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COVER: Abstraction of the window tracery, Salt Lake City Tenth Ward. Design by Warren Archer.

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LETTERS

Although the deadline for submitting proposals for next year’s conference is passed, Ken and Audrey Godfrey will consider last-minute proposals. Please contact them immediately at (435) 752-8765 or 1689 E 1400 North, Logan, UT 84341, or by e-mail: history@nl.net (en-one, not en-ell).

A Warsaw Mystery

This story, which hints at the identity of the person who assassinated Joseph Smith, involves a confession within a confession.

In 1961, I was working on my master’s thesis on the history of the early Illinois Geological Survey at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. Amos Worthen, a state geologist in the 1840s, traveled frequently from the capital, Springfield, to his home in Warsaw. However, he spent 1842-44 in Vermont, his natal state. I wondered why he had interrupted his career at this point and whether it had anything to do with the steadily increasing tensions between Warsaw and Nauvoo.

I interviewed two granddaughters of Amos Worthen, Jeanette and Marie Worthen in their Warsaw home. Neither had married; both appeared to be in their late seventies. Jeanette, who had taught high school in Chicago, did most of the talking. I asked if Amos had left Warsaw to escape the violence. They agreed that it was a possibility, but they had no family stories to account for the gap.

I suggested, “Some of the ‘pony clubs’ that raided and beat Mormons came from Warsaw.”

Jeanette admitted that it was so. Then her face flushed. She leaned forward and said intensely that there was fault on both sides. The Mormons stole “our cattle.” Families lost members to them as converts.

She continued. A “dear friend” was the daughter of a prominent Warsaw attorney. When her father died, she opened his deposit box. In it she found a signed confession that he had stood in the crowd on the afternoon of the assassinations and had shot Joseph Smith.

“Well was he?” I asked.

She shook her head. It wouldn’t do to tell. The Mormons might desecrate his grave. Their friend was so afraid that she moved away from Warsaw and never came back.

I pointed out that surely her friend’s family was safe after more than a century and that this man’s identity was historically important. She shook her head adamantly.

That was the first confession; the second is mine. For more than thirty years, I have failed to investigate this intriguing clue. The historian in me rec-
ognizes that, even if the young lawyer fired at Joseph Smith, it may not have been his shot that proved fatal. Joseph Smith’s body bore more than one wound. Also, Hyrum Smith was shot at the same time. Did the attorney know the difference between the two brothers? Yet obviously the attorney went to his grave believing that he had killed Joseph Smith. I believe that truthfulness and completeness in the details of history are important, so I hope that someone else will find his identity worthy of investigation.

Where could such an investigation begin? Perhaps with a search of the Warsaw papers to read the obituaries of attorneys in Warsaw. Even if the Worthen sisters were wrong about the attorney’s prominence, there couldn’t have been that many altogether in a town the size of Warsaw. From the obituary, it should be possible to determine the name of surviving daughters. Census, tax, marriage, and birth records should make it possible to trace her whereabouts and those of her descendants. Did she destroy the confession? Take her father’s secret to the grave? Or can this small but significant mystery be solved and take its place in clarifying the events of 27 June 1844?

John W. McLure
Iowa City, IA
MISSIONARIES IN THE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS MARKETPLACE: MORMON PROSELYTING IN THE 1830s

Steven C. Harper

THE SOCIAL CLIMATE OF THE EARLY REPUBLIC fostered an impressive surge of popular, evangelical religion. More than ever before, individual, ordinary Americans counted. The ideas that meant, in political terms, that men were created equal, in spiritual terms meant that perfectionism and free will replaced predestination as the Methodist Church rapidly became the largest denomination in America. Methodism and then other movements arose to empower “ordinary people by taking their deepest spiritual impulses at face value rather than subjecting them to the scrutiny of orthodox doctrine and the frowns of respectable clergymen.”1 Evangelical-

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1Nathan Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 10. I have followed Hatch’s practice of including
minded faiths proselyted the young country with unflagging zeal; and the missionary-minded group with the highest percentage of its membership involved in proselyting may well have been the Mormons.²

By the time Oliver Cowdery preached the first public discourse on Mormonism on Sunday, 11 April 1830, Methodist circuit riders had busily combed the countryside for decades, encouraging a competitive spirit in the increasingly pluralistic American religious arena.³ Presbyterians, Baptists, Disciples of Christ (also called Christians or Campbellites), and finally Mormons followed their successful lead. Presbyterian preachers, Methodist exhorters, Baptist revivalists, Campbellite disciples, and Mormon elders all kept detailed records of their evangelism. Prominent individuals in each denomination also wrote autobiographies. Taken together, these sources reveal an accepted system of conventions about how to take religion to the public; those conventions assume a free marketplace context of theology and methodology,⁴ in which preachers took pains to

the 1830s in the period known as the early republic.


⁴I owe my awareness of the religious marketplace existing in the early republic to Nathan Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity, and Hatch, "Mormon and Methodist: Popular Religion in the Crucible of the Free Market," Journal of Mormon History 20, no. 1 (1994): 24-44. However, I owe my attitude toward a "religious economy" to Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, The Churching of America: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy 1776-1990 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992). "Market concept" is used here for its explanation value and unique application, not in any pejorative sense. As a former missionary, I sympathize with the feelings of missionaries, itinerants, evangelists, and preachers from all denominations who felt themselves to be messengers of God rather than religious peddlers or salespersons. These early missionaries took their assignments very
discover the most effective methods of presenting the message. Based on my intensive study of the writings of almost fifty Mormon missionaries in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain, recorded while each was actively proselyting or immediately upon returning from a mission, it is apparent that they did the same, presenting competing versions of Christianity to the public through prayer meetings, sermons, and preaching services; they competed directly and intensely for converts, confident that their message could stand up well in head-to-head encounters with other proselyters. This theme pervades every form of primary documentation on this subject.

Of special importance here are some characteristics that contributed to the success of the modest army of Mormon evangelists as they proselyted the masses who simultaneously sought more biblical and more American religion. Coupled with the revelations of Joseph Smith, Church periodicals, minutes, and membership records, the abundant writings of early Mormon missionaries show that a major portion of their success came from their ability to manipulate the conventional proselyting methods of their time, thereby distributing the message with maximum effect. However, Mormons did not simply mimic the Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Disciples to quickly convert a significant share of the available souls. Their success can be partly traced to Mormon improvements in the doctrines being preached by competitors and their ability to “deliver” the doc-

seriously and often at great personal sacrifice. Francis Wayland, a Baptist preacher and president of Brown University, described the motivation of these individuals well: “They were generally men impelled to leave their secular employments by a conviction that they could not otherwise answer a good conscience toward God.” Francis Wayland, Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches (New York: Sheldon & Blakeman, 1857), 23.


trine in ways attractive to those who might have otherwise leaned toward one of the other evangelical groups. The Mormons sent out a more basic traveling ministry than the Methodists, became more Baptist than the Baptists, and claimed a more direct restoration of the “ancient order” than the Disciples of Christ. Other evangelical churches proselyting that vast group of Americans searching for convincing Christianity in the 1830s clearly saw Mormon success occurring at their expense and were correspondingly frustrated. This paper explores Mormon missionary methods, including how missionaries adopted and sometimes surpassed the methods or messages of their contemporaries to win converts, then examines how Mormon success contributed to an already intensely competitive atmosphere in the religious marketplace.

**MORMON MISSIONARY METHODS**

Certainly one of the strongest appeals of Mormonism was the fact that its first adherents epitomized ordinary Americans who had found an extraordinary faith. They modeled the fulfillment of the promises Mormonism made to the spiritually seeking; they were easy to identify with. It is true that Baptist churches were more democratic in governance and in selecting officers, but none could match Mormonism’s offer of priesthood power and responsibility for virtually every male. Every male convert found the responsibility, prestige, and status of a ministerial rank within his grasp. All men in good standing were assigned priesthood ordination as a duty, then went on to proselyte “primitive” style, meaning without purse or scrip. Thus, no one was disqualified because of lack of wealth, property, experience, or education. Often their tours were brief—a couple of weeks to nearby settlements or a couple of months to New England or Virginia or Ontario to visit family members and old friends. In exceptional cases, wives accompanied their husbands on extended tours, even working with them in the ministry, as Phebe Carter Woodruff did with Wilford on his 1837-38 tour of Maine and the Fox Islands and in 1844-45 to Great Britain.™ Unmarried elders

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often traveled extensively and for longer periods of time; Wilford Woodruff's tour of the South, before meeting Phebe, lasted almost two years (January 1835-October 1836). Wherever they went, Mormon elders were to "preach by the way." Thus, among other locations, the hamlets along the oft-traveled roads between Mormon gathering places in Missouri and Ohio received repeated visits from elders making the trip back and forth.

One can hardly overstate the powerful impact of Joseph Smith's revelations on his followers and the intensity of their motivation to proselyte. As early as February 1829, revelations told Mormon men that they were "called to the work" of spreading the gospel and then reassured that the "field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul." I have looked especially at the 1830-40 period. Missionary work never became unimportant, but the attention it received during the first decade was remarkable.

Joseph Smith was, to Mormons, as Moses. Twenty-year-old Peter Whitmer, Jr., of Fayette, New York, an early missionary and tailor when not preaching, wrote, "The word of the Lord came unto me by the Prophet Joseph Smith on the tenth month [1830] saying Peter thou shalt go with Brother Oliver to the Lamanites" (American Indians). William McLellin, a twenty-five-year-old Tennessee schoolteacher, shortly after meeting Joseph Smith for the first time in October 1831, wrote: "This day the Lord condescended to hear my prayr and give me a revelation of his will, through his prophet or Seer. And these are the words which I wrote from his mouth." McLellin continued his record, making no effort to distinguish between Smith's words and the Lord's, for in this setting there was none. Thus, even before the official organization of

8Ibid., 33-37.
9History of the Church, 1:28.
10Ibid., 1:209-217.
11Peter Whitmer, Jr., Synopsis of mission to the Lamanites, 183-31, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives.
12McLellin is best known among Mormons for a challenge to rewrite one of Joseph Smith's revelations at a November 1831 conference at Hiram, Ohio, and thus is considered an "apostate" by many. Because McLellin left the Church in 1838 for
the "Church of Christ" in 1830, the foundation of an ambitious missionary system had been laid, modeled on Joseph Smith’s understanding of the New Testament example and empowered by the authority of new revelation.

After Joseph Smith and the first Mormon families moved from New York to Kirtland, Ohio, in late 1830-31 that town quickly became a hub of church activity and the surrounding area became saturated with missionaries. Elsewhere, missionary activity created branch churches throughout New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, and all but the deepest Southern states. The traveling elders were responsible for building up and managing these churches, with the ultimate object of encouraging new converts to "gather to Zion" in Missouri, which many did as soon as they were able.

reasons that are not entirely clear, some have speculated that his willingness to "write a commandment like unto one of the Lord’s" showed a destructive pride that led to his eventual separation from the Church. D&C 67; History of the Church, 1:220-29; Dean C. Jessee, The Papers of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 1:367; Welch and Shipps, The Journals of William E. McLellin, 253 note 15. This may be so, but the most interesting detail revealed by McLellin’s journals and other writings are that he painstakingly copied manuscripts of four revelations from 1831-32. In this particular experience, McLellin had five questions in mind and prayed for a revelation, seeking evidence that Joseph Smith was a prophet. He was deeply impressed with the answers that came, writing in 1848, ten years after his defection, "I now testify in the fear of God, that every question which I thus lodged in the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, were answered to my full and entire satisfaction. I desired for a testimony of Joseph’s inspiration. And I to this day consider it to me an evidence which I cannot refute." Ensign of Liberty 1, no. 4 (January 1848), 61. See Steven C. Harper, "LDS Section 22, RLDS Section 20," and Larry E. Dahl and Harper, "Section 66," in Welch and Shipps, The Journals of William E. McLellin, 235-39, 246-54; Richard L. Bushman, "The Rhetoric of Revelation: Ancient and Modern Models," paper delivered at the Ancient Scriptures and Restoration Conference, June 1997, sponsored by Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Provo, Utah; Mark R. Grandstaff, "Having More Learning Than Sense: William E. McLellin and the Book of Commandments Revisited," Dialogue 26 (Winter 1993): 23-48, fails to consider some of the newly available McLellin information and therefore has some shortcomings but also adds some insights.

13Davis Bitton, "Kirtland as a Center of Missionary Activity, 1830-1838," BYU Studies 11 (Summer 1971): 497-516.

Kirtland served as the barometer and the training center of the missionary force. "The Elders are mostly out preaching," William Phelps wrote from Kirtland in July 1835. In September and October he added, "Whenever the wind is in the north it blows cold" and "the travelling elders begin to come in." By November "the Elders are coming in almost every day"—not for a winter of relaxation but for new religious duties: "We calculate to commence a School of the Prophets as soon as we can," wrote Phelps on 27 October 1835. "We shall begin to study Hebrew this winter." The elders were also to study grammar and history besides building a temple, which they saw as their highest house of learning. They looked forward to the ordinance of the endowment to be given in the completed temple as an event that would dramatically increase their power as missionaries. Their secular and spiritual achievements were blended and spurred on by the ambition of being better qualified to preach the gospel.

For Church leaders, development of the missionary system claimed a high priority. Development came mainly through revelations, some of which made very specific changes. In June 1829, a revelation called for twelve apostles to be "called to go into the world to preach my gospel unto every creature." When these twelve were chosen in February 1835 "the first quorum of Seventies" was filled with former elders loyal to Joseph Smith. Provisions were made for future needs when additional seventies would be called, more quorums established "to go into all the earth, whithersoever the Twelve Apostles shall call them." Like other developments in the missionary system, this one had its origins, according to Joseph

15Bitton, "Kirtland as a Center of Missionary Activity."
18History of the Church, 1:60-64; D&C 18. For the development of the roles of the seventies and apostles, see James N. Baumgarten, "The Role and Function of the Seventies in LDS Church History" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1960); Ronald K. Esplin, "The Emergence of Brigham and the Twelve to Mormon Leadership," (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1981).
Smith, in "the revelations I have received." Then from February to early May of 1835, apostles and seventies met together frequently, ironed out their differences, set an itinerary for their collective mission throughout the northeast, and, by 4 May 1835, were, with the elders, again purseless and scripless ministers in America's religious marketplace. These men were all ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood, authorized to baptize, to lay on hands to grant the gift of the Holy Ghost and to heal the sick, and to conduct meetings. Assistant missionaries, called from the ranks of the "lower" or Aaronic Priesthood, were empowered to "preach, teach, expound, exhort," and priests in this order could also baptize.

The Church tried to facilitate missionary service by providing for the families of those dedicated to proselyting. "It is the duty of the church," a revelation declared, "to assist in supporting the families of those . . . who are called and must needs be sent unto the world to proclaim the gospel unto the world." Failure to fulfill one's mission could result in "chastening." William McLellin, as I have already shown, was fully persuaded that Joseph Smith was "A Prophet, a Seer and Revelater to the church of Christ," yet he disregarded a revelation calling him to "go unto eastern lands" (D&C 66:7), explaining to his brother Samuel that he started his mission but stopped when he got to Middlebury, Ohio, because of ill health and lagging faith. Moreover, he was "determined to seek a companion and come to Zion & settle at least for a while." Four months before writing this letter, he had married the petite Emiline Miller, a twenty-two-year-old tailor and sometime schoolteacher. Since the revelation McLellin had specifically requested in October 1831 had instructed, "Go not up to the land of Zion as yet" and "seek not to be cumbered" (presumably meaning married), Joseph Smith was displeased and wrote scathingly of this episode to Emma: "His conduct merits the disapprobation of every true follower of Christ." McLellin had "disobeyed the voice of him who is altogether Lovely for a woman." He was excommunicated, on grounds that are not completely clear, on 3 December 1832, but was reinstated only a

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19 *History of the Church*, 201-2.
20 Ibid., 1:64-70, 2:209-17.
21 Ibid., 1:242-45.
month later when he was called on another mission. This time he was "determined . . . to keep all the commandments of God."

If the penalties for neglect were harsh, promised rewards were glorious: "If ye are faithful," the Lord promised missionaries on 25 January 1832, "ye shall be laden with many sheaves, and crowned with honor, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life."

The most ingenious aspect of the Mormon missionary system thus became its balance of constraint and freedom. The unmatched specificity and authority of Joseph Smith’s revelations quashed potential rivals and effectively prevented schism in the Church’s first decade. Smith alone revealed God’s will directly. Yet coupled with this authoritative structure was a democratic impulse that tapped the talents of a diverse body of men and women, gave them responsibility and encouraged such spiritual gifts as speaking in tongues and prophesying. According to a February 1831 revelation, elders were to “observe the covenants and church articles to do them” and “teach the principles of my [Christ’s] gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of the Gospel.” From these foundational texts, however, the elders were free to sermonize “as they shall be directed by the Spirit.”

Revelation often dictated the destinations to which missionaries were sent. Peter Whitmer Jr., one of four missionaries instructed in September 1830 to preach to the Indians beyond Missouri, found a warm reception in Ohio’s Western Reserve en route. “There we declared the fulness of the Gospel and had much success. We

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24 McLellin may be considered one who attempted to usurp Joseph Smith’s revelatory powers; Hiram Page, who claimed to receive revelations through a personal seer stone, was another. *History of the Church*, 1:109-15; D&C 28; D&C 67.

baptized one 100 and thirty members." A January 1832 revelation announcing assignments to twenty-four elders let twelve choose their own field while directing two in general terms to the "south country," four more to the "eastern countries," while two were to go to the "regions westward" from Kirtland where they should systematically go "from house to house, and from village to village, and from city to city." Most missionaries apparently went first to relatives and friends.

The strengths of such a program were its blend of autonomy, flexibility, and informality, with enough authority, specificity, and direction to maintain some order. "On Sunday, April 11, 1830," reads the History of the Church, "Oliver Cowdery preached the first public discourse that was delivered by one of our number. Our meeting was held, by previous appointment, at the house of Mr. Peter Whitmer, Sen., Fayette. Large numbers of people attended." That same day half a dozen chose baptism, joined by five more a week later. Throughout the next decade, Mormon missionaries followed this pattern many hundreds of times in unnumbered hamlets.

Early Mormon preachers rose from a variety of backgrounds, but many of them were already skilled public speakers. Austin Cowles of upstate New York had been a preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church for many years before he became a Mormon at age forty-five. Evan M. Greene of western New York, though a "beardless boy," joined the Church at age sixteen in 1832 and had served two Mormon missions by the time he noted his eighteenth birthday near the end of his 1832 journal. McLellin took naturally to preaching the Mormon message a week after hearing it for the first time in Paris, Illinois. Samuel H. Smith, Joseph's younger brother, had a "common school" education and was "a man of slow

26 Whitmer, Synopsis of Mission to the Lamanites.
27 History of the Church, 1:242-45, 1:148-54; D&C 75.
28 History of the Church, 1:81.
29 Ibid., 6:347, 354, 398.
30 Evan Greene, Journal, 22 December 1832, LDS Church Archives; Messenger and Advocate 2 (April 1836): 294.
speech and unlearned" but his missionary efforts were as fruitful as those of Orson Hyde, whose journal reveals a systematic approach to preaching that emphasized theological distinctions and scriptural evidence. Smith, in contrast, relied heavily on his own experiences and the witness he could bear of having seen and "hefted" the book of Mormon plates. When Smith proselyted with Hyde or McLellin, the other regularly offered a structured and scriptural sermon which Smith followed with his distinctive witness. This approach proved convincing to seven who were baptized, who in turn apparently persuaded several others that Mormonism was legitimate.\(^{32}\)

Exact figures on the numbers of Mormon men serving missions at any given time are not available; but dozens of Mormon elders, priests, and teachers made their way through eastern America's villages, settlements, and cities, "giving out" appointments to preach as often as possible. They preached to small gatherings in homes, and requested the use of courthouses, barns, or schools for larger crowds. Sites were as diverse as taverns or Protestant meetinghouses, when they could obtain permission. In frontier settlements, especially in Missouri, they did not shun a stump for a pulpit or a public square for pews.\(^{33}\)

McLellin's missionary journals make it possible to say that about two-thirds of the Mormon missionary meetings were attended by a dozen or fewer listeners. The size of the rest ranged from a score to (rarely) hundreds. Sunday morning meetings usually filled the hall or the square. Midweek evening meetings drew crowds of twenty to fifty or larger. Almost always some in the audiences "were

\(^{32}\)Hyde arranged questions and catechism-like prompts for use in preaching, for example: "What was the effect of the apostles' testimony upon the sectarians?"; "Compare the situation of modern witnesses of this day with the ancients"; and "Show the difference of the Spirit that prevailed then & this day." Hyde, Journal, February-December 1832, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives; emphasis his; Samuel Harrison Smith, Journal, February 1832-May 1833, photocopy of holograph, LDS Church Archives; Welch and Shipps, The Journals of William E. McLellin, 62, 64-65, 67.

\(^{33}\)Welch and Shipps, The Journals of William E. McLellin, 386-87. In this, they were copying the behavior of their sectarian counterparts. "I preached out of doors; I preached in barns; I preached in school-houses," wrote Charles Finney. Finney, Memoirs, 80.
angry, some were inquiring, but the more part were careless. Still, between 1830 and 1836, the average crowd sizes increased dramatically. "Obviously," summarizes one analyst, "the Mormon Church was attracting increasing attention."

Mormon missionaries clearly took these methods from their former churches and accepted social practices of the time. Religious meetings had long served the secondary function of entertainment, thus meeting a social need. With no trouble raising an audience, an interesting or inspiring preacher could smartly influence public opinion and sell his spiritual wares with considerable skill. Notable preachers like Presbyterian Charles Finney and Methodist Lorenzo Dow pioneered "plain preaching" styles characterized by deemphasis on theological distinctions and corresponding emphasis on emotion-evoking imagery with anecdotes and metaphors borrowed from everyday life, in contrast to earlier, classically trained ministers. These techniques were designed to put religion within the mental reach of all early-republic Americans. Finney defended his methods by their effectiveness, shrugging off the criticism of "doctors of divinity."

