular sticks with which to beat the Mormons. But perhaps Leone, who also uses it trenchantly, can be counted among those who helped change this policy. The Mormons, he wrote, “perpetuate this inferior
The second implication of the new revisions in scriptural phraseology is that the alteration of scripture is selective: The revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants have gone untouched because the "accommodation" of Mormon revelations to American society had already taken place by the time they were issued! During the short lifetime of the Prophet, the social values of Americans were bone-deep Protestant, and the Protestant characteristics of his time and place were embedded in the Doctrine and Covenants. There, in that work, they remain, frozen in place — the legendary capitalist work ethic, the communitarian experiments (notably absent in other traditions), the passionate Mormon rejection of celibacy, the emphasis on marriage now and forever, the recurrent calls for repentance and revival, the strong millennialism of radical Protestantism and, of course, the teaching that God has located the Center Place of Zion in the United States.17

That the Doctrine and Covenants was far less susceptible than other scriptural bases of Mormonism to alteration, either in text or perception, is a generalization that must stand up to the different thesis of Thomas G. Alexander. Careful not to overstate his case (except in the title!), Alexander has argued that a "progressive reconstruction of Mormon doctrine" took place between 1893 and 1925. But Alexander demonstrates change only in the conception of the Godhead. The Mormon conception, strongly trinitarian in the 1830s, came to be modified during the twentieth century under the influence of James E. Talmage. In his enormously influential Articles of Faith (approved in 1898), Talmage expounded a more literal interpretation of the nature of the Holy Ghost as "in reality a person, in the image of the other members of the Godhead — a man in form and figure."18

But it seems more reasonable to understand Talmage's change less as a "reconstruction" than as an extrapolation of orthodox Mormon "theistic materialism." There is not really much change in doctrine, but enough to document the point made above that Mormonism has moved away from the "holiness" emphasis on the spiritual presence of the Holy Spirit. A famous relationship [of the Indians] in their very efforts to overcome it. For in preaching inferiority, they come to believe in it . . . [and] converted Indians . . . automatically maintain their sense of inferiority because they see themselves in Book of Mormon terms. In this way the [Mormon version of history] perpetuates current social reality (p. 204)." This kind of criticism also preceded the change in policy toward the 'Blacks. As respecters of learning Mormon leaders are sensitive to criticism of this kind.

17It is interesting that in positing his famous thesis about the "amoral familism" of the Southern Italian peasant, the anthropologist Edward C. Banfield chose the Mormons as the most typical Protestant Americans: voluntaristic, socially responsible, and individually responsible. See Banfield, The Moral Basis of a Backward Society (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1958) and the correctives noted by John W. Briggs, An Italian Passage: Immigrants to Three American Cities, 1890–1930 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), ch. 2, note 1.

In a tour de force of evangelical empathy and understanding Timothy L. Smith has described the Book of Mormon as a document deeply immersed in the Biblical "holiness" culture of Jacksonian America, the doctrine of "the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's people." Smith, "The Book of Mormon in Biblical Culture," Journal of Mormon History 7 (1980): 5–21. Smith's characterization is persuasive, but holiness and biblicism were not quite as central a theme of the Book of Mormon as Smith believes. Holiness was stronger in the Mormonism of the 1830s than it is now. Mormon perceptions of the meaning of the Book of Mormon have changed over the last century and a half — an important story that no specialist in Mormon history has yet dared tackle.

Mormon and anti-Mormon probing of the foundations of Mormon religion should certainly continue, but is should not be permitted to obscure other problems. We also need early Mormon studies that supply us with a social profile of early converts (1827–1837), of all land holdings before 1847, of the social and economic structure of Mormon counties like Wayne, Ontario, and Seneca in western New York and Geauga and Lake Counties in Ohio. And there is more to the study of religious phenomena than political, social, and economic history. There is also something that could be called psychological history, e.g., the history of Mormon piety, ritual, and symbols. These particular aspects of the psychology of religion do not really flower until after the 1840s — after the true-or-false period of Mormon history. Klaus Hansen has given us the best summary in print of the development of the Mormon view of death and afterlife. Mention must also be made of Alexander’s article on Wilford Woodruff.

In a very different piece on Christian liturgy and symbol, so often dominated by art critics, church sermonizers, and Jungian symbolists, Marcus von Wellnitz has given us a revealing and down-to-earth view of the subject. With sensitive understanding, he has described the use of proxy performance in baptism, the iconography of angels, the symbol of the all-seeing eye, the notion of a sacred part of the temple, and several other basic Catholic liturgical symbols and practices. He demonstrates the surprising similarities between Catholic and Mormon symbols. Writing for a Mormon audience, Wellnitz does not bother to supply the specific examples of the Mormon parallels he has in mind. Leaving the “obvious” unsaid is not unusual among scholars writing from within a defensive group. Thus Wellnitz contents himself with the remark that “for the perceptive Latter-day Saint [the] parallels are obvious and the relationships apparent.” To an outsider not steeped in Mormon history and life, however, the conclusiveness of this sentence is not apparent. Moreover, even in so good an article as this, published in 1981, the old hidden rhetoric of Mormon/non-Mormon persists, and Wellnitz, in his last sentence, succumbs to the continuing tyranny of the true-or-false tradition:

indeed, resemblances in form and purpose point to the probability of a common source and common origin, providing an interesting support to LDS claims of a divine restora-

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19We have the invaluable work of Larry Porter but no systematic studies of counties. See Porter, “A Study of the Origins.” Richard Jenson of the Newberry Library’s program in quantification for historians, has remarked that western New York is “oozing with data.” Some academic scholars teaching in the state of New York have begun to take up the challenge, though their work is not far enough along to cite here.


tion of certain eternal truths apparently known and practiced anciently by former-day saints.  

At the other end of the spectrum are those who openly scoff at the truth of Mormonism. A recent example of this is Louis J. Kern's dismissal of Smith's claims as another example of "frontier sharpness and chicanery." In a way, Kern's open scorn is easier to take than the non-Mormon friend of Mormonism dealing with truth questions in a very serious, scholarly language, replete with footnotes, or prodigious research by computer analysis proving the historicity or nonhistoricity of the Book of Mormon. The investigation of the truth of Mormonism is still very important and will go on as long Mormonism lives. (No scholar today investigates the truth of Shakerism.) But people who do research in Mormon history cannot seem to deal with it as a human phenomenon like the American Revolution.

Nevertheless, there is reason to be optimistic. The writing of Mormon history has made remarkable advances in the last twenty years — but especially the last five years. Even the keepers of Mormon scriptures can admit to errors. Loyal Latter-day Saints are writing more and more naturalistic history — on new topics like piety, death, and liturgy, topics that are bringing Mormonism into the mainstream of historical inquiry. Anti-Mormons, open or secret, are finding their work quickly set aside — often by non-Mormons.

When the Saints finally make non-bowdlerized texts available and relinquish the primacy of "sacred history," then the process will be complete. And the historiography of Mormonism will have arrived in the right place.

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