Certainly, the popularity of such rousing sermons was a strong justification. Preachers competing in this religious marketplace "almost universally preached without notes." Repetitive sermons, designed to belabor a few points orally and lasting several hours were not uncommon; in fact, almost no preacher of any persuasion ever spoke for less than an hour. "I arose and preached

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35 In 1831-32, roughly 80 percent of the meetings were attended by no more than twelve and about 5 percent by thirteen to forty-nine. In 1833, 22 percent of the audiences numbered more than twelve and fewer than fifty, while 18 percent included more than fifty. By 1835, 30 percent of the audiences included thirteen to forty-nine, while 7 percent were attended by fifty or more. Through May-September 1835, almost 25 percent of the meetings counted fifty or more while another 12 percent fell into the thirteen-to-forty-nine category. In 1836, 36 percent of audiences were larger than fifty. Ibid., 381-82.

36 Finney, Memoirs, 83.


38 Finney's sermons "generally averaged nearly or quite two hours." Finney, Memoirs, 80.
about 2 hours," William McLellin entered in his journal on 10 May 1833, "and I did preach too, I think the greatest sermon that I ever preached in Ill." Perhaps, but no wonder the "more part" of audiences seemed "careless" to him. McLellin may have also tried to copy Charles Finney's "gesture religion," by adding arm movements to voice inflections which combined to make his sermons a series of crescendos; but Sidney Rigdon, a passionate preacher himself, gave William McLellin "a tremendous setting out about [his] awkward Jestures." However, Mormon missionaries copied and in some important ways eclipsed other methods of their contemporaries with great success.

Perhaps more than any other single evangelist, Finney was responsible for democratizing religion in the Burned-Over District of New York from which Mormonism emerged. Like Joseph Smith, he experienced powerful, intimately divine experiences, and he believed that anyone could. However, as Mormonism became more popular, competing with Finney directly for converts in upstate New York during the early 1830s, he criticized the new religion in almost the same terms that a traditional mid-eighteenth-century Presbyterian might have used. He called Mormonism "ridiculous credulity, founded in utter ignorance or a disregard of the first principles of evidence in relation to the kind and degree of testimony demanded to establish any thing that claims to be a revelation from God." Such backtracking by Finney is a subtle compliment to Mormonism's reach. The success of Mormon missionaries, who modeled their successful methods on Finney's to compete in America's religious marketplace, is Mormonism's subtle compliment to Finney.

39Welch and Shipps, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, 120.
40Ibid., 42-43.
4111 November 1834, in ibid., 148.
44See also Marianne Perciaccante, "Backlash Against Formalism: Early Mormonism's Appeal in Jefferson County," *Journal of Mormon History* 18 (Fall 1993): 35-63.
Circuit-riding Methodists, "having seen the superior advantages of a traveling ministry," had long taken pride in following the "primitive" purseless pattern of the New Testament.\(^{45}\) The Reverend E. F. Newell sought to show how close Methodism was to the New Testament by emphasizing differences between "settled preachers" and his Methodist itinerants: "Which of them looks most like a lazy man; and which gets the most money, the most reproaches, or follows the example of Christ and the Apostles nearest in traveling, suffering, preaching, self-denying, watchings, fastings, and winning souls to Christ?"\(^{46}\) Mormon elders were proud of their own purseless, scripless adventures through hardships, and recorded them carefully in missionary journals. They felt a kinship with the original apostles which authorized them to insist on the importance of their message. But the Mormons had even stronger New Testament claims. Thus, while Reverend Newell showed the primitive qualities of Methodism and Lorenzo Dow "frequently wished I had lived in the days of the prophets or apostles, that I could have sure guides,"\(^{47}\) Mormon prophets were called "with that same calling" Paul received; being ordained by the original apostles, "Peter, and James, and John"; and commanded by "Jesus Christ, your Lord and your God," to appoint and ordain more apostles, effective by 1835, to lead the ambitious missionary force (LDS D&C 18:9, 33; 27:12).

Mormon missionaries seized every opportunity to distinguish themselves from their "hireling" contemporaries who preached for money, or, as they believed, made merchandise of the souls of men: "priestcraft," as the Book of Mormon called it (2 Ne. 26:29; Alma 1:16; D&C 33). Moreover, healings by faith and other supernatural experiences were critical parts of the Mormon elder's repertoire, rewarding faith and providing evidence of restored authority. Miraculous healings, being overcome by the Spirit, and manifestations of the gift of tongues came usually in small groups of confirmed believers or among those on the brink of baptism whose faith was

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\(^{47}\)Quoted in Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity, 17.
sufficient to produce these confirming signs of divine grace. These were convincing appendages to the message most emphasized by Mormon elders, which future General Authority Zebedee Coltrin, then serving a mission in Ohio, summarized perfectly in his journal entry of 1 October 1832: “Filled our appointment. Shewed the ancient order of the church with apostles, Prophets, helps and gifts by the authority of the priesthood, and contrasted it with present day religion. Alleged the new and everlasting covenant must of necessity be established in these last days.”

Lacking an efficient system of communication between missionaries in the “field” and Church leaders in Kirtland, an elder could slip through the cracks. Peter Dustin, a very successful missionary, “went away,” William W. Phelps wrote from Kirtland, “and none of us knew where he was.” Delays in communication made it necessary for missionaries, after receiving their callings and general instructions by revelation, to manage their own affairs. For example, Evan M. Greene, after proselyting for some time, gathered with three other convert-missionaries on 22 October 1833 near Bedford, Massachusetts, and laid the case before the Lord and asked counsel of him for we felt as though our mission has ended and we felt that Bro Aldrege should go on to his church or the one he had built up in M[aine] also that Bro John [Boynton] should stay here a few weeks and then return to the church in Hollis[;] that Bro Cowan and myself should return to Kirtland and bare testimony by the way and we felt peace in it and received it as the word of the Lord.

For example, Esaias Edwards of Illinois and his wife, Elizabeth, ill with a “strange disease,” were intellectually converted to Mormonism between spring 1837 and July 1838 “by a close examination of the scriptures,” but they delayed baptism until Elder Alexander Williams “layed his hands upon her head and rebuked the disease in the name of Jesus Christ. Her pains immediately left her and she was filled with the spirit of God.” They were baptized “as soon as she recovered strength enough to walk to the creek.” Esaias Edwards, Autobiography, 1811-1847, not paginated, typescript, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Zebedee Coltrin, Journals, 1832-34, 3 vols. typescript, LDS Church Archives.

Quoted in Van Orden, “Writing to Zion,” 553, 566-67, 583 note 43.

An impressive combination of the American democratic spirit and dependence on intimate and specific messages from God thus guided the Mormon missionaries, a pattern very distinctive to the Mormons. Believing they were on God's errand and subject to his direction, elders found their divine guidance in the principles set forth in the revelations, common sense, and feelings of peace, which they accepted "as the word of the Lord."

Other directions came from leaders at Kirtland, who sometimes published general notices in the newspapers or sent individual instructions in letters that passed from one missionary to another. These could call for an elder's return to Kirtland or assign him to another area in which to preach. John Boynton, for instance, delivered a letter to Greene "to read unto the Church," instructing Boynton to find Greene, "and then we should proceed to his fathers which took me from my mission to the Black River." As another example, Oliver Cowdery, then assistant president of the Church, wrote to John Burk, then an elder in Missouri, in August 1835 complaining: "We [the presidency of the Church] wonder if the elders never think to give us their proceedings, officially. We want to know from them what they are doing, and what they are to do hereafter. Whether they are about to go forth in the spirit of meekness and preach the Gospel." Phelps noted in July 1835 that "the spirit of Satan" had persuaded "the elders to do what they ought not to do and leave undone that which they ought to do"—meaning to preach the gospel. For instance, Lyman Wight, a western New York farmer and a Campbellite who converted to Mormonism in Ohio in 1830, moved to Missouri in 1831, served a very successful

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52 Greene copied the letter into his journal 25 June 1835; Greene's journal also records writing reports to leaders in Kirtland. Perhaps a major reason for journal-keeping was to facilitate such reporting. See entry of 9 September 1833. Phelps, as Joseph Smith's aide in Kirtland in 1835, wrote several letters to and about missionaries revealing these aspects of Mormon proselyting. See Van Orden, "Writing to Zion."

53 Oliver Cowdery, Letter to Missouri Saints, 14 August 1835, quoted in Van Orden, "Writing to Zion," 560.

54 Quoted in ibid., 553-54.
mission in Cincinnati in 1832 in which he helped convert over a hundred, then left off preaching until he received a stern letter written 1 June 1835 from Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, William W. Phelps, and John Whitmer warning him that “unless he goes forth into the vineyard and magnifies his calling according to the commandment, Satan will sift him as chaff.”

Another responsibility of missionaries was to “regulate the affairs of Zion,” maintain order, discipline backsliders, and clarify doctrine in the outlying churches where remnants of Protestantism or mysticism mixed easily with the Mormon gospel. According to Oliver Cowdery on 30 May 1835, “the Lord appointed regular councils for the trial of transgressors.” Through this system, as the elders visited the outlying churches, they sometimes served as judges as well as preachers. Given the fluidity of both local jurisdictions and missionaries’ authority, some elders assumed an authority they did not have. Oliver Cowdery recorded that a certain George Busket presided at an “Elder’s Court” only to have his decision indignantly appealed to the First Presidency. The Presidency “decided that the proceedings were illegal on the part of the Elders; they not having authority to act in that country.” He told Busket: “Go to the parties and witnesses and forgive them whatever hardness you may hold against them and they must forgive you. When you have done so and sufficiently humbled yourself, prepare yourself to go forth and magnify your calling” as a missionary.

To improve communications in an ambitious system set on visiting “every nation and kindred and tongue and people” (testimony of the three and eight witnesses, Book of Mormon) and also to combat negative newspaper reports about Mormonism’s origins and intentions, Church leaders eagerly joined the explosive growth of newspapers in the early republic. “Virtually nonexistent in 1800,” Nathan Hatch noted, “religious periodicals had, by 1830, become

56Van Orden, “Writing from Zion,” 552.
57Quoted in ibid., 552.
the grand engine of a burgeoning religious culture, the primary means of promotion for, and bonds within, competing religious groups.\textsuperscript{58} Though always more modest in circulation than their Methodist, Baptist, and probably Christian counterparts, Mormon periodicals served the same purpose. Joseph Smith's revelations appeared in Mormon periodicals before publication in book form. The Church's first official newspaper, the monthly \textit{Evening and the Morning Star}, was edited by William Phelps at Independence, Missouri, from June 1832 through September 1834. Oliver Cowdery edited \textit{The Messenger and Advocate} from 1834 to 1837 in Kirtland, while the \textit{Elder's Journal}, edited by Joseph Smith, followed in 1837-38 in Far West. All three of these newspapers circulated to missionaries, despite their mobility, and served an important function as connective tissue in the gangly young church.

The \textit{Star}, as the elders called it, included many revelations, which were not published in book form before 1833 and which, even then, were not widely available. Before the \textit{Star} began publication, the elders "read and copyed revelations" to use on their next preaching tour.\textsuperscript{59} Moreover, the \textit{Star} kept elders abreast of activities in Kirtland and Missouri, official policy changes, and some current events in the nation and the world.

Edited by the sometimes vituperative W. W. Phelps,\textsuperscript{60} the \textit{Star}

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\textsuperscript{59}McLellin copied four revelations into his journal. Welch and Shipps, \textit{The Journals of William E. McLellin}, 54. Orson Hyde's 1832 journal includes holograph copies of what are now sections 42, 45, and 50. Zebedee Coltrin's journal (1832-34) includes copies of Sections 20 and 42 while George Burkett's March-May 1836 journal begins with what is now D&C 101.

\textsuperscript{60}George A. Smith confided to Joseph Smith that he "considered Phelps the sixth part of an editor, and that was the satirist. When it came to the cool direction necessarily entrusted to an editor in the soothing of public opinion—the soothing of enmity, he was deficient, and would always make more enemies than friends; but for my part, if I were able, I would be willing to pay Phelps for editing a paper, providing no body else should have the privilege of reading it but myself." Joseph Smith reportedly responded, "Brother Phelps makes such a severe use of language as to make enemies all the time." \textit{History of the Church} 5:390-91. See also Bruce Van
manifests Mormonism's competitive arrival among the churches trying to reach Americans through the press. My examination of its first issue shows its intentions and uses to missionaries and their converts. This issue contains a millennial revelation that wove together such New Testament themes as the ten virgins and "signs of the coming of the Son of Man," including "earthquakes in divers places." It was given, Smith wrote, to disabuse readers' minds of "many false reports and foolish stories being published or circulated to prevent people from investigating the work or embracing the faith." 61 Most importantly, it printed the "Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ," by which missionaries and their converts were to live, now essentially Doctrine and Covenants 20. According to my analysis, half of the issues printed some aspect or "items of law for the government of the Church of Christ." The Book of Mormon received almost as much attention. Most of these articles presented various evidences for the book's antiquity, such as the "Discovery of Ancient Ruins in Central America." These articles were supplemented by the printed testimonies of the eleven witnesses of the Book of Mormon plates and with biblical interpretations that proclaimed the Book of Mormon as the stick of Ephraim (Ezek. 37:15-70) and the sealed book of Isaiah (29:11-18). The literal gathering of Israel, that topic with a distinctive Mormon emphasis, often found a place on the front page. Articles on the millennium, the kingdom of God, and the signs of the times appeared regularly. Revelation, resurrection, prayer, and perfectionism were print-worthy topics, as were prophets (true and false), faith, and the establishment of Zion. However, it contains no reports from missionaries.

In contrast, the *Messenger and Advocate* included letters from missionaries. Peter Dustin, the missionary who "disappeared" during the summer of 1834, sent a letter in October 1835 reporting his mission in Malahide, Ontario, where he baptized thirty-two and

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established a branch. "Brethren, pray for them," he pleaded, for "when the people or the meek began to embrace the truth, the enemy raged and the meek rejoiced in the midst of all the slanderous reports." This letter captures the fundamental worldview of the early Mormon elder. Other elders wrote of similar experiences, always in dualist terms: good versus evil, the truth embraced by "the meek" versus "the enemy" who opposes. In the competitive religious marketplace, elders often used "slanderous" or some synonym to describe efforts to denounce Mormonism.

Readership figures of these papers remain unknown; but among the fifty-plus missionary diaries I studied, a vast majority mention reading or hearing one of the three newspapers at least twice. Orson Hyde, for instance, wrote on 6 July 1832 while he was serving a mission in New York and Massachusetts: "Received the STAR preached in the evening; spoke in great plainness and boldness; read some in the STAR." Moreover, close examination of the William McLellin journals (1831-36) suggests a possible chronological correspondence between articles printed in the Star or the Messenger and Advocate and the points of McLellin's sermons.

McLellin's uncommonly detailed journal indicates that missionaries considered the Star an important proselyting tool and also sold subscriptions. "If any of your neighbors wish to take the Star," McLellin wrote to his non-Mormon brother Samuel, "send their names and cash in your letter." A Mr. Seely "seemed to be quite believing and subscribed for the Star" in March 1833. In September 1834, Jacob Morris near Danville on the Illinois/Indiana border gave McLellin "$2 to carry to the Editors of the Star." In May 1835, McLellin "obtained 12 subscribers for the Messenger and Advocate," and his entry for 7 June 1836 lists the names and addresses of seventeen more.

62 Peter Dustin, Letter to the Editor, Messenger and Advocate 2, no. 1 (October 1835): 207. See also John P. Greene, Letter to Editor, 1, no. 1 (October 1834); Oliver Cowdery, Letter to W. W. Phelps, 2, no. 1 (October 1835).
63 Orson Hyde, Journal, 6 July 1832.
64 Welch and Shipps, The Journals of William E. McLellin, 85.
65 Ibid., 138.
66 Ibid., 225. Erastus Snow, Journal, April-December 1836, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives, summarized his efforts: "preached 147 times and
COMPETITION FOR CONVERTS

As Mormon missionaries adapted the methods of their Methodist counterparts, finding ways to surpass their claims to apostolic authority, gifts of the spirit, and revelatory documents, they converted some and infuriated others. Mormonism’s successful claims were convincing to the former Methodist circuit-riders Joseph and Phineas Young, Brigham’s brothers, and to their brother-in-law, John P. Greene, who found that Mormonism included the ideals they had hoped for in Methodism. Once converted, they set out again to retrace their former circuits, confident that they now had the real article and specifically seeking Methodists of their acquaintance whom they felt Mormonism would also convert.67

Baptists had similar experiences with Mormon missionaries. Most Baptists advocated baptism by immersion for adult believers. Except for an obscure faction, Baptists shunned infant baptism as nonbiblical and required rebaptism of those sprinkled in infancy “because we do not consider them to have been baptized,” as Francis Wayland explained. “We consider ourselves not to baptize again, but to baptize those who have never yet submitted to this ordinance.”68 Citing restored apostolic authority, Joseph Smith took this argument a step further by requiring rebaptism of Baptists turned Mormon, again as an authoritative revelation.69 This distinction was one of the factors that converted the reformed Baptist missionary, Parley P. Pratt, who in turn became a legendary missionary.70

obtained 27 subscribers for the paper printed in Kirtland.”


68Wayland, Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches, 98; emphasis his.


70Parley P. Pratt, Jr., ed., The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt (Salt Lake City:
The Disciples of Christ, who achieved denominational status on the heels of Mormonism, also found Mormonism a stiff competitor. Alexander Campbell, the Disciples’ influential leader, had an intense determination to reestablish the “ancient order” of Christianity, and—despite his own contributions—he despaired at the divisive effects of pluralism on Christian unity. In 1835 Campbell published Christianity Restored, which promised to provide “a connected view of the principles and rules by which the living oracles may be intelligently and certainly interpreted [and] of the capital positions sustained in the attempt to restore the original gospel and order of things.” By 1835, however, Mormonism had already surpassed Campbellism in claiming that God had intervened directly to restore his only valid church through Joseph Smith as a living oracle, claims Campbell could never match.

He strongly protested Mormon encroachment, however, objecting to the Book of Mormon on the grounds that it simply set down answers to all the theological questions of the day in scriptural language. Campbell satisfied himself and probably many others that Joseph Smith had concocted the Book of Mormon. He also acknowledged with chagrin that “several hundred persons of different denominations believed in it. Given Campbell’s ambitions, perhaps part of what motivated his antagonism towards Joseph Smith was the latter’s success as a simpleton prophet, an unlettered rustic who produced the book that addressed the day’s timeliest questions and restored Christianity better than the theologically trained Campbell could. Thus it was that Finney and Campbell, who had pioneered the democratization of American Christianity by emphasizing that ministers need not be classically trained and that anybody could tap into the spirit of revelation,


72Alexander Campbell, Christianity Restored (Bethany, Va.: M’vay and Ewing, 1835).

retreated from these positions as Mormonism came increasingly to occupy them.  

Campbell had another reason to be frustrated at the progress of Mormonism. Sidney Rigdon, a "prominent" preacher of "significant sermons" in Campbell's Reformed Baptist movement of the 1820s, quickly became a prominent preacher of Mormon sermons after being rebaptized a Mormon late in 1830.  

Rigdon had been Campbell's assistant in defending the doctrine of baptism as "appropriate only for penitent believers in Christ, not for infants." (Campbell "argued that the purpose of baptism is not for the forgiveness of original sin but for the absolution of personal sin.")  

Joseph Smith promptly appointed Rigdon as his own assistant but with additional authority that Campbell could not offer. Rigdon, Joseph Smith revealed, was as John the Baptist, "destined . . . for a greater work" than lieutenant to Campbell, including authority to lay on hands to grant the Holy Ghost, "even as the apostles of old" (LDS D&C 35:3-6). Rigdon's marked influence on his Campbellite followers turned many of them into Mormons in the area around Kirtland, Mentor, and Hiram in northern Ohio.  

Joseph Smith did not back down from the challenges of a competitive religious marketplace. For example, he once preached for three hours on the "Methodist discipline in its black deformity," flatly required rebaptism of Baptists turned Mormon, and physically ejected an abusive "Baptist Priest" from his house.  

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76Van Wagoner, Sidney Rigdon, 33. In June 1828 Campbell noted how effective Rigdon had lately been: "Bishop's [sic] Scott, Rigdon, and Bentley, in Ohio, within the last six months have immersed about eight hundred persons." Untitled article, Christian Baptist, 2 June 1828, 263.

77History of the Church, 2:319; D&C 22; Welch and Shipps, The Journals of William E. McLellin, 152, 268-69; Harper, "LDS Section 22," 235-38; Scott H.
1835 letter, Joseph Smith contended with Alexander Campbell in a sarcasm-coated theological exchange. Campbell called Smith an atheist and linked him with the sorcerer Elymas (Acts 13:10). Smith in turn called Campbell a modern son of Sceva, "who would fain have made people believe he could cast out devils," and "with the best of feeling would say to him, in the language of Paul to those who said they were John's disciples, but had not so much as heard there was a Holy Ghost—to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, by those who have legal authority, and under their hands you shall receive the Holy Ghost, according to the scriptures."78

Following the example set by their leaders, Mormon missionaries in every diary or journal I have read recorded competitive confrontations with Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Christian clergymen. No matter how similar the doctrines and practices of the other evangelicals were to Mormonism, the elders believed that everyone else was wrong, a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me" (Isa. 29:13). To this "sectarianism," Mormon elders neither felt nor sought any theological connection. They believed deeply and very literally that they alone preached the primitive gospel, not by virtue of Protestant descendancy but as restored direct from heaven to Joseph Smith. They regarded the Book of Mormon and the Church itself as the "marvelous work" prepared to supplant "sectarianism" in the latter days (Isa. 29:14).

Purseless, scripless, and either apostles or personal acquaintances of prophets and apostles as authentic as the Bible's, whose revelations and authority superseded those of even the most pious Protestant minister, Mormon missionaries were not surprised when clergymen received them on less than friendly terms. Confident elders often welcomed challenges and debates, hurled back epithets of "hireling priests" or "priests of Babylon," and felt convinced that any mistreatment strengthened the honor in being counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' name (Alma 5:41). Persecution made them


78History of the Church 2:268-69, 319.
feel more akin to the first Christians. While a generous or benevolent evangelist might get credit for Christian conduct in a Mormon journal entry, "sectarian" doctrines and often their preachers were treated as unacceptable, even contemptible. Missionary journals and Church periodicals from the 1830s are therefore full of reports of Mormon triumph over clerical opposition. In an enthusiastic but not atypical account, Apostle David Patten claims that he gave a Protestant challenger "the length of his own rope and he hung himself on lust." "One suspects," Davis Bitton suggested, "that the encounters may have appeared different from the other side."

Nothing in the documentary record suggests that such debates resulted in significant conversions of clergy or members of their congregations. One of William McLellin's several run-ins with "a Methodist priest" appears far more typical of what happened when elders and their competitors became "lifted up." After McLellin's already prolonged three-hour sermon, the Methodist "arose with all the rage [and] fury which it seemed the evil one could invent." "When he closed," McLellin continued, "I arose and showed the people his mistakes." McLellin could not preach the next day, for "I had lost the spirit of God." Retiring to the nearby woods, he "prayed [and] prayed until I found out what was the matter... I found by close examination that my whipping out the Methodist P[riest] so completely the day before had tended to lift me up," McLellin recorded, even in confession still somewhat immodest. This experience typifies a pervasive theme in missionary journals, namely, that the elders struggled against the temptation to preach for self-aggrandizement. When they recognized it, they tried to be humble; not infrequently, experiences such as McLellin's compelled them to be humble.

Still one should not focus entirely on the competitive spirit

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79 Zebedee Coltrin, for example, thought a Methodist minister named Brown in Madison, Ohio, "enjoyed the light of the Spirit, until he ridiculed baptism and the Spirit left him." Coltrin, Diary, 24 September 1832; Orson Hyde "called on a Freewill Baptist who was quite friendly, and his wife also" on 4 June 1832 near Richford, New York.

80 David Patten, Diary, LDS Church Archives.

81 Bitton, "Kirtland as a Center of Missionary Activity," 508.

pervading the evangelical marketplace in the 1830s. After all, another spirit appears to have been just as pervasive. Mormon successes depended partly on competition, but the elders had to resist shallow name-calling if they hoped to gain converts. A more successful form of competition was to boldly preach the “first principles” or “five points” as some called them: faith in Christ, repentance, baptism by immersion, receiving the Holy Ghost through the laying on of hands, and then living a life of devout obedience to divine commandments, reinforced by challenging their listeners to “prove all things” (1 Thess. 5:21). When taken to the public, “the principles of salvation through Jesus Christ” proved persuasive, especially as it was added upon or emphasized by spiritual confirmations, miraculous healings, and spiritual gifts. McLellin’s own willingness to enter the fray with outbursts against “sectarianism” aside, Joseph Smith taught that the elders could best reach the people with a simple message:

Preach and cry aloud, “Repent ye, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent and believe the gospel.” Declare the first principles and let the mysteries alone, lest ye be overthrown. Never meddle with the visions of beasts and subjects you do not understand. . . . Preach those things the Lord has told you to preach about—repentance and baptism for the remission of sins.

Thus, when Mormon missionaries taught the basics of their faith, preaching from the Bible, emphasizing the “authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” and interpreting through the authoritative light of Joseph Smith’s revelations, people were moved. When they ended each sermon—as they almost always did—with an invitation to “obey the gospel” by being baptized, nearly everywhere a few and sometimes more came forward.

Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy was one. She grew up in western New York where she acquired a “fair education” in the “common

83Snow, Journal, 14 April 1838.
84History of the Church, 5:343.
85All the elders wrote of emphasizing the Book of Mormon. Abraham Smoot’s repeated phrase, “authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” best captures the point they tried to make. Smoot, Diary, 7 and 11 March 1838, photocopy of holograph, LDS Church Archives.
branches” of reading, writing, and arithmetic, along with a keen sense of the expanding American pluralism and corresponding evangelism notable in her region. Her Baptist mother and Universalist father were “Church going people”; her Methodist grandparents taught her to keep the Sabbath, read the scriptures, and “go to Sunday School and meeting amongst the Methodist persuasion,” while she also attended church with a nearby Presbyterian aunt and uncle.86

As a result, young Nancy grew up with a “religious turn of mind... I read the Bible and prayed with all the sincerity in the world for I wanted to be a Christian and be happy like they were.” Puzzled by the differences she noted between the New Testament and “what these different denominations thought,” Nancy refused to “unite with any.” “I wanted with all my heart to be good,” but even at revivals, despite her desire “to get that change of heart, . . . I could feel no different.”

She was a young wife when, in the summer of 1830, “rumbles about a gold bible that a gold-digger had dug up . . . came fast and thick.” When the first Mormon missionaries appointed a meeting in her town, Nancy and two women friends attended with many others to hear David Patten “teach the pure doctrine of our Savior.” She described his sermon as a “powerful” one “on the first principles of the Gospel as taught by the Savior and his apostles. Oh how plain and beautiful and easy to understand. I believed with my whole soul.” Nancy’s husband was more reluctant and “took his time to investigate,” apparently by commencing a thorough study of the Bible. In the spring of 1834, they were baptized.

Zerah Pulsipher was likewise motivated by his biblical understanding. His father had been millennium minded, and Zerah had experienced a number of spiritual manifestations as a young adult, including dreams and a comforting “vision” of his deceased wife. He did not believe in a theology that included “souls left in Hell fire to all eternity.”87

86Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy, Autobiography, Special Collections, Lee Library; see also a different version, Hubert Howe Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
87Zerah Pulsipher, Autobiography, 5-6, Special Collections, Lee Library.
In Onondaga County, New York, in 1830 Zerah was farming, had built a mill, and had constructed a “meeting house for the Baptist Church” which he served as a lay leader. In the summer of 1831, the first report he heard of “an ancient record or Golden Bible . . . struck me like a shock of electricity. . . . I thought it might be something that would give light to my mind upon principles that I had been thinking of for years and many times I had remarked that the pure church with its gifts and graces was not on the earth, if so I had not found it. But I should be happy enough to find it in my day.” He obtained a Book of Mormon, “read it through twice and gave it a thorough investigation and believed it was true.” When Jared Carter preached in Onandago County in the winter of 1831-32, Pulsipher “questioned him upon the principles of the ancient gospel with all its gifts belonging to it. . . . I asked him if he had ever laid hands on the sick and they had recovered. Yes, he said, he had in many instances.”

Pulsipher opened his church to Carter and called together his congregation for a meeting at which Carter declared the Book of Mormon “to be a revelation from God.” At the end of the sermon, Pulsipher arose and said to the congregation that we had been hearing strange things and if true they were of the utmost importance to us. If not true it was one of the greatest impositions and as the preacher had said that he had got his knowledge from heaven and was nothing but a man and I the same, that I had just as good a right to obtain that blessing as he, therefore I was determined to have that knowledge for myself which I considered it my privilege, from that time I made it a matter of fervent prayer.

When the internal conviction came, he told his Baptist congregation that he was going “to join the Church of Latter Day Saints, which I did and a large body of my church went with me. I was ordained to the office of an elder and went to preaching with considerable success at home and abroad.”

Nancy Tracy and Zerah Pulsipher typify the positive responses to the first Mormon missionaries. Such converts came from ordinary

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88Ibid. 6; Jared Carter, Journal, esp. late 1832-early 1833, LDS Church Archives.
circumstances and were socially well adjusted. They were keenly aware of the religious diversity and intensity around them and in them. But before they became Mormons, nothing would have distinguished them from many others. When they encountered the Mormon missionaries, the message harmonized with their biblical foundation, appealed to their democratic tendency to decide for themselves, and honored their spiritual hunger to have a direct spiritual manifestation of confirmation. Logic instructed them that the Mormon claim must be either divine or devilish. Helping to tip the balance was the missionaries' manners: sermons were “plain and beautiful and easy to understand” delivered by men who claimed and demonstrated that they possessed divine authority. The Book of Mormon also challenged them to determine its authenticity. Believing that their inquiries could be answered, they received both intensely personal experiences and, in a number of cases, the revelations of a personable prophet. For these Americans, embracing Mormonism was the most spiritual, the most reasonable, the most empirical, and the most American response to what they viewed as the most convincing product in the religious marketplace.

They shared the sentiments of Kentuckian John Lowe Butler, who wrote of his 1835 conversion, with a kind of common thoughtfulness often disdained by doctors of divinity, that Mormonism “was just the thing I had been hankering after.”

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As much as some might regret it, there is realistically no way for leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to be completely removed from the realm of political activity; and for much of its early history, they made no pretense of standing aloof. That situation was sometimes unfortunate. The not-inaccurate perception of non-Mormon neighbors that the Prophet and his associates might guide all aspects of the lives of the faithful fostered episodes of anti-Mormon activity in Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, Utah, and in various mission fields.

Yet in the murky swamp of Gilded Age politics, Church leaders felt constrained to grope for a pathway to survival and security for themselves and their followers. Vivid memories of heavy-handed federal policies, often initiated by less-than-scrupulous Utah oppo-

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nents, had conditioned many Latter-day Saint General Authorities to something like a siege mentality that was far from unjustified. Sometimes they, too, adopted the view that the ends of protecting spiritual sanctity justified the means of less-than-candid statements and behind-the-scenes political maneuvering. Critical moralizing ill becomes those of us in the U.S. Church who currently bask in the sunlight of general respect and public approval, standing on the much firmer ground of more carefully protected First Amendment rights. Faced with their exigencies, we almost certainly would have explored the same options they did. Certainly successful Church involvement in politics to achieve Utah statehood saved Mormonism from extinction as a legal entity in the United States. After such a perilously won success, Mormon leaders could hardly be expected to totally abandon politics.

In the process of securing what the First Presidency termed "political deliverance," they had to make public announcements that they would abandon not only plural marriage but also ecclesiastical interference in political affairs. Although they did not intend such conditions to be permanent, after statehood was achieved it became increasingly difficult to resume either former practice. This obstacle not only grew from pressures outside Mormondom but also from Latter-day Saints who took the promises as sincere and, as a result, embraced monogamy and political independence so fully that the supposedly temporary conditions gradually became permanent. Some of the most significant developments in this process occurred at the moment statehood was achieved and soon thereafter.

The struggle for Utah statehood has been adequately scrutinized;¹ however, there has been but little examination of the first instances thereafter when Mormon leaders might be tempted back into the political thicket. How they occasionally avoided and at other times tumbled into the pitfalls prevalent at the time is the focus of this paper. And to fully understand that perilous activity, some essential events in the quest for statehood demand further examination.

One of the most unfortunate eras of Church history is the anti-polygamy raid of the mid-1880s, when feelings were so intense that Utah historian Gustive O. Larson was not inaccurate in titling a chapter of his study of the period "At the Edge of War." Almost all important Church leaders were in hiding, and many ecclesiastical matters were simply not attended to. It is not certain that the Church could have survived indefinitely either the increasing prosecution by federal authorities or the lack of direct Church leadership, and many leading Latter-day Saint brethren came to recognize that fact.

On the night of 15 February 1887, underground bodyguards escorted two men into President John Taylor's hiding place, the residence of William Rouche at Kaysville. Franklin S. Richards was the son of Apostle Franklin D. Richards and an attorney primarily engaged in the Church's political activities, and Charles W. Penrose, editor of the *Deseret News*, then a counselor in the Salt Lake Stake presidency, and future apostle, was functioning as a sort of publicity agent for the Church. Richards and Penrose were about to depart for Washington, D.C., to deal with a major crisis; their associates had failed to block the passage of the Edmunds-Tucker Bill, and its provisions threatened even harsher judicial treatment of Mormons and their organization. The key strategy Richards and Penrose hoped to implement was to propose that the provisions of the Edmunds-Tucker Act not go into effect for another six months, during which time a Utah convention would frame a constitution prohibiting polygamy. The emissaries understood they needed to secure the approval of President Taylor to pursue this approach.

At the crucial Kaysville meeting, Richards and Penrose attempted to persuade Taylor that the constitution strategy need not be viewed as a compromise of the Church position on plural marriage but rather as a purely political matter in which the non-polygamists (the only ones who could legally vote since the Edmunds Act of 1882 had disfranchised all polygamous Mormons), would

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3Ibid., 139-54, 174.
simply be acting in their capacity as citizens. The polygamists, including almost all General Authorities, would not be committing themselves on the important subject since they were already barred from voting. This legally ingenious distinction was the first of several instances in which Mormon leaders distinguished between political and religious positions on the doctrine of plural marriage. The implication was that it was possible to allow the world’s standards to apply to nonpolygamists while simultaneously allowing others to render obedience to the higher law by remaining aloof from the process of sanctioning the Utah constitutional concession.

Another of the arguments Richards and Penrose presented to Taylor was that, if Utah statehood were achieved, the laws would then be enforced by officials whom the predominantly Mormon electorate chose. In contrast, as a territory—Utah’s current status—officials were beholden only to the federal government and were almost uniformly hostile to Utah and its people. After due deliberation, Taylor, then in the last months of his life, stated that he could see no objections to carrying out this plan, while stressing that the Church should not be regarded as “conceding anything religiously.” As an indication that he fully accepted Richards’s and Penrose’s arguments, Taylor wryly observed that “if a constitution should be adopted according to the provisions [outlined] it would, at worst, only be punishing ourselves for what our enemies are now punishing us.”

That summer Mormon delegates to a Utah constitutional convention approved of a provision actually drafted by President Grover Cleveland’s solicitor general, George A. Jenks, who was in Utah for that purpose. With Church leaders actively encouraging their people to ratify, 96 percent of 13,702 territorial voters approved the document, and it went to Congress. All General Authorities and probably most Church members understood there had been

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5Charles W. Penrose and Franklin Snyder Richards, Letter to John Taylor, 16 February 1887; John Taylor and George Q. Cannon, Letter to Penrose and Richards, 19 February 1887, John Taylor Papers, Historical Department Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter LDS Church Archives), Salt Lake City; James Jack to John W. Young, 27 February 1887, James Jack Papers, LDS Church Archives. For ease of identification in this essay, I have provided fuller versions of names where initials may have been used originally.
no doctrinal concession; and advocates of plural marriage made it
their business to continue stressing such doctrines, although more
quietly than in the past. For example, on 31 July, the day before the
Utah constitution was ratified by Utah voters, Joseph F. Smith, then
second counselor in the First Presidency, told a small private gath-
ering that God honored those women who entered plural marriage
and “the men who obeyed it occupied a higher plane than those who
disregarded it.” He conceded that all Latter-day Saints had their free
agency about whether or not to enter the practice, but warned,
“Those who reject it would be damned” while those who obeyed
would be saved and rewarded. He was apparently referring to the
current belief that only those participating in polygamy could expect
to attain the highest degree of the celestial kingdom, while others
would be relegated to lower levels within the same realm.6

In late July 1887, John Taylor died. Although Wilford Wood-
ruff would not be officially sustained as his successor for many
months, he became virtual head of the Church immediately as senior
apostle. On 4 August, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith,
Taylor’s former counselors, were nominated with him to act as a
committee charged to direct the statehood movement. Thereafter,
the three devoted much time and attention to these matters. Often,
when writing letters for this effort, the three signatures would be
bracketed and labeled “committee,” meaning the committee on
statehood.7

Among those who did not believe that Church leaders were
sincere in their support of a state constitution prohibiting plural
marriage were the Democratic Party leaders in Congress who were
required to act on the Mormon petition for statehood. For that
reason William Springer of Illinois, the Democrat chair of the House
Committee on Territories, proposed an amendment to the Constitu-
tion of the United States providing that, should Utah officials fail

6Abraham H. Cannon, Journal, 31 July 1887, Archive of the Mormon
Experience, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; see also
Lyman, Political Deliverance, 47-53.

7Heber J. Grant, Journal, 4 August 1887, LDS Church Archives; Wilford
Woodruff, George Q. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith, Letter to John W. Young, 17
August 1887, Letterbooks, First Presidency Papers, LDS Church Archives.
to enforce anti-polygamy laws, Congress could enact such statutes and provide for enforcement.\textsuperscript{8} Many of the strongest advocates of Utah statehood believed that this kind of measure was essential to assuring doubters the problem would be solved.

However, the Church committee on statehood, consisting of Woodruff, Cannon, and Smith, firmly instructed their agents, particularly John T. Caine, Utah's Congressional delegate, and Church lobbyist John W. Young, against cooperating with this amendment since they believed it would too closely restrict continuing plural marriages.\textsuperscript{9} Their stance confirmed the suspicions of their Democrat allies and assured that the 1887 effort at Utah statehood would be unsuccessful.

In late 1888, during a similar attempt at admission, Democrat leaders asked the Quorum of the Twelve for some substantive concessions on polygamy. Again, the Twelve considered the proposal but finally refused. They concluded that such changes could only come as "the Word of the Lord" through his designated spokesman, now Wilford Woodruff.\textsuperscript{10} The Democratic leaders of Congress thus had no choice but to leave Utah out of the omnibus bill then about to admit North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Washington. This bill passed on 27 February 1889.

One former Democrat congressman, General John A. McCler-ndand, had been appointed one of five Utah Commissioners charged with overseeing elections and other federal matters in the territory. He was known to be "friendly disposed" to the people of Utah and had some sympathy with their attempt at statehood. In a series of letters to President Grover Cleveland during the period when statehood was pending, he reported progress in the "work of reform" in the territory, meaning that, according to his observations, the tenacity with which polygamy was defended and practiced was

\textsuperscript{8}John T. Caine, Letter to Wilford Woodruff, George A. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith, 4 February 1888, John T. Caine Papers, LDS Church Archives; Congressional Record, 50th Cong., 1st sess., 318.

\textsuperscript{9}Woodruff, Cannon, and Smith, Letter to John W. Young, 7 December 1887, Woodruff Papers, LDS Church Archives; Young, Letter to Woodruff, Cannon, and Smith, 18 January 1888, Young Papers, LDS Church Archives; John T. Caine, Letter to Woodruff, Cannon, and Smith, 7-21 January 1888, Caine Papers.

\textsuperscript{10}Grant, Journal, 20 December 1888.
diminishing to some extent. He affirmed the potential effectiveness of prohibiting polygamy in the constitution even though he understood that the provision would not immediately eradicate such violations of the law. Astutely he commented, “The more often the Mormons commit themselves whether regularly or irregularly against polygamy, the more they will have increased the obstacles to a retreat from the path of reform.”

Although neither Cleveland, McClernand, nor other Democrats would be in power long enough to formulate a policy based on this observation, the old Civil War veteran proved absolutely correct: the more frequently Mormon leaders publicly proclaimed the abandonment of plural marriage—despite carefully phrased loopholes and elaborate allowances for exceptions—the more difficult it became to cancel those proclamations. Not the least of the ironies built into this situation was that those outside the Church fold were quite skeptical about the pronouncements from the Church hierarchy while the Latter-day Saints believed implicitly all statements emanating from men they sustained as prophets. They took the series of announcements at full face value, and a considerable number were eventually dismayed at indications that some Church authorities might not have been sincere in their commitments. The sentiment also grew among many believers that their leaders should not do anything that appeared that they had made promises in bad faith or that they were reneging on their word. Among those holding this belief were Heber M. Wells and Frank J. Cannon, the first state officials elected.

In another aspect of the politics of polygamy, the specific developments that finally led to the most significant announcement concerning plural marriage, Wilford Woodruff’s 1890 Manifesto, were, first, the threatened confiscation of Utah temples in August and September 1890; second, the U.S. Supreme Court’s declaration on 3 February 1890 that an Idaho law taking the vote away from even nonpolygamous Mormons was constitutional; and third, the

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drafting of the Cullom-Struble Bill, introduced in the Senate on 10 April 1890, that would apply the same prohibitions to Church members in Utah and elsewhere. As a Republican Church lobbyist, Frank J. Cannon, argued in May 1890 in testimony before a congressional committee considering the proposed law that it aimed to punish "a class of people who have obeyed the law, who have avowed that they are willing to continue to obey the law, and who swear that they will not aid or abet anybody else" in practicing plural marriage. In other statements to Congress, Cannon affirmed that many of the younger generation of Mormons had already decided against open support of future plural marriage practices—presumably both new marriages and continued cohabitation of marriages contracted before 1890.12

The General Authorities were fully cognizant that their persistence in maintaining the practice despite the mounting federal onslaught had not only prevented nonpolygamists from enjoying the full measure of political independence possible only through statehood but were now facing complete disfranchisement solely because they backed their polygamous brethren. There may well have been private complaints to that effect. Church leaders were sensitive to the sacrifice their fellow priesthood holders were making. As they formulated the policies related to the Manifesto and previous tacit prohibitions, Joseph F. Smith couched an explanation of what they were doing in terms that indicated one of several motives was to do a favor to their "monog brethren" in defense of their rights, since they had so firmly supported the principles of plural marriage for the benefit of the polygamists. I have also suggested that one motivation behind the pronouncements against new plural marriages was to absolve the institutional church of responsibility for the continuance of both new plural marriages and continued cohabitation. Thus, those charged with either crime would be prosecuted as individuals and the Church could not be blamed. Under these circumstances, monogamous Mormons could

not justifiably be disfranchised and what had heretofore been the foremost obstacle to efforts for statehood would have been removed.\textsuperscript{13}

Despite the pressures converging on Woodruff and his followers, similar problems had been overcome and resisted in the past. Even if the Church was figuratively backed to the wall and practical considerations demanded concessions, the situation does not necessarily mean that Woodruff’s Manifesto was entirely politically motivated. For instance, President Cannon later pointed out many earlier situations that had seemed to urgently demand concessions as well, but such concessions had not been made because “at no time has the spirit seemed to indicate that this should be done. We have waited for the Lord to move in the matter.” This sense of divine timing must be considered in interpreting the events of September 1890.\textsuperscript{14}

One of the immediate goals the First Presidency hoped to gain from the Manifesto was more tolerant treatment of polygamous wives and their children. Within a month of his historic announcement, Woodruff wrote to Justice Department official E. C. Foster with a request: “Having acceded to the requirements of the law, it has seemed to us that a more lenient interpretation of what constituted unlawful cohabitation might now be rendered and enforced.” Soon after, Attorney General W. H. H. Miller cautioned federal law-enforcement officials in both Idaho and Utah “not to do anything that may look like persecution” of the Mormons.\textsuperscript{15} Yet in April 1891 President George Q. Cannon expressed his belief that government officials were not yet convinced plural marriage had been abandoned and thus requested those involved in the practice to more conscientiously appear to comply with the law.\textsuperscript{16}

In October 1891, President Woodruff was called before a

\textsuperscript{13}Joseph F. Smith, Letter to L. John Nuttall, 7 May 1890, Joseph F. Smith letterpress copybooks, Joseph F. Smith papers, LDS Church Archives; Lyman, \textit{Political Deliverance}, 138.

\textsuperscript{14}Lyman, \textit{Political Deliverance}, 136, 140-42, 147-48, 186.


\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Deseret Weekly News}, 11 April 1891.
chancery court where he was asked if he understood the Manifesto to apply to cohabitation in previously contracted plural marriages. Although such had not been his original interpretation of the Manifesto, he now affirmed that it was. It is clear from subsequent private conversations that this interpretation was farther than the Church leader intended to commit his people on the matter, but the public perceived the promise as sincere. It was another step away from polygamy that became increasingly difficult to reverse.

Thus the concessions necessary to achieve Utah statehood had been made and were widely publicized. There was certainly nothing yet like what Mormon sociologist-historian Armand Mauss has termed "a strategy of purposeful accommodation" consciously formulated to survive in a hostile world. But in fact, though unwittingly, Mormon leaders had made what was thereafter universally recognized as the essential step toward that end. It is equally clear that Church leaders did not intend the crucial announcement to interfere with already contracted plural marriages, but its other provisions were considerably less clear. As events later showed, different General Authorities and members of the First Presidency differed widely on what the future status and extent of the "peculiar institution" of polygamy was to be. Polygamous husbands who continued to cohabit with their plural wives experienced considerable pressures, including a strong admonition by Cannon in April conference 1891, to avoid any incidents that might interfere with Utah's admittance to statehood. Yet as late as April 1894—three and a half years after the Manifesto and two years before statehood—President Wilford Woodruff affirmed in a private gathering of General Authorities that the day would soon arrive when good men would again be able to marry plural wives. Heber J. Grant quoted him as saying,

17 *Deseret Weekly News*, 24 and 31 October 1891; Abraham Cannon, Journal, 12 October 1891 reports that General Authorities expressed these views on Woodruff's testimony.

"The principal of plural marriage will yet be restored to this church, but how or when I cannot say."\(^{19}\)

Word of such assurances undoubtedly encouraged those committed to the principle, but rumors of this intent certainly challenged and even threatened those who wished the promises of abandonment of polygamy to become permanent. There was no unanimity on this issue even among the highest quorums of Church authorities as was demonstrated in just a few more years during the Reed Smoot hearings of 1902-06. Probably only a few living at the turn of the century wanted to return to the situation of some decades earlier when Brigham Young and his associates held sway over so many aspects of Mormon life. The new generation entering the new century was increasingly inclined to adopt a lifestyle closer to the mainstream of American life. The number of younger people within the Church who wanted plural marriage to become a thing of the past was growing.

The failures to attain Utah statehood in the 1880s had been unfairly blamed on the Democratic Party, which could not have delivered it without some actual concessions on polygamy. Thereafter the First Presidency, who had continued to function as a committee on statehood, determined that the Church's highest priority was still the presumed political independence and self-government attainable only through Utah's admission as a state. A necessary intermediate goal was successfully fostering cordial relationships with some of the foremost national Republican leaders, whose party was then in power. Within a year of the Manifesto, which had been largely forced upon the Church by that party, Mormon leaders received a directive from Morris M. Estee, chairman of the most recent Republican national convention, advising them that there also had to be evidence that Mormons were "at liberty to vote according to their political convictions and not according to the dictates of the priesthood."\(^{20}\) By 1892, with mostly indirect involve-


\(^{20}\)Woodruff, Cannon, and Smith, Letter to Morris M. Estee, 3, 5, 9 December 1890, Letterbooks, First Presidency; Wilford Woodruff, Journal, 14 October 1890,
ment from the First Presidency, the People's Party dissolved and a viable two-party system with allegiance to the national Republicans and Democrats was established in Utah. The fascinating story of how this was accomplished has been detailed elsewhere. While this step did not simply transfer the Mormon voting majority into the Republican fold, this two-party affiliation was also accomplished prior to statehood. Such a switch in voter preference was possible only because the Mormon hierarchy exerted its extensive influence on its members.

One of the most notable aspects of the first Utah political campaign along national party lines was the so-called Times interview. In June 1891, the editors and management of the Salt Lake Times, a Republican newspaper more favorable to the Latter-day Saints than the Tribune, asked Church leaders if they were truly prepared to abandon political involvement. Cannon and Woodruff answered that they were. There had been such statements before and would be similar ones again the next year and during the heated 1895 campaign. Although perceived threats to Mormonism would sometimes tempt Mormon General Authorities to try and impose political solutions on their people, the announcements were nevertheless of great significance. While many outsiders did not give much credence to the pronouncements, those within the Church who trusted these ecclesiastical leaders took seriously the statements that they henceforth expected their people to act autonomously in political affairs. Such announcements were intended primarily to allay outside criticism of Church interference to obtain Utah statehood, which they undoubtedly did. But of equal importance is the political independence engendered among the Mormon electorate; and subsequent statements by some Church leaders—George Q. Cannon, for instance (cited below)—indicate that they were not always happy with such autonomy.

Achieving Utah statehood had necessitated some brilliant po-

LDS Church Archives.

21Lyman, Political Deliverance, 150, 155-81, 255-59, 319.

political maneuvering, orchestrated all the way by the First Presidency. They had succeeded. As a result, Woodruff, Cannon, and Smith naturally anticipated that, with a state government elected primarily by their own people, they could, at least occasionally, resume the political role they had wielded so extensively in the past. As John Taylor had implied, they expected the new state officials to look more tolerantly on existing and probably new plural marriage relationships. It would be a tremendous shock to some in the Mormon hierarchy and their followers to discover that an undeniable corner had been turned. In neither condoned polygamy nor political domination were they to enjoy the situation they had long anticipated.

One of the most decisive episodes of ecclesiastical political interference occurred on the very eve of statehood. George Q. Cannon, then in his sixties, wanted to become one of the U.S. senators elected by the first Utah state legislature which then made those selections. This hope was not an unrealistic one, nor would he have been an ineffective senator. But in the fall of 1895 during the first elections of state officers, Joseph F. Smith denounced Apostle Moses Thatcher and Seventy Brigham H. Roberts because they ran for office as Democrats without receiving permission from the presidency. Smith’s statement touched off perhaps the greatest outcry ever over Church interference in politics. In the immediate aftermath of the controversy, many Mormon Republican legislators were elected who were pledged to vote for George Q. Cannon’s son, Frank J. Cannon, a monogamist, and also not to submit to the pressures and political demands of Church leaders. Even when Woodruff expressed a desire to see his first counselor selected, suggesting that it was the will of the Lord, a Salt Lake Tribune reporter determined, as did a special Church committee, that “many members [of the legislature] were quick to say that they could not be severed from their support of Frank J. Cannon even if his father should openly announce that he was in the race.” A canvass of the Republican members indicated that “a full majority of the legislature had withstood the shock [of the possible rival candidacy], and was determined to support Frank J. Cannon to the end.”

23Salt Lake Tribune, 14 January 1896; Frank J. Cannon and Harvey J.
This independence, partly created by the recent Church interference controversy, clearly cost George Q. Cannon the senate seat he eminently deserved, a loss that rankled for some time. At October general conference, 1897, he publicly lamented that, in situations where he believed advice from those with access to divine guidance was required, it was sometimes refused by individuals who would earlier have accepted it. One person had reportedly told him, “I don’t care how much you know, you may have all the experience in the world; but I don’t want to talk to you, you are an officer in the Church and I don’t want any ecclesiastical interference with me.”

It is difficult for later generations to understand what a difficult adjustment this would have been for someone like George Q. Cannon, a former close associate and son-in-law of Brigham Young. But in other candid moments, Cannon, the most astute Mormon political strategist of his generation, would admit that such an adjustment had to come if Mormondom were to be fully assimilated into the mainstream of the United States. Here too Church leaders were seeking to steer a course in uncharted waters, never an easy task. It was not fair to demand total abstinence from political affairs when such events had so often threatened the Church. But the

O’Higgins, Under the Prophet in Utah (Boston, Mass.: C. M. Clark Publishing Co., 1911), 166-67, explained: “Among the legislators pledged to me were Mormon bishops and other ecclesiasts who had promised their constituents to vote for me and who now stood between a betrayal of their people and a rebellion against the power of the hierarchy. I released one of them from his pledge, because of his pathetic fear that he would be eternally damned if he did not obey ‘the Will of the Lord.’ The others went to the presidency to admit that if they betrayed their people they would have to confess what pressure had been put upon them to force them to the betrayal.” All sources agree that a committee including Angus M. Cannon (George Q. Cannon’s brother and president of Salt Lake Stake) and George’s son, Abraham H. Cannon, investigated the possibility of electing Cannon anyway and discovered that it probably could not be done; too many Mormon legislators were prepared to withstand ecclesiastical pressure. See also Edward Leo Lyman, “The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Riverside, 1981), 534-42; Edward Leo Lyman, “Statehood, Political Allegiance, and Utah’s First U. S. Senate Seats: Prizes for the National Parties and Local Factions,” Utah Historical Quarterly 63 (Fall 1995), 353.

hierarchy and their supporters had to face the challenge of determining what was acceptable. Sometimes this learning came about through mistakes.

During the momentous events of Utah's admission to the union as a state, the first governor, Heber Manning Wells, struck a sensitive nerve when, in his inaugural address he misquoted Woodruff's Manifesto. Instead of saying that no new plural marriages would be "contracted" in the United States, he said that no plural marriages would be "continued" there. Wells was a son of Daniel H. Wells, a former counselor to Brigham Young; his brother Junius was a member of the First Council of Seventy. Both father and brother were polygamists; Heber's sister Emily was one of Apostle Heber J. Grant's three wives. (His first had died in 1893; Emily died in 1908.) Penrose noticed this significant alteration of meaning and discovered that continued had been in the governor's original draft. In other words, it was not simply a typographical error in reports of Wells speeches. He called the First Presidency's attention to it and suggested that the 1890 announcement be republished by way of setting the record straight; it appeared in the Deseret News within the week. Wells's speech represented an important contemporary interpretation of the Manifesto among some who would be considered committed Latter-day Saints. Wells might have been presumed to share the hierarchy's view of plural marriage; but his message made it clear that, as governor, he would not cooperate with those seeking to revive a more open practice of plural marriage.

This stance does not mean that Wells was necessarily unsympathetic. He understood that many of his generation and acquaintance were regarded by the world, perhaps unfairly, as illegitimate. When the first state legislature sent him Senate Bill 120, providing that children born of polygamous marriages prior to statehood could inherit property from their fathers, he signed it into law. This issue had worried many in Utah for a long time and had been a subject of litigation before the U.S. Supreme Court. But the new Utah law aroused no controversy or known opposition. It was later, after the midpoint in his eight-year tenure as governor, that Wells

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26Utah Legislature, Senate Journal (State of Utah, 1896), 536, 574.
was compelled to take a firm position on enforcing laws against plural marriage. This episode not only caused him to do a great deal of soul searching but also displeased some Church leaders.

Before these developments, however, several other well-publicized episodes of ecclesiastical interference in politics flared up. The first was when B. H. Roberts was elected to a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1898. The house refused to seat him because he was a polygamist. The other was a Church oversight committee constituted during the convening of the first state legislature in January 1896.

Charles W. Penrose had helped draft the Woodruff Manifesto, ghost-wrote press dispatches on statehood, and wrote the prayer Woodruff was supposed to give at the statehood day ceremonies (but because of illness could not. George Q. Cannon actually pronounced this invocation). Several weeks into the first state legislative session of 1896, Penrose began to assume the role of a quiet lobbyist. He “went over” various pieces of legislation with certain Mormon legislators. On 7 February, probably acting as a member of the Salt Lake Stake Presidency, he was invited to offer the invocation for that day’s Senate session, a duty performed by a number of clergymen. Later that month, the First Presidency appointed him, with Republican apostles Francis M. Lyman and John Henry Smith, to a “committee on legislation.” The next week he went several times to the Salt Lake City and County Building, where the legislature was in session, to confer with lawmakers on pending matters, including a controversial fire and police commission bill.

Soon thereafter, Penrose confided to his journal that he had been appointed to what he called “the regular committee to confer on legislative matters.” Its other members were Franklin S. Richards, Church attorney, fellow Democrat, and former lobbying associate, James Sharp, and W. W. Ritter, both Salt Lake City businessmen and seasoned territorial legislators. Meetings were held in Richards’s

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28 Penrose, Journal, 22-23 January, 25 February, 2, 6 March 1896. A fire and police commission would be a regulatory agency, but such bodies were still uncommon in the 1890s.
office. Often faithful Mormon legislators also attended committee meetings during discussions of bills being considered by the lawmakers. Penrose occasionally discussed proposed laws with George Q. Cannon; and on 16 March the committee met “on legislative matters” with the entire First Presidency. Penrose and at least some of the other members attended a conference two days later between the First Presidency and Senate president George M. Cannon, the Church leader’s nephew.29

After Governor Wells vetoed a controversial college bill, the sponsor, William J. Kerr, president of the college at Logan, called on Penrose; taking Richards, they went to discuss the matter with the First Presidency who disapproved of the bill. That evening Kerr argued at length, trying to convince the committee that the proposed legislation was essential; but disappointedly, they, too, concluded that it was “unnecessary.” Kerr replied that he would continue to seek its passage over the governor’s veto and that he had sufficient house support to assure passage of the still-pending bill. He later recalled that a member of the oversight committee asked him if “he knew the committee was acting under the advice and direction of the Church authorities and its action was such that it must be obeyed.” This was news to Kerr, but he nevertheless affirmed his determination to work for the bill’s passage. The next morning the Church legislative committee continued to try to prevent the legislature from overriding the veto, with Penrose conferring first with half-dozen members of the house and later with a similar number of state senators. He was chagrined when the lower house overrode the veto; at least four of the men he had personally lobbied had voted for the bill “notwithstanding what was said to them.”30 This event provides further evidence that legislators whom the General Authorities considered to be good Latter-day Saints were determined to act independently in their law-making capacities. Their position was clear: they had been taught that such independence was a religious as well as a political right; furthermore,

29Penrose, Journal, 6-10 March 1896.
as candidates for office they had all taken public positions that they would vote and act their consciences. Immediately after this wrestle with the Church committee, Kerr confided his experience to two Salt Lake City attorneys who apparently spread the account further. Accompanying the report were rumors that the Church would impose ecclesiastical discipline upon recalcitrant Church legislators. An obscure Salt Lake City weekly, the Argus, was the first newspaper to suggest the existence of the legislative committee; it stated that five prominent Mormons sat in judgement on "all important questions" that the governor was called upon to pass or reject. Although editor Jimmy Bloor did not say that the governor always complied with their decrees, he did state that the committee usually wielded a "controlling weight." Governor Wells immediately denied these allegations. Two days later, Critchlow published a letter making similar charges in the Salt Lake Tribune, although he soon thereafter toned down his allegations against the governor. Both the Ogden Standard and the Deseret News denounced the charges as without proof.\textsuperscript{31}

Critchlow had been the acknowledged Republican leader in Utah's House of Representatives and attested to sincere intent on the part of most of his Mormon associates to "carry out in letter and in spirit promises given by them and in their behalf." By this he meant the previous declarations that the Church would no longer interfere in politics. He was less positive about the intentions of some of the highest Church authorities, reminding readers that he, too, had believed them some years previously when the promises were first made. Critchlow's main objective was to raise the question, not of the existence of the Church legislative committee, of which he had no doubt, but "whether there [was] to be any open, indignant and widespread repudiation of this betrayal of the people."\textsuperscript{32} Presumably he hoped that Church members would show outrage at the action of their leaders; but in this, he had to be disappointed. The extant sources mention no public outcry. Still, it is possible that

\textsuperscript{31}Argus, 11 April 1896; Salt Lake Tribune, 12-14 April 1896; Deseret News, 13 April 1896; Ogden Standard, 12 April 1896; see also Lyman, "Heber M. Wells," 69-77.
\textsuperscript{32}Salt Lake Tribune, 12 April 1896.
careful observers among the Church hierarchy might have sensed a behind-the-scenes reaction against undue ecclesiastical influence.

The Salt Lake Herald was the most conscientious of the papers in investigating the allegations objectively, acknowledging that such developments threatened to rekindle old Mormon-Gentile animosities. Its reporter, Ed Ivins, questioned each of the committee members identified by the Argus. Although the Argus had correctly named four members, all of them found ways of denying that the committee existed. Penrose’s diary reveals the thinking of Church leaders when confronted with such questions. When Ivins queried him about Critchlow’s allegations, Penrose told Ivins “those facts as far as I thought proper and denied Critchlow’s falsehoods.” Penrose told Ivins that “there was no committee appointed by the Church that I knew of.” Yes, he admitted, he and several others familiar with legislative matters, including Richards, met with members of the legislature when the legislators requested such meetings; but these individuals had no authority from anybody and made no attempt whatever to control the legislature.33 In light of his own personal journal entries, these statements were blatantly false. It was a clear instance of what Carmon Hardy has so aptly termed “lying for the Lord.”34 When Ritter asked Penrose’s advice on speaking to the press, Penrose undoubtedly assured him that protecting the Church from negative publicity was more important than full disclosure. Ritter informed Ivins that the entire allegation was “the supremest bosh.”35

The First Presidency stated on the record that they had no knowledge of any committee appointed to supervise legislation. George Q. Cannon added that “the Church did not attempt in any way to influence legislation.” He conceded that several legislators had asked his opinion on specific pieces of legislation; because he was not particularly familiar with these bills, he sent them to “other men in the city who had [previous] experience in Utah law-making.” Cannon named, among these experts, Sharp, Richards, Ritter, and possibly William H. King. He omitted Penrose, whose diary clearly

33Salt Lake Herald, 19, 16, 18 April 1896.
34Hardy, Solemn Covenant, 363-88.
35Penrose, Journal, 3, 12, 13 April 1896; Salt Lake Herald, 13 April 1896.
establishes that he, like at least most of the others, had been appointed by the First Presidency and that they had held legislative strategy committee meetings with the presidency. Franklin S. Richards admitted to Ivins that he had conferred on the college bill with Penrose, along with Ritter, Sharp, and John M. Tanner, but also denied that it was a Church-appointed committee. In short, every Mormon General Authority and every member of the legislative committee whom Ivins interviewed told partial truths and downright misrepresentations during this episode. There is no doubt that the committee existed and that the First Presidency created it to scrutinize legislation and attempt to influence legislative actions. However, this committee did not appear to enjoy much success among Church lawmakers who had already asserted their independence in rejecting the First Presidency's candidate for U.S. Senator. In light of the Mormon hierarchy's failure in the venture and the real threat of a major uproar if efforts to circumvent the regular legislative process were more conclusively proved, it seems likely that the First Presidency decided to drop such blatant methods of lawmaking.

In a sense, representing as they did the majority of Utah's population, Mormon leaders probably possessed every right to form a committee of knowledgeable men to oversee legislative actions which might have impact on the Church and its members. It was also natural that they would be sensitive to perceived attacks by non-Mormons like Critchlow, which had caused so many problems in the past. It is doubtful if either the First Presidency or Quorum of the Twelve established an explicit official policy on political oversight of the legislature and some individual General Authorities were probably prepared to allow such matters to take their course under the newly instituted democratic machinery of statehood. Still it was difficult for others of the hierarchy to let go of power they had traditionally wielded. Although it is no longer possible to justify the outright denials of the existence of the legislative oversight committee, it must be understood that its members were acting in the established tradition of condoning falsehoods when deemed necessary to protect Church interests. Here again, transitional times are

36Salt Lake Herald, 1, 16 April 1896.
most challenging and historical hindsight needs to be tempered with great awareness of the context of the times and circumstances.

Just as the legislative oversight committee controversy subsided toward the end of that session, E. B. Critchlow, a non-Mormon representative from Salt Lake City and key leader in the lower house, prevailed upon some Mormon lawmakers to support a strong antipolygamy statute, arguing that such a measure was necessary to convince the world that the Church was sincere in its proclamations. Abraham O. Smoot, a polygamist from Provo, introduced the bill in the lower house, where it was referred to the judiciary committee which Critchlow chaired. When the vigilant Penrose reported this event to Apostles Grant, Franklin D. Richards, John Henry Smith, and Francis M. Lyman, they all considered the measure “ill advised and desire[d] it suppressed.” Although Penrose does not specify what means they employed, they succeeded. The bill never got out of committee and back to the house floor. This exercise of power, added to his recent experience with the Church legislative committee, was another factor causing Critchlow to become a leading critic of the Church’s political involvement.

As noted previously, not all Church leaders were prepared to abandon all efforts to revive or protect plural marriage practices. The first state legislature established a Utah code commission which, over the ensuing several years, organized relevant territorial statutes and recently enacted state laws into a unified code, duly reenacted. Among these was the rather strict 1892 statute prohibiting plural marriage. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard state in their excellent history of the Church that the territorial law was thus “inadvertently codified into state law.” Carmon Hardy, another careful historian of the subject, asserts that allowing this statute demonstrated some negligence on the part of interested Churchmen. Perhaps the most concerned ecclesiastical parties were being cautious not to arouse further controversy.

Finally, in a presumably safer era at the end of the 1901 Utah legislative session, the so-called Evans Bill passed, which amended

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37 Penrose, Journal, 3 April 1896.
the former statute. The new law provided that only the immediate family of a person presumably wronged by a situation of polygamy or unlawful cohabitation could bring legal complaint regarding the situation. This law squelched third-party investigators and prosecutors from initiating court proceedings for continuing or new offenses against such laws. Abel John Evans, a committed Mormon and current president of the Senate, explained that his purpose was to keep “down public agitation” on polygamy and allow it to continue its course, which would bring it to a natural death within a generation. But quite naturally, this law generated more discussion and feeling than any other during the session. Representative W. G. Van Horne of Salt Lake City made an impassioned but unsuccessful plea against the bill’s passage, arguing that its object was to prevent the prosecution of those maintaining long-standing polygamous relationships. He predicted that the bill’s passage would arouse nation-wide indignation and that Congress would initiate the long-threatened constitutional amendment giving the federal government power to strictly prosecute such practices. Many, including Governor Wells, then serving his second term, agreed with this prediction.39

Wells clearly agonized over his responsibility, confessing that “no official act of my life has been approached with a sense of responsibility so profound as is the consideration of [the Evans] bill.” He regarded the bill’s political implications as the most crucial yet raised in Utah and acknowledged that both proponents and opponents were equally sincere in desiring what was best for the state. He also expressed deep affection for those who from highest motives had entered into plural marriage relations, affirming that he was of that lineage and had been taught from infancy that it was approved by the Almighty. He affirmed his belief that, despite current feelings to the contrary, most Utah Mormons would eventually be grateful if the Evans Bill were not entered on the statute books. Wells was fearful—as others should have been in light of past threats—that its passage would signal the commencement of a movement for an anti-polygamy provision in the U.S. Constitution, which would thereafter distinguish Utah from its fellow states. This, he claimed, would

in the long term be far less desirable than prosecuting a few cases under the present laws.

Wells recalled the events of “that distressing period shortly before statehood,” which ended when the Church made concessions about polygamy followed by amnesty for past offenses and finally evidence of good faith on both sides, leading to Utah’s admission as a new state. He then mentioned how the recent B. H. Roberts case threatened to “again obscure the sun of Utah’s prosperity and peace.” He had been against seating a polygamist at the time and now declared that no further furor should occur through his short-sightedness. For these reasons, he vetoed the bill; an attempt at an override failed.\(^40\)

Some regarded Wells’s veto as an act of great courage and moral conviction.\(^41\) In a larger sense, this stubborn opposition from a reasonably faithful Mormon occupying Utah’s chief executive position was probably one of the most significant of the entire period for bolstering the resolve of other nonpolygamous Mormons to stand firm against the retrocession of any of their Church leaders on their promises. Wells’s independence probably cost him any chance of inheriting a Utah seat in the U.S. Senate, for which he was an otherwise logical choice. Wells’s elimination markedly enhanced Reed Smoot’s prospects for that position in less than two years.

In the first half of the twentieth century, Church leaders continued to occasionally attempt to influence political affairs in Utah and beyond. According to political scientist Frank H. Jonas, their efforts met with little success.\(^42\) In the last half of this century, as Mormon voters have become markedly more conservative, contemporary observers might be able to argue that politically inter-


ested members of the Church hierarchy may now enjoy greater success.

Heber M. Wells faded from the limelight, but polygamy flared again as an issue in the U.S. Senate hearings about seating Smoot, a monogamist but an apostle in a church that apparently continued to condone plural marriage. The testimony the Smoot hearings generated and the anger and frustration engendered among Mormons who were humiliated to learn of new plural marriages and continuing cohabitation led to President Joseph F. Smith's second manifesto (1904) which effectively and finally launched the process of ending official approval of the practice. After that some General Authorities commenced taking reports of further polygamy seriously. In fact, one of the most fascinating studies that could be done would be tracing the increasing hostility of Francis M. Lyman and his protégé Heber J. Grant—and to some extent even George Q. Cannon—toward the continuing practice. Here again a prime consideration was probably fealty to past promises and the expectations developed among Latter-day Saints who heeded the words of their ecclesiastical leaders. There is no question that obedience to the hierarchy still was a prime characteristic of the Church; but as the twentieth century progressed, it was tempered as never before by independence of political thought and expressions stressing free agency. On the subject of plural marriage, as Carmon Hardy has stated, "although the principle was surreptitiously kept alive by hundreds of stalwarts, thousands more believed the public statements of their leaders" and fully embraced monogamy.

To summarize: General Authorities had been virtually compelled to ensure the survival of the Church by abandoning several practices of primary importance within the realm of religious observance. Many powerful individuals and groups in the outside world had long opposed plural marriage and the direct involvement of ecclesiastical leaders in political affairs with little actual success. But

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44 Hardy, Solemn Covenant, 338; see also pp. 244-338.
as the twentieth century approached, continued resistance to outside pressures proved increasingly impossible. It is difficult not to empathize with the position Mormon leaders found themselves in, caught, as they conceived it, between divinely directed injunctions and the demands of the government backed by the majority of the American people. In October 1890 general conference, just after the announcement of the Manifesto, George Q. Cannon returned to Mormon history for a precedent and described how the Lord's commandment to build a temple at Jackson County had been frustrated by mob action. He then read Doctrine and Covenants 124:49-53, relieving the Saints of their obligation and condemning those who prevented them from completing the task.

President Woodruff followed, explaining that while it was not his purpose to "undertake to please the world," the Church was small; against laws enforced and upheld by a nation of 65 million, reality must prevail. He comforted the Saints: "The Lord has given us commandments concerning many things and we have carried them out as far as we could, but when we cannot do it, we are justified. The Lord does not require at our hands things that we cannot do." Still, this episode and the hierarchy's forced abandonment of domination in political affairs were painful, and the pathway toward accommodation and acceptance sometimes appeared to be fraught with detours and dead ends. However, the result was ultimately acceptance and approval by fellow Americans to a degree beyond the fondest dreams of those initiating the changes essential for such a momentous reversal of public opinion.

45Deseret Weekly News, 18 October 1890; Lyman, Political Deliverance, 139.
46Among essential works that pick up parts of the story where we have left it are Alexander, Mormonism in Transition, 3-73; Jan Shipps, Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 109-19; Hardy, Solemn Covenant, 167-309, and Armand L. Mauss, The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 3-17, who argues interestingly and persuasively that some General Authorities perceived that they had gone too far toward being accepted by the outside world and launched an effort to again establish a position of uniqueness and nonconformity.
PROBABLY EVERY SAINT over the age of thirty in the Mormon heartland has heard at least two J. Golden Kimball stories. The first goes something like this. A concerned well-wisher asks J. Golden if his unfortunate habit of profanity won’t result in serious disharmony with the other General Authorities, perhaps even his dismissal from the First Council of Seventy. J. Golden admits, “President Grant gets upset with me, I know, but it’s not for long . . . I repent too damn fast.”

The second story is equally disarming: Golden was just stepping off the sidewalk at the corner of Main Street and South Temple from Temple Square when a youthful driver squealed around the corner, causing him to leap backward to save himself. Shaking his fist after the reckless speedster, Elder Kimball yelled wrathfully in his distinctive high-pitched voice, “You son of Perdition! Have you no

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respect for the priesthood! Can’t you tell the difference between one of the Lord’s anointed and a common Gentile?”

Telling one story starts an avalanche in most groups of other remembered tales, some witty, some scandalous, all of them bringing the healthy catharsis of laughter at the incongruity of a General Authority who cussed at the pulpit and whose private conversations were ever-so-faintly tinged with blue. As a reminder that even Saints have sometimes lopsided haloes, J. Golden has become something of an icon and a genuine Mormon folk hero. As those deans of Mormon historians, Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, have observed, J. Golden Kimball has become the “Will Rogers of Mormondom.” Son of Apostle Heber C. Kimball, a six-foot-three-inch beanpole of a man, once a mule skinner in the Bear Lake region, Kimball had a colorful vocabulary, which he used, even from the pulpit, in a shrill magpie voice. Beloved by Latter-day Saints as no other person but the Prophet [Joseph Smith], he died in 1938 at age 85, leaving a personalized legacy of unwearying dedication to Mormonism, liberally spiced with anecdotes, which, as they were told and retold, became part of the lore of the Latter-day Saints. He helped Mormons diminish their pretensions, pride, and self-deception, and reminded them that they must not take themselves too seriously.

Less well-known are two other intertwined traits: first, a blood loyalty to the Church, and second, a deeply troubled and unhappy

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1I relate these stories as they have been repeated with relish in my family; but they also exist, in essence and in many variations, in forms that have also found their way into print. For other compilations and appreciations, see Claude Richards, J. Golden Kimball (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1934), Thomas E. Cheney, The Golden Legacy: A Folk History of J. Golden Kimball, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1979); Mikal Lofgren, Wheat: Humor and Wisdom of J. Golden Kimball (Salt Lake City: Moth House Publications, 1980); J. Golden, video written by James Arrington, starring Dalin Christiansen, directed by James Arrington and Kevin Mitchell (Orem, Utah: James Arrington Productions, n.d.); see also James N. Kimball, “Remembering Uncle Golden,” Sunstone 1, no. 3 (1976): 22-28; Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Diary, Letters May Separate LDS Leader from Irreverent Stories Told about Him,” Salt Lake Tribune, 25 September 1993, B-1; Lori Buttars, “A Golden Wit,” Salt Lake Tribune, 22 November 1996, D-1.

family life that was a source of grief to him for most of his adult life. These two traits were symbiotic, each drawing from and contributing to the existence of the other, but this article will focus primarily on J. Golden as a husband and father, inspiring in the reader, I hope, a compassion for the sacrifices routinely made by General Authorities and their families of that generation to a degree astonishing to our own generation.

Jonathan Golden Kimball was born 9 June 1853 at Salt Lake City, the second of four children born to Heber C. Kimball and Christeen Golden. Christeen, born 20 September 1822 in New Jersey, was converted in Pennsylvania, moved to Nauvoo, and was twenty-three years old when she was married and sealed to the forty-five-year-old Kimball on 3 February 1846. According to Stanley B. Kimball, Heber C. Kimball’s biographer, he had married sixteen wives by January 1846. During the next five weeks, just before the February exodus from Nauvoo he married “at least twenty-two more women,” of which Christeen was one. His diary, which ends in December 1845, never mentions her. Eventually he would marry forty-three women, fathering children by seventeen.\(^3\)

Christeen was thus always one of a group of wives. She crossed the Mississippi and arrived at Sugar Creek in February with twelve or fourteen wives and their children. She arrived in Winter Quarters as one of seven wives where she found herself boarding with the Grant family. She reached the Salt Lake Valley in 1848 as one of twenty-six wives.\(^4\) Christeen apparently always lived with other wives. Although her location is not always known, during the late 1860s she lived in the “big house” on the Kimball “plantation” (the ten-acre block directly north of Temple Square) with six other wives.\(^5\) Her first child, Cornelia Christeen, was born 7 June 1850 and died two days before Christmas when she was three. J. Golden had been born six months earlier. Almost four years later, his only brother, Elias Smith Kimball, was born on 30 May 1857, followed almost four years


\(^5\)Ibid., 234.
later by the last child, Mary Margaret, on 30 April 1861. Heber himself, heartbroken by a still-mysterious estrangement from Brigham Young, died seven years later on 22 June 1868 in Salt Lake City at age sixty-seven. J. Golden had turned fifteen only two days earlier.

J. Golden spoke in glowing but somewhat impersonal terms of his father in several conference addresses, at least twice quoting Brigham Young and George Q. Cannon rather than offering his personal feelings. A rare personal memory was:

> When I was a boy, my father did most of the praying in the home, and when I got to manhood I did not know how to pray. . . I did not know just how nor what to pray for. In fact, I did not know very much about the Lord . . . and I have been sorry, many times, that I can’t pray like my father did; for he seemed on those occasions to be in personal communication with God. There seemed to be a friendliness between my father and God, and when you heard him pray you would actually think the Lord was right there and that father was talking to him.  

In 1930, Golden, then seventy-seven, paid eloquent tribute to his father’s character and role:

> I honor my father for his faith, courage, and integrity to God the Father and to His Son, Jesus Christ. He was one of the first chosen apostles that never desired the Prophet’s place—his hands never shook, his knees never trembled, and he was true and steadfast to the Church and to the Prophet Joseph Smith. . . .
>
> I take pride in being a son of my father, and as long as I live I shall never fail to honor my father and his successors and try to be as loyal and true and steadfast in the faith as they have been.  

Although Golden’s admiration is unfeigned, it seems unlikely, based on these memories, that the aging patriarch and his teenage son were close in twentieth-century terms. Heber’s death did not leave Christeen destitute, but he died intestate and the settlement was a lengthy and complicated affair. Ultimately $50,352 was divided

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7Conference Report, April 1913, 86.
8Ibid., October 1930, 60-61.
among ten wives and $12,194 was distributed to their thirty-two children. Christeen was credited in 1868 with personal property previously received from Heber worth $806 that was subtracted from the final distribution to the wives in 1875, when she received $2,825, the approximate equivalent of $22,000-25,000 in modern dollars. Four wives received approximately twice as much, a fourth received $4,400, but two received almost exactly the same amount, and the other three received less. Two received only $200 apiece. Only Elias of Christeen’s three surviving children received anything at this point, but the sum, $661, was more than any other child but four older sons. (Only two daughters received separate legacies.) Golden, then twenty-three, received nothing, nor did Mary Margaret, although Golden once mentioned in general conference that his mother was given a lot on Capitol Hill, presumably as part of the settlement of the estate. This settlement was almost seven years in the future, however, and immediately after Heber’s death, Christeen was virtually destitute. Golden promptly began working as a mule Skinner and freighter to support his mother and the other two children. Christeen “took work for a pittance at ZCMI. Crowded out of the Kimball Mansion, they lived in dire yet genteel poverty in a two-room house.” This period apparently lasted about two years.

Then in the early 1870s, Christeen and her three children joined a minor exodus of Kimballs to Meadowville in Rich County, Idaho, near Bear Lake. There, they launched into ranching. According to Stan Kimball, eleven of the Kimball sons were involved in this venture, including Isaac Kimball and David Patton Kimball, sons of Emily Trask Cutler Kimball and Vilate Murray Kimball respectively. In 1881 when Golden was twenty-eight and when, after twelve backbreaking years, the ranch was a success, the family heard Dr. Karl G. Maeser speak in their log meeting house. He was recruiting students for the five-year-old Brigham Young Academy in Provo, Utah, and he spoke with such zeal that the autumn term found the family in Provo, Utah. Heber C. Kimball had begun

training Golden as his secretary; this early training, together with Golden's two years of diligent application in Dr. Maeser's classes are no doubt the reason for the beautiful handwriting that never deserted him.

In April 1883, J. Golden accepted a mission call from Church President John Taylor and left for the Southern States with a hundred borrowed dollars in his pocket and unwavering faith. One missionary had been killed in Georgia in 1878. Two elders and four members were killed in 1884 at Kane Creek in Tennessee. Later that same year, an elder was tarred and driven out of a Mississippi town, a meetinghouse was burned in Alabama, three elders were whipped in Alabama, and one elder in Mississippi was wounded by gunfire.\textsuperscript{12} Thirty-year-old Golden responded with a fierce and fearless devotion, willingly facing the threat of actual injury and enduring without complaint such ill health that he turned "yellow as a parchment" from malaria.\textsuperscript{13} B. H. Roberts was his mission president and, for part of the time, his companion. It was the beginning of a profound and tender devotion between the two men.

After his mission, J. Golden returned to marry Jane ("Jennie") Knowlton in 1887, the daughter of John Q. Knowlton and Ellen Smith Knowlton. Golden and Elias "traded off the ranch, moved to Logan, Utah, went into real estate business, and established farm machinery businesses, one in Logan and one in Montpelier, Idaho. They . . . purchas[ed] a huge tract of land in Canada. But . . . they lost everything."\textsuperscript{14}

Four of Golden's and Jennie's six children were born in Logan: daughter Quincy ("Jane") on 11 March 1889, Jonathan Golden Jr. ("Jack") on 20 June 1890, Elizabeth ("Beth") on 24 March 1892, and Gladys, on 31 March 1894.

In 1891, Golden was called back to the Southern States, leaving Jennie with two children under the age of three and pregnant with Beth. Gladys was conceived on one of Golden’s trips home, giving Jennie, who was for all practical purposes a single mother, four

\textsuperscript{12}Cheney, The Golden Legacy, 23.

\textsuperscript{13}Quoted in ibid., 26.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 26. The Canadian investment was a "land scheme promoted by John W. Taylor," then an apostle.
children under the age of five. Golden served as mission president for three years, again, loyally and diligently, with considerable personal courage and at great personal sacrifice. On 6 April 1892, at age thirty-eight, he was called as one of the Seven Presidents of the First Council of the Seventy. Until his death forty-six years later, he was a General Authority, traveling virtually every weekend, on call for weekly quorum meetings and other responsibilities, in demand to give counsel and blessings, and basically responsible for his own support. For twenty-two years (1900-22), he was not only a member of the First Council of the Seventy but was also its office secretary. Presumably this function came with a salary, but it could not have been much.

After Golden's release as mission president in 1894, he and Jennie moved to Christeen's modest home at 36 East First North Street where the last two children were born: Richard Heber ("Dick") on 29 September 1896 and Maxwell Knowlton on 14 December 1901. Jennie, trying to raise these children on a shoestring with a largely absent husband, resented Golden's destitute condition. Even for those days when a father was not expected to have extensive contact with his offspring, Golden seems to have been seldom home. And the unhappiness of his home life undoubtedly contributed, if only in unconscious ways, to the amount of time he spent away from it.

Growing up, I recall hearing from my parents, uncles, aunts, and cousins about the conflicted marriage and family life that Golden and Jennie had. There seemed to be unanimous agreement that it was unhappy to the point of dysfunction, but understanding the cause was shaped by gender. Whenever the subject came up, the discussion invariably became impassioned because the women in the family came to Jennie's defense, pointing out how difficult, if not impossible, it must have been to be married to a man who was seldom at home because of his Church callings and never able to provide a decent living. My father and uncles were more sympathetic to Golden. They would point out how his situation was really no different from that of any other Church leader yet other wives—Sister Emma Ray Riggs McKay, for instance—were loyally supportive and uncomplaining. They felt that Jennie should bear most of the
responsibility for their unfortunate relationship and the aberrant behavior of most of the children.

From my perspective in the late 1990s, I feel sympathy with both Golden and Jennie. After four decades of emphasis on family unity, family home evening, and "no success can compensate for failure in the home," it may seem shocking that the home of a prominent and much-loved General Authority should be less than ideal. The underlying causes and deeper forces at play in Golden's and Jennie's lives were both religious and economic. The Church's emphasis on missionary work placed a high priority on obedience to missionary callings and zealous service while in the field. Not only must the word of the Lord go forth, but the infusion of new members and their tithing contributions was essential for the Church's continued growth. Among the willing and financially able were also the less willing, and the willing but less able. Golden was in the latter group. Responsive almost by reflex, his personal willingness to sacrifice and his absolute loyalty to the Brethren can only be considered stunningly admirable; but the women and children had to live with the results of decisions they did not make and were not consulted about. They had to pick up the pieces and hold things together until their men returned, at a time when women's earning ability was not only confined to low-paying jobs but was also extremely limited in scope.

For many of the wives in these circumstances, this task was difficult but not impossible. The same generation raised on the image of Emma Ray McKay's loving and uncomplaining total support of her apostle-husband also heard the stories of how David O. McKay's mother, Jenette Evans McKay, not only staunchly sent her reluctant husband on his mission when she was pregnant but ran the farm herself and had a new home constructed by the time he returned. Such oft-told stories of supportive heroism, by being held up not only as the ideal but as virtually the only public version of missionary wives, have become the norm. For such women, their commitment to the Church, for the most part, was as profound as that of their husbands. They made it clear to the children that the father's mission was to be a period of sacrifice in the service of the Lord. The mother's positive attitude carried over to the children. Their united response to his call was viewed as a family's sacred
obligation. They, in their own ways, were as involved in the work of
the Lord as their missionary father and husband was.

For Jennie Knowlton Kimball, this issue was far more complex. She was a devoted and caring mother and felt she deserved the help of her husband in the rearing of six children. And perhaps if Golden’s mission had been confirmed to one term of service and if his subsequent Church service had been as a bishop or stake president, matters might have been different. But the repeated calls eroded her magnanimity, sacrifice, and selflessness. Golden’s absences became periods of abandonment and disparagement which she grew to resent. To be the gracious and long-suffering wife who smiled in the shadow of her General Authority husband and who relished vicariously the work he performed for the Church and the mass adulation he enjoyed from its membership was not something that naturally came to her. She never thought of herself as the stereotypical wife of a General Authority. Jennie’s resentment and anger toward the Brethren and what she believed they had done to both her marriage and her family grew throughout her life. She found it difficult to share this torment with her husband because it came from the same source that brought him so much joy and satisfaction—the Church.

For Golden, who understood at least some of the problem but certainly not all of it, the dilemma forced upon him was the choice between his moral responsibility to the Church and his familial duty to wife and children. He chose the Church and expected Jennie to understand. She did not. The support of such a decision required an unusually pious and obedient wife. Jennie, unfortunately, was neither.

If J. Golden relied on his own parents for his model of marital relations, he would have received a mixed message. Christeen and her children were one of “a core of twelve units—twelve wives” and their children who lived together or at least nearby. How much personal attention did Christeen want or receive from her busy husband? Certainly Heber was a hard-working and thrifty provider who took care of the physical needs of his wives and children. According to his biographer, “his love for his first wife, Vilate, was unquali-

15Stanley B. Kimball, Heber C. Kimball, 229.
fied," but his public expressions about proper marital relations could sound harsh and unfeeling. For instance, he announced, "It is the duty of a woman to be obedient to her husband, and unless she is, I would not give a damn for her queenly right." His parameters of tolerated discussion were narrow: "If ever I am [so] foolish as to quarrel with a woman, I ought to be whipped." He announced, speaking of Brigham Young and Jedediah Grant, "I love these men, God knows I do, better than I ever loved a woman; and I would not give a damn for a man that does not love them better than they love women. A man is a miserable being if he lets a woman stand between him and his file leaders; . . . he is not fit for the Priesthood." He criticized women as a group for "lounging about" the Tithing House, for their "little peevish, trifling complaints," for their lack of home-making skills, for their love of finery, and for being "tattler[s]." He also claimed that any woman who found fault with his harsh words "is not a lady." Although Stan Kimball also claimed that "no surviving documents record . . . displeasure" at such sentiments from Heber's wives, there is also no record that Heber negotiated a gentler, warmer private persona within his family circle to counter the scorn he heaped on women in public. 

On the contrary, Heber seems to have taken very much the same approach at home. Adelia Almira Wilcox Hatton Brown, who arranged with Vilate to be sealed to Heber in 1856, recorded in a memoir written late in life that "when our Lord [Heber] could find time he would come in and visit us and instruct us and teach us our duty and if he saw anything he thought was wrong in any one of us he was not slow to tell us." Mary Ellen Harris Kimball, four years the junior of Christeen and sealed to Heber at about the same time, dutifully recorded, apparently with no resentment, a number of similar instructions that Heber delivered to his wives. For example, in March 1857, as Heber was leaving the house one morning, he passed her, seated by the

16Ibid.
17Ibid., 234-36.
18Ibid., 236.
19Ibid., 239.
door, put his hand on her head and gave her a quasi-blessing, quasi-scolding:

Mary Ellen, may the Lord God Almighty bless you and comfort your heart, and you shall begin to arise from this very moment if you will take my counsel. Do not speak when you have nothing to talk about. That is, do not pump water when there is none in the pond, but be wise and let your words be in wisdom.\(^\text{20}\)

On another occasion, he put Mary Ellen on the spot by announcing that “he often thought we did not understand his calling” and asking Mary Ellen to explain it. When she ventured that it was “to be a father to this people, to chastise, instruct, and lead them to the Celestial Kingdom,” he let her know she was wrong. On the contrary, it was “his office to dissect spirits, and he knew them as well as if he had made them.”\(^\text{21}\) Heber also believed that he was a descendant of Jesus Christ.\(^\text{22}\)

No record, not even a family tradition, survives to suggest Christeen’s feelings for her much-older husband, but Mary Ellen records a poignant story in her diary on 5 July 1857, about five weeks after Elias’s birth:

Mr. Kimball [Mary Ellen’s invariable form of referring to her husband] came in this morning and presented one of Joseph’s sermons to Christeen, showing her a name which he said he had given to her child some time ago. Said that he blessed the child and named it Elias in the absence of its mother, for she was not one with him. He also said that he preferred to name his children for good men and desired the spirit and power of that name to rest upon them; said he did not know what kind of a man he might make, yet he could read its spirit when alone with the child, or in company with those who were of the same spirit as himself.

He then spoke of the last blessing meeting he had. Said he never desired to bless his children in the presence of their mothers since;

\(^20\)Mary Ellen [Harris] Kimball, *Journal of Mary Ellen Kimball, including A Sketch of Our History in This Valley*, [edited by Ogden Kraut] (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, January 1994), 42.

\(^21\)Ibid., 48.

and did not believe he would should he live a thousand years. He said the observations that several of his wives made at that time wounded his feelings severely and grieved the spirit of the Lord. And the day would come when they would feel sorrowful on account of it. He said that we did not realize that he was a servant of God or dictated by His spirit or we would never treat him as we often did. . . .

He then spoke of the propriety of our becoming one with him. But said we felt our own importance so much that we would set up our wills and wish him to come to our terms. And if he became one with us, he must subject himself to our will instead of our becoming subject to his will, and this was not in accordance with the design of the Lord. He further said that we looked upon his weaknesses as crimes. We did not see him as the Lord did for He looks at the intents of the heart. Yet he could see us as the Lord looked upon us.

He . . . said in two years he would be free from those spirits which had so often weighed him down. And said for his part he wished to remove every hindrance which might prevent us from being one with him . . . but said to accomplish this we must be awake to our duty, for as we caused the obstruction so we must help remove it out of the way.  

Stan Kimball records the report, “according to family lore,” that Heber blessed baby Elias “with all the strengths of his father and none of the weaknesses of his mother.” Stan comments, “If this be true, it certainly explains the ensuing tension.” Lending credence to this story is a very similar blessing Heber gave Mary Ellen herself when, at age forty, she became pregnant with her only child. In the blessing, Heber rather pointedly remarked: “I bless the child that it may be perfect in its brain, in its limbs and joints and vitals, possessing all the energy, strength, and fortitude of its father and be free from the desponding spirit which has often had power over its mother . . . And like its father ever ready to listen to the words of life and be blind to the wickedness and corruption of the world.”

Mary Ellen’s baby son died at fifteen months. Perhaps not unnaturally given the attitude of her husband, Mary Ellen blamed herself: “[I] feel that I had not enough of the spirit of the Lord to

23Ibid., 49-50.
25Mary Ellen Harris Kimball, Journal, 85.
save him from his early grave. . . . I must mourn over my stupidity and pray my Father in heaven to give me more light."  

About six weeks later, there is a hint that not all of the wives received his rebukes in utter meekness. Heber asserted that his wives should love and sustain him as he loved and sustained Brigham Young, by implication because it was necessary for Brigham to maintain his position as the head. He continued: "You might say Br. Heber chastises and reproves us so much that our peace is destroyed. We will not allow him to be our head any longer, but we will choose another in his place. Now what would be the consequences? You would bring death and destruction and misery upon yourselves, because you did not recognize the good I had done you and were unwilling to be reproved of your faults or to forsake them."

When he found a wife ironing a child's dress on the Sabbath, he assembled the entire family and scolded the erring wife before them to rebuke them all for "our careless and indifference in giving heed to the teaching that we heard from time to time," and to remind them that "he stood in the same position to his family that Joseph did to the Church." When he saw some bread in the pail of swill for the pigs, he gave the family "quite a lecture. . . . upon prudence and economy." On another occasion he announced that "it was his duty to correct us, but not ours to correct him; that belonged to a higher authority."

In short, it seems likely that at least some of the time, Heber C. Kimball was overbearing, domineering, bitterly critical, and insensitive to the feelings of others. Richard Van Wagoner and Steven Walker note that he also had an "extreme sensitivity to slights from his colleagues," making him ill-disposed to tolerate anything but complete attentiveness and obedience at home.

There is no way of knowing which of these scenes of husbandly harshness J. Golden witnessed in his youth or how he interpreted them; but however standard such a family dynamic might have been in the

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26 Ibid., 92.
27 Ibid., 5.
28 Ibid., 58-59, 100.
29 Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, A Book of Mormons (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1982), 144.
nineteenth century, at least from a twentieth-century perspective, it was not good training for a loving and mutually supportive marriage.

Golden’s and Jennie’s children at first internalized the pain of a missing father but in time openly acted out this hurt in their adult lives. Only Jack and Max remained active in the Church. Jack served on two high councils and as a bishop. Max served a full-time mission to France, Switzerland, and Belgium, and was a high priest. The third son, Dick drifted away from Church activity. Golden and Jennie were particularly shamed, however, by the sexual misbehavior of their daughters. Two had affairs with married men. One bore an illegitimate child. The third, Beth, was involved in a lurid love triangle; her husband shot and killed a man whom he claimed had alienated his wife’s affections; a jury acquitted him of murder on the grounds that he was protecting the sanctity of his home. As a boy growing up, I formulated an image of this episode from our family stories that was pure melodrama: The betrayed husband returns home to find them in bed together. The gunfire. The wife’s reputation forever tarnished. This family story assumes without question Beth’s adultery. The reality, which I did not understand until I began the historical research, does not completely exonerate her, but it presents a more complex view. It also presents a heartbreaking glimpse of J. Golden and Jennie, publicly embarrassed by a lurid scandal widely promulgated throughout Utah.

My first glimpse beyond the family melodrama version came in the summer of 1953 when, at age nineteen, I worked on the track gang of the railway between the open pit in Bingham and the Magna smelter. The foreman, Charles Beckstead, had been born and reared in Bingham and had worked in the copper mine all of his life. In his late fifties when I met him, he was waiting out his retirement with a bad back, seeing that our gang of twelve earned our wages from Kennecott Copper six days a week.

When he learned my last name, he felt compelled, for reasons I never fully understood, to describe all he could remember of my ill-famed cousin, Elizabeth (“Beth”) Kimball Willard, from the days of his own youth between 1915 and 1917. What he recounted had all the elements of a lurid pulp novel: lust, deceit, jealousy, rage, revenge, and murder.

He described Beth as a “free-spirited young woman who didn’t give a damn what anyone thought of her. She had far too active a
sex drive for a small mining town like Bingham. Her dad was a prominent Church leader, and it's as though she wanted to up-end everything he stood for. And let me tell you, she almost succeeded.”

I didn't really believe everything Charlie Beckstead told me. In fact, I felt sure he had embellished some of the story until several years later when I reconstructed the case from the lengthy newspaper accounts of the trial. Beth had in fact openly flaunted the morals of her very conservative Utah society during the spring, fall, and summer of 1917.

According to these accounts, twenty-one-year-old Beth met Arthur L. Willard, a non-Mormon, at the University of Utah where they were both students.30

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He was twenty-five and finishing his last year of law school. A native of Little Rock, Arkansas, he had come to Salt Lake City from Seattle, then began teaching school in Rupert, Idaho, where he had married in 1912. His wife had died in 1913, leaving a daughter who was being raised by his wife’s grandparents in Idaho. Beth and Arthur were married in July 1914 when Arthur was twenty-five and Beth was twenty-one. In the fall of 1916, they moved to Bingham where Arthur was principal of the grade school and also of the high school where Beth taught typing, shorthand, and Spanish. He planned to spend his summers practicing law.

Arthur had met Cecil Holmes, a native of Kentucky, in Rupert, Idaho, about seven years earlier and had taken a keen interest in the young man’s education, arranging for him to finish high school in Bingham and hiring Cecil’s older sister Will (not a nickname) to teach sixth grade at Bingham Elementary. Will and Beth became good friends. During the 1916-17 school year, twenty-two-year-old Cecil boarded with Arthur and Beth. In a short period of time, Cecil and Beth became close friends, too. Students, other teachers, and townfolk regularly saw them walk “arm in arm” to and from school. It was Arthur’s habit to go to work earlier and stay later than they. Cecil and Beth sometimes disappeared from the school dance floor to spend “several dances” on an unlighted upper floor. There were embraces. Cecil began calling Beth “Starlight,” “my girl,” and “Lovey,” in front of teachers and students.

One weekend in late March, all three went to a school ballgame on Friday night. Then Arthur continued on to Salt Lake City for a business conference on Saturday that he expected to last all day. To “prevent remarks,” a student named Lucile was supposed to stay overnight with Cecil and Beth. The conference was cancelled and Arthur arrived home early Saturday morning to find Lucile nowhere in sight and Beth and Cecil, clad in nightclothes, eating breakfast. The cot on which Cecil slept was tidily made up, its pillows and blankets in place. In the bedroom, the covers on the double bed were turned back from both sides and both pillows were indented. Beth said Lucile had “just left,” but Lucile told Arthur on Monday that she had not stayed overnight at his house.

When Arthur confronted Beth about her behavior, Beth told him she was innocent; she loved only him; she and Cecil had done nothing wrong. He forbade Beth and Cecil to be in the house alone.
Then, only a few days later, Cecil stayed home from school, claiming he was ill. When Beth did not come to school, Arthur returned home and found them standing together in the bedroom. Arthur ordered Cecil to “get out of my sight and stay out.” Cecil scrambled into the bathroom until Beth and Arthur left for school, then moved out of the house the same day. Arthur told Beth that she would have to leave too, but in three or four days so that it wouldn’t look as if she and Cecil had left together.

Cecil checked into a Salt Lake City hotel, the Moxum, for ten days between March 20 and April 1. Beth moved back home with her parents in Salt Lake City. She and Will stayed at the same hotel for at least one night. On another evening, Cecil introduced a mining salesman staying at the hotel to “Mrs. Willard and Mrs. Kimball.” Mrs. Kimball was Jennie, but the Deseret Evening News, which reported his testimony, never gave her full name or explained that she was Beth’s mother. The salesman sold some mining stock to Jennie, and the foursome decided to attend the Pantages Theatre. On the way, Beth and Cecil disappeared to “get some dinner” and showed up much later at the theater. After the show, the two men returned to the hotel while the mother and daughter went to the Kimball home.

On 1 April, Cecil went to Kentucky, his home state, returning to Utah on 1 June. Beth and Arthur effected a partial reconciliation, and she returned to Bingham in early April to finish the school year. Cecil returned to Salt Lake City, took employment with an insurance firm, and insisted that Bingham be included in his route because he “had a sweetheart” there.

Arthur’s friends began telling him, uncomfortably, that Beth was meeting Cecil in Salt Lake City. She admitted it. Arthur saw his lawyers and arranged for divorce papers to be served on Beth on June 6 or 7. Various acquaintances reported that Arthur was making threats against Cecil.

On Wednesday, 13 June, Cecil came to Bingham, and Arthur saw him in a barbershop. There was a fistfight. Arthur went to the law office he was sharing for the summer, stole a .38 caliber revolver from his office mate, and found Cecil. There was another fight, and Arthur, who was getting the worst of it, shot Cecil in the abdomen. He hemorrhaged and died two hours later.
Meanwhile, Beth was shopping in Salt Lake City, strolling up Main Street between Second and Third South “in leisurely enjoyment of the June afternoon.” It is not clear who found her and told her the news, but she collapsed on the sidewalk and was reportedly under a doctor’s care at her parents’ home that night and the next day. She said only that she was “innocent of wrongdoing or undue intimacy with Holmes,” a position that J. Golden, whatever his private doubts, defended publicly throughout the trial and the remainder of his life. He announced that “his daughter would defend her honor to the end, even at the cost of her accused husband’s life. . . . [She] will not allow herself to be dragged into the case as a sacrifice for Willard’s cause in the event that he resorts to the ‘unwritten law,’ which is the written law in Utah, to gain his freedom.” Golden also gave Beth a part-time job in his office at $35 a month during the latter part of June. It is unclear how long she worked before retreating to California where she stayed until the trial required her presence.

The case came to trial on 15 October 1917 and lasted almost two weeks. Golden attended several days of the testimony along with Beth. It must have been a great agony to him. Will Holmes, the dead man’s sister, was staying in the Kimball home and testified that she had put Beth’s photograph in Cecil’s coffin. Another woman was with her. The undertaker was unable to identify this other woman, but it was clear from the line of questioning that the prosecutor assumed it was Beth.

For her part, Beth played the injured wife. On the first day of defense testimony, she stood outside the courtroom door saying she wanted to be allowed to enter so that she could look her husband “in the eyes” while he testified that she had been unfaithful to him. Her attorney, Oscar W. Moyle, told the press that she was ready to take the stand and tell everything because she “has nothing to hide” and had returned from California “in the hope” of being allowed to “tell all she knows.”

Others obviously thought she had a great deal to hide. Jane Dunley Layton, a seamstress who had been working for Jennie Kimball, testified that she had been staying at the house six weeks before the killing and that she and Beth had slept in the same bed for three of those weeks. Golden’s and Jennie’s feelings can only be imagined as Jane testified that she had seen Cecil and Beth sitting together on
the wall at Lafayette School on both the Monday and the Tuesday before the Wednesday shooting. Jane had described Cecil to Jennie and asked if that were Beth’s husband, only to hear Jennie respond dryly that it was Cecil Holmes. When Beth was brought home after hearing of the shooting, according to Jane, she had wailed that she wanted to die if Cecil died, had collapsed in “hysterical grief” crying out “Cecil!” many times, and also insisted that “she loved him and she didn’t care who knew it.”

After twelve days of trial, the case went to the jury on Saturday, 27 October. Arthur’s attorney had reminded the jury during five hours of closing arguments, “You are not trying the guilt or innocence of his wife. You are trying the guilt or innocence of the defendant. . . . If there be any idle curious here who expect that in my argument I shall hold Elizabeth Willard up to scorn, they are due for disappointment.” Then having taken this nobly moral stance, he rather confusingly reminded his listeners that “that many of the great women of the earth had stepped from the straight way of virtue and urged upon his listeners the attitude of a magnanimous comforting attitude toward the wife of the slayer.” Having gone so far, he then came remarkably close to contradicting himself by pointing out what the jury had grasped as soon as the murder had occurred: “Doubt of Mrs. Willard’s innocence . . . must mean doubt of her husband’s guilt.”

Oddly enough, the prosecution made roughly the same points: “They have made the poor wife drink the cup to the bitter dregs,” said the state’s counsel. “They have brought little children [the high school students] here to tell of their gossip. If there was anything else, they would have presented it. Would you blast a good woman’s name on the evidence they have introduced? It is preposterous.”

The jury was out for two hours and twenty minutes, then returned a verdict of “not guilty” under the “defilement” statute.31 One reporter sentimentally depicted Beth “in the haven of her childhood home” while Arthur was “returned by the law to the

31This statute, part of Utah’s written code, provided that a husband who kills his wife’s lover to preserve his home and his name from “defilement” has a defense for homicide.
gray-haired mother whose aching heart fought loyally through the torturing hours of her attendance at the trial."

Beth, also free at last to talk to reporters, was not reticent. She seems, however, to have missed her cue for affirming her own innocence and instead seemed hellbent on denouncing her husband:

"I don't want any sympathy," declared Mrs. Willard. "I don't want anyone to defend me. I know that Mr. Willard killed an innocent man, and if I didn't know that, I wouldn't be here today. I rest confident in the belief that Mr. Willard will be punished. He cannot escape the law of retribution, as sure as there is a God in heaven."

Ironically, this statement may be as close to "bearing a testimony" as Beth Kimball ever came in her whole life.

But the unanswered questions are legion. Obviously Jennie knew Cecil Holmes well enough to identify him from her seamstress's description and knew that her married daughter was meeting her lover (actual or would-be) while she, a General Authority's daughter, was living under the parental roof. Furthermore, Jennie, a General Authority's wife, was willing to make up a foursome at a public theater with her daughter, her lover, and a traveling salesman. Did Jennie think her presence would protect her daughter from scandal? But what of her own reputation when Beth and Cecil disappeared and she chose to go on to the theater alone with the salesman? Was she trying to put the brakes on Beth? Or kicking up her own heels in Golden's absence? It was unthinkable within my family that Jennie would have winked at, let alone enabled, her daughter's adultery. I can't help thinking that, whatever reproaches Golden might have heaped on both his wife and daughter when the murder was committed, they were nothing compared to Jennie's self-accusations.

The other conclusion is that blood was indubitably thicker than water. Whether Beth was technically guilty of adultery or not, she was certainly guilty of the appearance of evil and she wanted to break up her marriage. Golden, though no doubt enraged and humiliated, stuck by her. He opened his home, not only to her, but also to the sister of the man with whom Beth was scandalously linked. He gave her a job, almost certainly paying her salary out of his own scanty salary. And he staunchly appeared beside her in public when every curious glance must have fallen like a blow. Although Uncle Golden
may have failed to form friendships with his children while raising them, his love and loyalty did not falter even when their behavior brought shame and disgrace to him.

Another unusually complete and candid window into the discordant relationship of Golden and Jennie has been preserved in 127 letters written by Golden and 35 written by Jennie to their youngest child, Max, between 1926 and 1928, then serving a mission in France, plus some additional letters later when he was an attorney in Washington, D.C. These letters were particularly insightful because they addressed quite candidly all of the peculiarities of the familial relationships. For the first time I began to understand the depths of this family’s problems and the long-term heartache their religious/economic impasse created for both the parents and children. It was the descriptive details of sacrifice, disappointment, struggle, financial strain, and bitterness that generated the ache these letters left within me.

Golden and Jennie wrote separately to Max, a message in itself when overseas postage was so expensive. One of the few themes both writers have in common is their deep love and concern for Max, who worked hard but struggled with culture shock, difficulty in learning the language, and homesickness. They repeatedly encouraged him to work hard and make a success of his mission. Except for this factor, however, they focus on almost completely different topics throughout their correspondence. The first few letters made apparent how divergent Golden and Jennie’s views were on any number of subjects—the most recurring being the Church and family finances. Jennie writes at length about her garden, her health, remodeling the house, learning how to drive, traveling to the West Coast, and how very much she misses Max. Golden reports news of the city, the weather, conferences at which he has spoken, and the like.

32 These letters to Max are part of the J. Golden Kimball Collection, mss. #662, Manuscript Division, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, donated through the kindness and generosity of Golden’s daughter-in-law, Capitola (“Cappy”) Conrad Kimball, and her daughter, Susan Kimball Kee. I thank the staff of the library for their cooperation as I read these letters and thank both Cappy and Susan for their graciousness and candor in answering additional questions and sharing other family documents with me. I cite these letters parenthetically in the text by date, identifying each writer.
Less obvious but nonetheless discernible in these letters was the tragic gap not only in Golden’s and Jennie’s relationship with their children but also between themselves. Forty years of financial hardships and Golden’s frequent and long absences had seriously scarred this couple. In their letters to Max, both Golden and Jennie describe some of the elements of the despair that distanced them from each other. Golden’s letters show him struggling to understand and interpret his experience as a husband, trying to make sense of the failed relationship and to distill from the bitter experience wisdom that would better serve his son:

I must leave tomorrow at 7:00 A.M. for Bear Lake Stake Conference, held in Paris, Idaho. It is hard on me and very lonesome for your mother. (27 May 1926)

Your mother hasn’t got enough faith to keep her happy, only in spells. I am going through the same experience, but most of the time I don’t care a hoot and that helps! (16 June 1926)

Your mother is wonderful when it comes to her great desire that you make good and fill your mission honorably. She has surprised me in the way she views the matter. (28 July 1926)

Mother—she is a wonderful mother and a darn good woman even if she and I can’t see through the same keyhole. (4 November 1926)

I see no reason why you should not learn the lesson your old dad has learned and fought all of his married life to put it over and be halfway honest and decent. If I haven’t gained the love and respect of my family by doing so, I have at least retained respect for myself as a man who has tried to play the game of life straight. I am a plain spoken man and tell the truth most of the time. (5 January 1927)

All of my ideals of home-life have been shattered—I am disillusioned in many ways. (26 January 1927)

Your mother fusses over being alone without Jack [a grandson] which left me to feel I meant little in her life and this brought no joy to me. . . . I am a soul alone. (22 March 1927)

It’s a bad thing for man and wife to be fenced in all winter together—to be separated helps us to appreciate the good in us and forget the bad. (26 March 1927)

I have turned our bunch [sons and daughters] over to the Lord and
gave him a chance to try his hand at it, as we have with all our efforts made a mess of the job. (11 May 1927)

It is truly discouraging. . . . Your dear mother is the enigma of my life and causes me many heartaches—and, if half her story was told, I have been the trial of her life. . . . On your return, you will find us little improved and will see things as they really are and not as they should be. . . . You are a dear boy, for such you are and when you become a man with a wife and children and a home you will better understand your father and mother. (19 May 1927)

My only happiness is in the Church. (9 September 1927)

If your mother had taken up Church work, it would or might have been different. (26 September 1927)

Your mother and our children have never at any time understood me nor sympathized with me. Only a short time ago your mother taunted me by saying: “Yes, you smile and say nice things on the street and in public but if they knew how mean you are they wouldn’t speak to you!” I said, “Thank God, they haven’t heard your version of things or I would be mortified.” Son, always remember God understands us but no one else does. In fact, we do not understand ourselves. (23 November 1927)

We do not have the same viewpoint, the same desires, the same objectives. How can there be unity of effort if we fall apart and go in different directions. We do not team together. It’s a fight over free agency, initiative and personality. There is no head. There never can be. It is only death and separation for what your parents each have suffered . . . It has always been finance, debt and bills to pay and hell to pay, both feeling that they have had the hard part of it. (22 July 1932).

Only once in these 127 letters does Golden acknowledge a feeling of dependency toward Jennie: “Will be desperately lonely without your mother. Feel myself wearing down, getting older” (7 March 1927).

The tone of Jennie’s letters was much more relaxed by comparison, lacking both the intensity and the bitterness of Golden’s observations on their relationship. It is almost as if she has accepted the relationship in its dysfunctionality and has stopped reacting to it. Thus, she can observe Golden objectively and find the good moments to be pleasant surprises instead of sharp reminders of what
they lack. It is also clear that she has given up competing with the Church for his attention. In fact, she seldom mentions the Church except in connection with Golden. It did not appear to be an important part of her personal life:

Dad is full of cheer as usual when he is at work for the Church. (21 June 1926)

Dad was uncommonly nice to me on this trip. [She had accompanied him to a stake conference.] (22 November 1927)

Dad is quite low as they do not treat him awfully well. Every man is sent out to preach but him. (28 April 1928)

Dad has been feeling quite hurt over not being sent out, but I am sure it is only Rudger Clawson who sees to that—anyway, everyone likes dad a lot more than anyone else—so he shouldn’t feel badly. (11 May 1928)

Jennie’s letters approach intensity when she talks about her daughters, Jane, Beth, and Gladys:

The girls have a strange idea of life, you can only love them and pray for them. They have no interest in God or man it seems. (1 April 1928)

I am not proud of my girls at all. (8 April 1928)

On this topic, at least, she and Golden saw eye to eye, although they did not seem able to share their sorrow. Golden wrote:

I love the girls but they are headed for adversity, sorrow, and heart-aches unless they turn their faces toward God and seek after Him. Influences and environment are not likely to help them. To say anything only exasperates and brings division. (2 August 1927)

Jane has taken up with a married man like Gladys did. They both cease to be themselves. No greater trial has come into my life. (19 May 1928)

Our family has made such a damn mess of their lives, we cannot help but worry our souls out about them. (5 June 1935)

33Rudger Clawson, then president of the Quorum of the Twelve, was widely known as a rigorous rule-maker and -keeper. J. Golden’s spontaneous approach was deeply trying to Clawson. See Chapter 7, “Golden and the Brethren,” in Remembering Uncle Golden.
The pathos of their situation seems particularly painful; though they were both grieved over their children, neither was able to reach out in comfort to the other. Jennie no doubt placed much of the blame for the rebellious behavior of the children on Golden because of his habitual long absences. Since raising the children was the mother’s responsibility, Golden no doubt believed that Jennie’s lack of faith had communicated itself to the children; and he did not understand why she was less supportive than other General Authorities’ wives. Despite their divergences, however, there is no hint in the letter that either contemplated or desired a divorce or separation. They had developed a degree of acceptance, understanding, and reliance on one other through the sheer accumulation of shared years.

Cappy Conrad, who married Max Kimball in 1947, commented to me: “He related to me how it was to read those letters in the mission field from his mother and father. He realized for the first time the extent of their problems. Because he quit school and left home at seventeen, Max was unaware of the uneasy truce between his parents. He always felt the heart of the problem was the totally different agendas his mother and father had. He remembered Jennie as a loving wife and mother who seldom had any support from her husband. She was to Max a woman who wanted her children to be exposed to art, music, literature, and education while his father only wanted to keep them in the Church. It was always my impression from my husband that no one fully appreciated Jennie’s life and all that she had to put up with. She was an educated and refined woman. Unlike most other wives, she did not hesitate to speak her mind.

“She was always trying her best to make a little money. She had a good business head for some things and paid all the bills. Unfortunately, she particularly liked to invest in mining ventures in the West, which, for the most part, turned out badly. I am still in possession of her many worthless, elaborately illustrated stock certificates. She was also a superb cook. The Brethren, Max recalled, always welcomed an invitation from his father to join him for one of her splendid meals. She loved her garden and her home. She sewed dresses for her three daughters. She wanted nice things for all her children. But it was obvious to everyone, Max would observe,
that his father was happiest when he was doing missionary work or preaching to the Saints.

"Yet there were ways in which the marriage met their needs. Max would often tell me that, if it hadn’t been for his mother, his father would not have gone anywhere in the Church. His father frequently stated, 'I wouldn’t have amounted to a hill of beans without Jennie’s love and support.' He remembered, as a boy, how his mother would buoy up Golden when he became depressed. She would tell him how he was more loved by the members of the Church than any of the other Brethren. Max would tell me she believed in the Church but was angered by the Brethren. How his mother could differentiate between the two always irritated his father. His three sisters directed their resentment against the Church rather than against their father. They were not like their father, but more strong-willed like their mother. Max could never handle his sisters, but then, no one could. He always felt close to his brothers, Jack and Richard.

"It was a strange family. Max did not feel his parents raised any saints. He did not blame the Church for this, nor did he blame his mother or father. To him, his mother was a beautiful, caring, and independent woman; and his father was a courageous and loving man who was in many ways oblivious to the needs and wants of his family. As a young man growing up, he remembered that his father was seldom there. He believed his parents were, as a man and a woman, extraordinary people—but he often reflected it would have been better if they had never married."

Cappy kindly made available to me an address Max delivered at sacrament meeting in Washington, D.C.’s, small LDS branch in 1938 after Golden’s death. Max’s comments offer a poignant portrait of his father’s deeply personal struggles:

I was raised rather closely to my father, but unfortunately, I stood too close and could not see him entire. Thinking of him now I am delighted in his humanness, in the fact that he was not a tower of strength, but a man of ordinary quality. He told me once that he was the victim of a great inferiority complex, that his life had been a struggle from the beginning. Perhaps this was the ground of his great understanding of man and his tribulations.34

34Maxwell K. Kimball, untitled sacrament meeting address, ca. fall 1938,
It is safe to say that most marriages fail because the man and the wife want different things. The irreconcilable impasse between Golden and Jennie developed early in their marriage. Jennie really wanted only two things from her marriage—the constancy of a husband and father in the home and freedom from financial problems that tormented them all of their lives. Sadly, Golden felt he was powerless to do anything about either. For all of this service to the Church, his living allowance was cruelly small—only $65 a month. It was impossible for him to demand that he stay at home or request more money. It was pointless for Golden and Jennie to even discuss the problem. They were locked in a desperate dilemma.

The unbearable public humiliation of personal financial failure which lay at the root of so many personal problems caught up with Golden in the spring of 1899. He could no longer ignore the obvious fact of his pitiable finances. On 19 April he filed personal bankruptcy with the U.S. District Court of Utah. In a written affidavit to the court he listed his assets as $2,031 and his debts as $11,126. The collapse of his personal finances meant that Golden could not settle his many debts with merchants, bankers, and numerous friends. He was shamed and humiliated by this unbearable situation. His despair was heightened because he knew that most of his debtors faced fiscal complications as grave as his own.

Golden met with each of them and attempted to work out some form of long-term repayment. Most of these men responded with sympathy and understanding for Golden’s plight. But with others, there was a bitterness toward Golden that bordered on hostility. Although the Church did not increase Golden’s allowance, he was the last General Authority in the Church to ever declare public bankruptcy.

Fourteen years later, he was still struggling with the direst poverty. On Sunday night, 27 July 1913, the sixty-year-old Golden was taking a walk along North Main Street near the LDS University about 9:00 P.M. when he encountered a twenty-nine-year-old grocer named Samuel J. Holt, to whom he owed a long-standing bill. Holt,
a returned missionary who had married in the temple, was accompanied by his wife. The previous day, Saturday afternoon, Jennie had “sent to the store for some gasoline with which to clean dress goods. Instead of receiving gasoline, she was sent coal oil; as a result the dress was ruined. Mr. Kimball tried to get a settlement from the grocery but they did not agree on the terms, and Holt threatened to [sue].”

No words were exchanged between the two men when they encountered each other; but according to Nicholas G. Morgan, the assistant county attorney, Holt suddenly charged Golden and “struck him several times in the face, inflicting a number of severe cuts and bruises on the head and cheek.” Holt continued the brutal attack until several men came to Golden’s aid. He was “so badly injured that the services of a physician were required.” According to Morgan, “the wounds indicated that a blunt instrument like brass knuckles had been used.” The Salt Lake County Attorney’s office issued a complaint charging Holt with assault and battery and a warrant for his arrest was placed in the hands of the sheriff’s office, but Golden apparently never pressed charges; at least the newspapers in subsequent days contain no record of a booking or arraignment. The debt Golden owed Holt was twenty-four dollars. Eight years later in 1921, he candidly told a general conference audience, “I don’t know anything about hell, but that is the worst hell I have ever been in—to be in debt. I can tell you how you can keep out of debt; but I can’t tell you how to get out after you get in.”

Jennie must have shared in the public humiliation of these events; but they did not bring the couple closer together. Jennie did not get what she needed from Golden so she felt that he was mean and the Brethren were unsympathetic. Golden, in turn, felt lonely and depressed, unappreciated by his wife and frequently unappreciated by the Brethren as well. He was universally loved in the Church for his ability to bring the healing of charity and good humor to the complexities of life, yet these were the very qualities he could not achieve in his own family or marriage.

Although he did not advertise his familial woes, he also did not

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37 Conference Report, October 1921, 85.
try to present a hypocritically glossy image of perfection to the Saints. Instead, his conference talks contain candid counsel from which Mormon parents, struggling with less than perfect offspring, could themselves draw encouragement and strength:

There is a great responsibility resting upon us fathers, and upon the mothers, and I do not think there has ever been a time in my life when I have felt the responsibility to be so weighty and great upon me in all my labors in the Church as it is at the present time with my own family. They are not many in number. But there are enough of them, and about all I can handle.

I think you will find somewhere in the Old Testament that “the fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” I have to confess to you that I have eaten some sour grapes in my day, and there is a problem regarding my children. And while I am interested in my children and family, I have similar interest for your children and families.38

The father almost needs the patience of Job to get a family together for morning prayer. That is pretty plain talk, but you seem to understand what I mean. I guess you have tried it. . . . You go right home now. I know where my trouble is, and I am trying to cure it. I am learning this lesson, that there is no use of my trying to govern a family until I can govern myself.39

I want eternal life. I want salvation, and I desire to breathe the same desire into my wife and children, so that they will want to partake of it, and be willing to make some sacrifice.40

I have been awfully neglectful of [my family]. My family has been secondary in my work. I hope the brethren will be awfully careful what they say about families. I hope they will be very tender of men’s feelings, when they talk about our children and about parents being responsible for their children—that their sins will rest upon them. God knows, I have got all I can carry without packing anyone else’s. Now you want to be awfully careful and awfully tender of those things, because in the wisdom of God he will gather our children together.

38Ibid., April 1913, p. 84. The scripture he mentions is Ezekiel 18:2: “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.”
39Ibid., April 1913, 89-90.
40Ibid., April 1915, 135.
They are God's children. My children are God's children. God is just as much responsible for my children as I am.

Now, brethren, I want to say to you—I do not know whether you know it or not—there are a lot of things you do not know that you ought to be told—if there are any people who are neglected in the Church of Jesus Christ it is the families of the leaders of the Church. They go out and tell you how to take care of your families, and they are away from home and their families take care of themselves. You want to be careful.\textsuperscript{41}

Few knew of the disparity between what the membership understood of Golden and the lamentable contrast in his home life. A close friend aware of these circumstances theorized that the burden of perfection imposed upon all the Brethren compelled Golden to seek some form of refuge through his natural wit. Such besieged yet humorous responses coexisted in the complex personalities of such comparably gifted men as Mark Twain and Will Rogers. As Golden suffered from the waywardness of his children, alienation from his wife, and differences with the Brethren, his humor no doubt kept him alive and functional at times of great despair. Yet any balanced portrait must also consider his staunch and shining faith, an aspect of his character that is underexplored in this short essay. Most shadows are longer than the object which casts them. The dark shadows of Golden's private life deserve honest scrutiny, but so does the unconstrained brightness of his loyalty and love for the gospel.

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., April 1921, 178-81.
Mary Bennion Powell: Polygamy and Silence

John Bennion

In the spring of 1902, twelve-year-old Mary Bennion of Taylorsville, Utah, discovered a letter to her father from a woman she had considered a mere friend of the family. It led to the revelation that her father, Heber Bennion, had taken second and third wives a decade after the Woodruff Manifesto. This revelation was so devastating to Mary that she never fully recovered from it. In her mind, her father had not only broken the laws of heaven and the land but had shattered all of the conventions of romantic, tender courtesy a husband owes a wife and had broken the heart of her mother, Susan Winder Bennion, who, at that point, had borne ten children and buried three.

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TABLE 1
The Plural Families of Heber Bennion (1858-1932)

1. Susan Marian Winters, born 25 June 1859, Payson, Utah, to Oscar Winters and Mary Ann Stearns Winters; married 11 September 1885 in Logan, Utah; died 16 June 1936, Taylorsville, Utah; ten children, all born in Taylorsville except for Ethelyn:
   1. Ethelyn, 6 August 1886 in Pleasant Grove-7 June 1919
   3. Mary, 11 January 1890-10 January 1918.
   4. Lucile, 14 February 1892-18 June 1925
   5. Ada, 12 March 1894-13 March 1894
   6. Helen, 11 June 1895-29 June 1980
   7-8. Arthur and Allen (stillborn twins), 23 December 1897
   9. Sterling Alfred, 27 January 1899-29 June 1890
   10. Rulon Oscar, 14 March 1900-22 February 1960

2. Emma Jane Wester. She had no children, and the ancestral file contains no further information about this wife.

3. Mary (Mayme) Bringhurst, born 19 February 1883 at Taylorsville, Utah, the daughter of John Bringhurst and Emma Trip Bringhurst. No marriage date appears on the family group records, but the family records give a marriage year of 1901; eight children:
   1. Susie, 19 February 1903 in Provo, Utah. Mary records this birth on p. 3 of her 1901 journal as 1902. See other discrepancies below. She does not list birth months or days.
   3. Herbert Grant, 23 September 1907 [Mary says 1906] in Salt Lake City
   4. John B., 3 July 1910 [Mary says 1909] in Salt Lake City
   7. Ralph, 9 August 1916, Brigham City, Utah, died 19 November 1916
Twelve-year-old Mary was keeping a diary at that time, but she does not mention this event; however, as an adult, Mary recorded her traumatic reaction in marginal notes in her journal; in a personal essay titled “The End of Childhood”; in an unfinished novel, “A Utah Idyll”; and in two sets of handwritten notes which may have been the beginning of a family history centering on polygamy.¹

These narratives—with their patterns of silence, formulaic expression, and emotional outbursts—document Mary’s struggle to signify family events differently than her father interpreted them. He matured during the years when the Church was embattled over plural marriage, and consequently he read his marriages as obedient sacrifice. Mary’s cultural inheritance was divided; she received not only the tradition of her father but also the secular ideology of monogamous romance, reinforced at that point by the Church’s movement toward conformity with mainstream America. Consequently, she read his second and third marriages as destructive infidelity. In her narratives the stories of the fathers and those of the children struggle for supremacy. They are a rare glimpse into part of the price paid by Mormon polygamous families at a time of painful transition.

**FAMILY IDENTITY AND THE WOODRUFF MANIFESTO**

Between the first Manifesto given by Wilford Woodruff in 1890 which publicly discouraged new plural marriages yet left private loopholes, and the second Manifesto, given by Joseph F. Smith in 1904, which publicly and clearly renounced polygamy, Mormonism’s “peculiar institution” was in transition. During those fourteen

¹These five sources, all of which will be quoted in this account, are housed in two depositories—the first three at the University of the Utah, the last two at the Utah Historical Society. They are: (1) Mary Bennion Powell, Journal, 23 vols., Bennion Family Collection, MS 251, Boxes 4-5, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah; (2) Mary Bennion Powell, “The End of Childhood,” typescript, n.d., Bennion Family Collection, Box 5, Fd. 2; (3) Mary Bennion Powell, “A Utah Idyll,” typescript, n.d., Bennion Family Collection, Box 5, Fd. 3; and (4) Mary Bennion Powell Muhs (Muhs was the surname of her second husband), “Incidents in the lives of my immediate ancestors and my immediate family” and (5) “January 1970—More Notes,” handwritten accounts, n.d., both in Bennion Collection, MS B-16, Box 7, Fd. 2, Utah State Historical Society Salt Lake City.
years, the Saints grappled with what the Woodruff Manifesto meant. Some believed it meant that no new marriages should be formed; others believed that husbands and wives should separate; still others believed that marriages could still be contracted outside the United States. The doctrinal confusion produced disorder in the day-to-day roles lived by husbands, wives, and children in plural marriages. When she heard the announcement, one plural wife, Annie Gardner, wondered what would happen to her: “I was there in the Tabernacle the day of the Manifesto and I tell you it was an awful feeling. There President Woodruff read the Manifesto that made me no longer a wife and might make me homeless. I sat there by my mother and she looked at me and said, ‘How can you stand this?’ But I voted for it because it was the only thing to do. I raised my hand and voted a thing that would make me a unlawful wife.” Her primary concern might have been practical, but she also felt uncertain because the story had been transformed which gave identity to her plural family.

In some cases the Woodruff Manifesto had little effect on the way family members viewed each other. Albert L. Payne of Provo, Utah, remembered that his father occasionally attended the Salt Lake Theatre with his two wives decades after the Manifesto. “There was no reason to hide,” he recalled. “They didn’t talk about it, but they did things together.”

In other marriages, the social and financial status of plural wives became ambiguous, affecting the ways children and parents defined their relationships. In 1888 Matilda Pehrson became the second wife of my great-grandfather, Israel Bennion. Federal pressure against plural marriage was already almost intolerable; and the Manifesto two years later left her stranded in uncertainty. For a decade and a half after her marriage, she and her four children used either

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3Quoted in Embry, Mormon Polygamous Families, 12.

4Ibid., 85.
her maiden name or a fictitious name, as if she had no legitimate husband. Her daughter Ruth Bennion suggests in “A Report on Plural Marriage in the Vicinity of Vernon” that the right to use a husband’s name may have been precious to Matilda:

When [she] was a young child, she received a patriarchal blessing at the hands of Presiding Patriarch, John Smith, and it contained among other things, the promise, “Thou shalt secure unto thyself a name which shall be held in remembrance among the Saints.” This promise was not fully fulfilled until about sixteen years after her marriage, long after the danger of apprehension and conviction was past. . . . In about 1904 the Tooele Stake President announced in a public meeting that she [Matilda] and her family should be known by the name of Bennion, and this name should be used on all the records of the Church.5

In addition to not having her husband’s name during the early years of her marriage, Matilda also had little financial support from him. After finishing her education at the University of Deseret, she taught school in her hometown of Vernon, Utah, where her husband also lived. Her son, Angus Bennion, writes that she saved $1,000 from her salary which was her “living” for the next few years.6

Just before the birth of her first child in 1892, Matilda moved to Salt Lake City to protect herself and her husband from prosecution. In 1894 she returned to Vernon and rented part of a house which was a quarter mile away from the home of her husband and his first wife, Jeanette Sharp Bennion. According to Ruth, she “continued to raise a family in a community where she met with a mixture of behavioral responses, ranging from ridicule and mild persecution on the one hand, through indifference and unconcern, but also including loyalty and sympathetic attention.”7 Angus adds that she made her living by taking “care of the post office in

6Angus Bennion, “Matilda Pehrson,” ibid., 81.
Vernon, which yielded her and us children a bare subsistence."\(^8\)

Her father gave her vegetables and a cow.

In about 1901 Israel and his "first wife and family" moved seven miles outside of town; Matilda paid $300 for his vacated house which was "roomy enough, but with bare floors, under which the winter wind could gain access, and drafty doors and windows."\(^9\) Five years later, Israel wrote in his journal: "I paid back to Matilda $300.00 that she had before time paid to me for my house and lot in Vernon. Thus, I have given her that house and lot: this, in my present financial condition is a fair portion to her."\(^10\)

While some plural families had ambiguous identities even before 1890, the Woodruff Manifesto certainly made familial relationships even more uncertain, especially for marriages contracted after that date. Mary Bennion's father, Heber, believed that his call to take new wives previous to the Woodruff Manifesto was still in effect after the Manifesto. Mary copied a letter which her father, then seventy-one, wrote on 9 July 1929 to his brother-in-law, Church President Heber J. Grant, defending his post-Manifesto marriages:

"About the year 1887 I was ordained a presiding Seventy in one of the quorums over Jordan by Abraham Cannon and Brother Gould of Z.C.M.I. They tried to exact a promise from me that I would enter into the practice of plural marriage. I hesitated and demurred, but they finally ordained me with a strong injunction to enter into that principle when opportunity afforded."\(^11\)

Heber says that he engaged

\(^8\)Angus Bennion, "Matilda Pehrson," 81.
\(^9\)Ibid., 82
\(^10\)Israel Bennion, Journal, 3, private typescript for Israel's descendants. The original diary, MS 13900, is at the Historical Department Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).
\(^11\)Mary Bennion Powell, "Parts of a letter written by Heber Bennion to Heber J. Grant," 9 July 1929, Bennion Collection (USHS), MS B-16, Box 7, Fd. 2, 2-3. The original letter is not in Heber Bennion's papers at either the University of Utah or the Utah Historical Society. Mary's notes are extracts from a letter copied for her by Vic Jorgensen on 10 February 1973, LDS Church Archives. If nothing else, this copied letter shows that Mary believed her father had the authority and encouragement of Church leaders to enter into polygamy. Heber Bennion's sister, Hulda Augusta Bennion, married Heber J. Grant in 1884 and died in 1952. She was the second of his three wives but the only one to survive well into the century. Lucy Stringham died in 1893 and Emily Harris Wells in 1908.
to marry two women in the mid-1890s but “released” them, following
the advice of George Q. Cannon, who said that the time was not yet
right. Then, he explained, “In the late 90’s one of the Presidents of
my Stake told me that there was now an opportunity to get into that
principle. I noted the recurrence of that word ‘opportunity.’ To be
sure of my ground this time I went first to President George Qu.
Cannon. He said ‘Yes’ the door was open again, but there must be
harmony with the first wife, to avoid trouble in the family, and for
the Church. Accordingly I went ahead and took two wives.”

Heber’s religious conviction shaped the way he viewed his
marriages—the story he told himself about his own experience. He
felt that he was obeying his religious leaders when he married and
that it was an act of pious duty which would bring him divine glory.
The 1929 letter to President Grant also gives a valid reason for
secrecy surrounding the marriages—“to avoid trouble . . . for the
Church.” However, not all members of his family agreed that
Heber’s call to polygamy was divinely sanctioned.

Beginning with her discovery at age twelve and continuing for
the rest of her life, Mary resisted her father’s version of the family
experience. For her, his plural marriages destroyed the family peace
and tainted his love for her mother and the children of that first
marriage. In notes attached to the end of her copy of his 1929 letter,
she says that his letter is tragic

because of the unnecessary ignorance . . . that caused hundreds of
Mormon men to become polygamists because they believed God had
commanded them to through Joseph Smith and his followers in the
Church Presidency, who, also, considered themselves the only repre-
sentatives of God on Earth. These deluded men believed a man told
them God demanded of them the greatest sin in my estimation a human
being can commit—adultery. The Mormon fanatics declare that . . .
this sin can be committed only by women in the Church—but never by
men, who were told to do it by Church Authority. And as there can be
no greater pleasure, joy, and peace, on earth, than that afforded by
monogamy, so there can also be no greater mental pain than that
endured by a loving wife whose husband had been made to become
a polygamist, by Church authority. She had no place to go, for
comfort, not to God, because she’d been taught to believe God

12Ibid., 3.
commanded her husband to put other women in her place. And she couldn't divorce her husband and get one who believed in monogamy, because she'd been taught this would be a terrible sin against God. This constituted for her a *living death*, from which she longed for release even if that would mean the natural death of the body.\(^\text{13}\)

Father and daughter read their family experience in opposite ways depending on whether they believed a polygamous or a monogamous marriage was ideal. At the end of his 1889 journal Heber wrote, “Missed the train for Pleasant Grove.”\(^\text{14}\) In the margin of her bound copy of that journal, Mary bitterly penned, “He missed the train all right. The train for happiness; for early in life, he decided to be a polygamist, which broke his wife’s heart, and the hearts of all her children who were old enough to know that marriage means absolute and single loyalty to one’s spouse.”\(^\text{15}\) However, for Heber polygamy was the gateway to the celestial kingdom. Father and daughter each constructed their story of his plural marriages out of cultural narratives already available to them through family tradition, Church doctrine, and national culture.

**MALE DOMINION AND FAMILY IDENTITY**

As a second-generation Mormon in Utah, Heber Bennion received from his father at least three legacies—polygamy, the habit of meticulous journal keeping, and a love of agricultural pursuits. All of these actions were shaped by his desire to obey priesthood authority and to increase in dominion of lands, wealth, knowledge, reputation, wives, and posterity. For both men, dominion over wives and children meant not only the pleasures of possession but also the responsibility to organize an economic and spiritual life for them—to succor those in one’s kingdom.

Heber’s father, John Bennion, was born just outside of Harwederd, Wales, where John’s father leased a small farm. John, according to the family story, was accused of trespassing and poaching on the preserves of a nobleman. He ran away to Liverpool rather

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\(^{13}\)Ibid., 5.


\(^{15}\)Ibid.
than face prosecution. In that city he apprenticed himself as an "iron moulder and boiler maker" and was converted to Mormonism by John Taylor. In 1842 he sailed to the United States and settled in Nauvoo, eventually traveling west with the other Saints. He and his brother Samuel settled first east of the Jordan River but eventually moved across the river to a more permanent home north of Taylorsville. Each move was either in obedience to a leader or to expand economic possibilities, and soon John owned herds of cattle, sheep, and horses which grazed as far as West Jordan on the north, Rush Valley on the west, Castle Dale on the east, and the Muddy Mission in the South. His economic movement from barely above laboring class to the status of a great landowner exemplifies the American and Mormon dreams. In his journal he regularly recorded his satisfaction. This passage shows that economic and religious work were unified his mind:

The past year has been a time of prosperity with the people of the Latter day Saints in these vallies. Crops on the whole have been better than any season since we settled this country. The large increase of population in this & neighboring territories & the words of inspired men has waked up the farmers to a sense of duty to take care of the grain, and lay it up in store that Israel may have bread at a time when famine is wasting the Gentile nations. Some few not of our faith are already casting in their lot among us for peace sake & many more a[re] tired of the war & trouble in the states. In this day of prosperity I pray the Lord to preserve me & my family in the faith & love of the gospel that we may keep our garments unspotted from the pollutions of this vain and wicked world.  

John’s desire for dominion was not merely selfish; he wanted to gather others under his protection and organize good lives for them. Most members of such families believed that the family would march, with the father at its head, straight to the celestial kingdom. An article published in the *Millennial Star* barely a decade after John

sailed for America indicates the pressure on good men to become polygamists:

The great object of the Lord and all good men is to increase and multiply life. As there are doubtless many spirits waiting to be clothed upon with bodies—as God is about to remove many of the male sex from the earth, by judgments, for their wickedness in neglecting to keep His commands—and as He designs to make a short work upon the earth in the last days—we may naturally conclude that He will require every deserving man and woman living upon the face of the earth, after they have arrived at proper maturity, to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth”—and this cannot be done except upon the ancient order of plurality of wives, which the Lord has seen fit to restore in these last days.\(^{18}\)

Following the pattern of many leaders of the Church, John took three wives: Esther Wainwright in 1842, Esther Birch in 1856, and Mary Turpin, Heber’s mother, in 1857.\(^{19}\)

In addition to its being a record of his labor on his farms, John Bennion’s journal serves as a record of the growth of his family. He thinks of them partly as a resource over which he has a stewardship. In 1866 he wrote:

Esther Ann and Mary have each given birth to another son whom we named David and Marcus. Our daughter Angeline was married to Geo Spencer on the 4th of November and on the 8th I was engaged in getting my winters firewood in Butterfield kanyon when by falling I fractured my knee. This kept me to my bed awhile. Twas tedious for me to endure as I has [sic] scarcely lay in bed a whole day. Afterwards in the house I thought it was well that in the vigour of my lifetime the Lord had blessed my labours so that now I have means and a good faithful family, so that if I properly direct their labours we shall continue to live comfortably although I am disabled for hard work. I pray the Lord that my skill in directing may increase and make up for this.\(^{20}\)


His journal is a record before God of his dominion. It carries the story of the benefits of a righteous polygamous family, creating familial unity among his twenty-nine children.

John passed not only his attitudes and habits but much of his earthly kingdom to his sons. In his history of the Bennion family, Harden Bennion, Heber’s half-brother, writes, “Heber’s father was a close student of the likes and dislikes of his sons, their aptitudes, their tendencies toward the various activities and occupations that naturally came to them as they grew into youth and manhood; and as a result of such study Heber was chosen as the shepherd of the family.”

After John’s sudden death from an injury with a horse in 1877, Heber Bennion continued to handle the sheep herds, having been given a personal interest in them. He had ranch property in Taylorsville, Bingham, Bluffdale, and near Coalville. “Heber’s livestock interests [grew] until he had sheep and cattle ‘scattered on a thousand hills’ and he was one of the leading livestock men of the state.”

In 1885 he married Susan Winder, who bore him ten children, seven of whom lived to maturity. They built a “splendid farm home” in West Taylorsville, where he became bishop and state legislator—an important man in the community. Later he purchased a large house closer to his business interests in town in Waterloo Ward.

Following his father’s habit of recording his stewardship before God, Heber made a record of his dominion in the eight extant volumes of his journals. In 1894 he wrote, “I am much interested in my father’s journal. . . . Unimportant things when recorded grow in interest with age. . . . We can speak after death only by what we have written; all else is only tradition and hearsay. And how weak is tradition compared to the journaling from my father’s record.”

In January 1889, while serving a mission to the Eastern states,

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22 Ibid., 1:203.
23 Ibid., 1:201.
Heber recorded, “Held fifty-seven meetings; baptized eight persons and assisted in the baptism of five others; blessed or assisted in blessing six children, and administered to the sick ten times . . . traveled three hundred and twenty miles by rail and walked about five hundred, and wrote one hundred and thirty-seven letters.”26 His record gives evidence before God of an industrious life, but it also defines him as the righteous leader of his family. Heber includes in his journal his service to the Church: “On the 9 of Jan. [1890] I was ordained a High Priest and Bishop of our ward. . . . This was a great surprise to me so young and boyish [Heber was thirty-one], & overwhelming almost to suffication [sic] at the time, but I had previously learned to adjust myself to the changing vissitudes [sic] of life and round up my shoulders for most any thing.”27

His dominion also included public responsibility. During the 1890s he was elected to the state legislature: “I was complimented by the Democratic Party putting through several of my pet measures, among others a bill authorizing the sale of University lands and another was exempting mortgages [sic] from taxation. . . . I was a member of several committee and chairman of the com. on enrollment. . . . In the midst of some mischief we probably did some good.”28

Much of his journal records the agricultural labors performed by him and his family: “Sold part of my cattle as beef in the Spring at a low figure and sent the remainder off to the hills. Bought and planted 2000 fruit trees in two fields. The larger one containing 1400 prunes, cherries & peaches was entirely destroyed later on with grasshoppers. Yet with all these misfortunes I seem to prosper and make money. Such is life in the west.”29

Heber believed in hard work and made his children labor. Daughter Mary wrote, “We all worked to the utmost limit of our strength because father believed that hard work was a great charac-

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26Heber Bennion, Journal, typescript, Bennion Collection (USHS), MS B-16, Box 2, Fd. 5, 47.
27Heber Bennion, Journal, 1892, Bennion Family Family Collection (U of U), MS 251, 42.
28Ibid., 43.
29Ibid.
Gathering dominion through his work and the authority of the priesthood was the controlling metaphor of the story Heber told himself. Consequently, Heber followed his father and took additional wives. He married Emma Jane Webster in 1900 and Mary (Mayme) Bringhurst in 1901.\textsuperscript{31} Emma Jane, who bore Heber no children, entered the family with little disturbance, but eighteen-year-old Mayme Bringhurst, the mother of eight, was apparently more strong-willed, and her marriage affected family cohesion more drastically.

From his father, Heber inherited the drive for dominion, and from the Church he received the traditions of valuing God's law over federal law, of using polygamy as an avenue to ecclesiastical power, and of keeping acts secret which violated federal law. These inherited principles made it possible for him to view his secret marriages as righteous ones. When members of his family saw things differently, his first reaction was to silence them, possibly because they were endangering family unity and threatening his goal of carrying his wives and children to heaven with him.

**MARY BENNION’S DOMINION**

Like her father and grandfather, Mary valued hard work on the farm, in the house, and in the Church. Her first of twenty-three journals begins: "Mary Bennion born on the Canaan Farm, Taylorsville Utah, January 11, 1890. . . . I am eleven years old and am in the fourth grade."\textsuperscript{32} Obeying her father's instructions, she makes a record of her acts—evidence of a life well spent. During the first year of her journal, she records that she caught a horse, tramped a load of hay, made yeast, put on a boil of meat, rendered some tallow, churned and molded the butter, took provisions to sheep camp, branded and docked sheep, helped make fence, went berrying, stoned cherries, herded the stock, made fires, picked currants, washed pans to strain milk, picked prunes, picked up potatoes,
dressed the children, harnessed the horses, hitched a horse to running gear, hooked up the horse, cleaned chickens, milked and did chores, got kindling, and peeled pears for preserves. Often, perhaps because she was tired of detailing her acts, she simply writes, "Worked around" or "Did chores."

Like her father and grandfather, she treasured a well-organized household and a well-tended ranch. A passage from 1 April 1906 when she was sixteen is typical:

I got breakfast, fed the lambs, strained the milk, did the dishes, and then spent an hour or two weeding the lawn. Bros. Mathews and Gerrard came and finished putting the moulding up in the dinin-groom and stairway. I washed the walls, ceiling and floor of the bathroom. We now have the parlor, the kitchen and the cellar to clean before our spring house cleaning will be finished. Today a horrible thing happened which ended in a loss of about five hundred dollars. Four horses were left hitched to a plow in the field and while the hired man was away they got tangled in the harness and one horse got his neck broken.  

She appreciates the order produced by hard work, and she hates careless destruction.

In 1914 she demonstrates this trait again by complaining about the disorder produced by interlopers in her home: "When I came home from Logan after school closed I found at Thorndyke [the family's name for their home in the Waterloo Ward] besides Aunt Mayme and her family three other families, namely Dr. Burton, wife and two children from southern Utah, Mrs. Lemon, son and daughter, from Mexico; and Mr. Johnson, wife and three children, also from Mexico. The place looked like part of a tenement district. Tin cans, papers, egg shells etc were scattered about the lawn, and dirty—oh!" Her value of cleanliness and orderliness has been violated.

Mary knew herself to be a good worker and organizer; she was proud, as were her father and grandfather, of her ability to be a good steward over her more limited dominion. When she was nineteen and away at school, she records that she "wrote to papa and mama

33Ibid., Vol. 2.
34Ibid., Vol. 6, June 1914.
to see if I could be the housekeeper this winter.” She is requesting authority from her parents to be in charge of the household. Her mother, ill much of the time, was unable to work. Perhaps also Mary is requesting that she have authority instead of her father’s other wives.

She records church activities in her journal as her father and grandfather did. As she grew older, she taught in the Sunday School, Primary, MIA, and Relief Society. She also valued education, attending the LDS University, where she received a certificate as a nurse; the Agricultural College in Logan; and finally, when she was fifty-nine, the University of Utah.

Perhaps even more than her father and grandfather, she treasured family relationships. Nearly every passage of her journal details the movements of her parents, brothers, and sisters. On 4 July 1907 she recorded: “Ethel went to Saltair with Ray, Heber [her brother] went up the canyon with a crowd of students and Lucile and I went to Wandamere [a local resort] (with Arthur Petersen & his brother). Papa came in from the sheep herd but he left Sterling out there. Mama, papa, Rulon and Helen went to Wandamere. Helen stayed over to Aunt Mary Lizzie’s.”

The most cheerful entries are times when family and friends gathered for a church meeting or party. Just before her brother Heber Jr. left on a mission to Germany she wrote: “Worked till noon, then we went up town and had our family picture taken. Then we went out to Taylorsville to Heber’s ‘farewell.’” She then names some of the friends and family who came. “There was a good program. Heber spoke in his calm, deliberate way, without the least sign of breaking down. The bishop said some very complimentary things about him. We had a splendid time dancing. Everybody treated us fine. L. & I danced 13 [to] 15 times each.”

While her record of work is straightforward, joy breathes through her descriptions of family and friends—showing the impor-

36Ibid.
37Ibid., Vol. 3, 16 September 1908.
38Ibid.
tance of these relationships to her. Each year her family spent the month of August at their Chalk Canyon ranch near Coalville. The journal is bright and playful when a crowd of relatives is there:

Tonight the crowd went to Upton to a dance. On account of the muddy roads there were only a few people there at first, so that when we got to Clarkes we were told that the musicians had come home and gone to bed. Heber went in and roused them and sent them to the hall. . . . About half a dozen Upton boys, hearing us singing, followed on horses and joined in the dance. Besides this they treated us to candy, nuts and soda water. Just before we came home we had a Virginia Reel and Joe swung some of us around in a way we will never forget.39

But when the crowd is gone, her feelings about the trip to the ranch are very different. On 1 September 1906 after an extended time when she was ill and alone, she writes, “We got home about four o’clock in the afternoon. It rained nearly all day. At last I am home after spending the most lonesome and dreary five weeks of my life.”

Given this careful attention to family relationships, the most remarkable absence in her journal is reference to her father’s other wives after her 1902 discovery that two more women, one of whom had already given birth to his child, belonged to her father’s family. In her journals, even after his 1902 discovery, she mentions them rarely, as if they were neighbors dropping by. It is not until about 1911 that she begins referring to them as “Aunt Emma” and “Aunt Mayme.”

In her journal she refers often to young men with whom she danced, played parlor games, or walked, but she avoided marriage until she was twenty-eight. In 1918, she married Charles Powell, with whom she had grown up near Pine Cliff, her father’s ranch east of Coalville; and they had six children. Charles was a farmer and a salesman; they were perpetually on the edge of poverty. Mary was ill, anxious, and depressed much of her life, a condition she blamed on her father for overworking her and for submitting her to the mental stress of living in a polygamous family. Despite her questions, she remained active in the Church all her life.

39Ibid., 31 July 1908.
Because she doesn’t describe the polygamous relationships in her journal, the clearest record of her attitude is in the carefully articulated essay and fictional narratives of her day of discovery; the tone of revulsion comes clearly through every version.

**THE NARRATIVES OF MARY BENNION’S DISCOVERY**

In January 1949 at age fifty-nine, Mary made the following entry across the blank left side of the first page of her first journal begun at age eleven in 1901:

Rereading my journal fills me with mixed emotions, fond affection for my family, astonishment that I had to work so much harder than any of the friends of my childhood, even though my father was wealthy when I was growing up; amusement [sic] at my simplicity; pity at my helplessness—at the helplessness of humanity in general; grief at my father’s torturing my mother with his polygamous life.

On the next page she explains why as a child she wrote a journal which contains no introspective wandering, only a list of acts:

This diary (as well as all other diaries I have written—perhaps I should just say all diaries) needs a great deal of explanation. I will do some of it but it would take the knowledge of an Omniscient God to explain it properly. I will do the best I can without such help—at least for the present.

First I will say that the journaling or diary writing habit was inculcated in the lives of his children by the Utah pioneer John E. [sic] Bennion. His son Heber passed it on to his children. When we were given little black bound note-books, one Christmas, our father instructed us in their use. He said we should write in them every day, all the work we did, and all the meetings we attended, and the church duties we did. As we had been trained from babyhood to blind obedience to his every word, we automatically, and mechanically, carried out his instructions. Thus our diaries were reasonable facsimiles of his, and his father’s. All the most important incidents of our lives, thus, live only in our memories. Our journals might be those of any of thousands of orthodox members of the Mormon Church. We didn’t even record the fact that our father was a polygamist, with three wives,—our mother the first one. Or that we had, throughout the years, acquired eight half brothers and sisters; even though these facts conditioned our lives more than anything else that has ever happened to any of us. Births, deaths, marriages, riches, poverty, sickness, war,
depression, all these things put together do not count at all, in our struggle for happiness, when compared to the fact that father was a polygamist. \(^{40}\)

In the same adult handwriting of 1949, she lists her father’s marriages. The name Mary Bringhurst is scribbled over with “Mistake here” written to the side. \(^{41}\) Was the mistake her father’s act of marriage? Or did Mary cross out the name as a way of denying that the marriage had happened?

This first journal, written in the round cursive of a child, records her acts between March 1901 and March 1906 (ages eleven to sixteen). It mentions nothing about her discovery in 1902 of her father’s polygamous marriages. She ends the journal entry dated 23 December 1901, with “We put up the Christmas tree to-night.” After a hiatus of slightly more than a month, she wrote on 1 February 1902, “I thought it would be of little use to write my journal for the last few months because I did the same thing nearly every day.” She then writes steadily until 29 February 1902, ending that day’s entry with the words, “Then I did my chores.”

Her next entry marked only “Wed.” with “May 1902” written above as a heading is “I will start my journal again.” The entry immediately following is headed “Sep. 1902, Mon. 29,” and she writes, “I think I am starting my journal for sure this time.” She tells of their month-long trip to her father’s ranch in Chalk Canyon and explains that her mother “has been sick for about a week. Emma Jane Webster called in to see how she was. Emma Jane is teaching school here in West Taylorsville.” Even in this private medium Mary feels she needs to give a reason other than plural marriage for Emma Jane’s presence—she is teaching school in the area. She does not refer to either this woman or Mayme as her father’s plural wives or as her mother’s sister wives.

In the lower margin of the 29 February 1902 entry is written in the handwriting of an adult, “[Jan. 1949—My half-sister Susie [the first child of Mayme Bringhurst] was born on Feb. 19th, 1902. Yet I did not even know my father had other wives than my mother till

\(^{40}\)Ibid., verso of page 1. I omit footnotes in the journal entries that follow when a full date appears in the text.

\(^{41}\)Ibid., verso of page 3.
months after Susie was born. When I found it out I wanted to die.” While Mary records her strong reaction years later, at the time of the discovery sometime in the spring of 1902 she wrote nothing—not even her daily record of work.

However, she broke her silence in four narratives which describe the day she discovered her father was a polygamist. These narratives include three nonfiction accounts (“The End of Childhood,” “Incidents in the lives of my immediate ancestors and my immediate family,” and “January 1970: More Notes”) and a 121-page novella entitled “A Utah Idyll.”

In these four documents, she struggles to understand and interpret the events. Through meditation she tries to explain her feelings that something had gone wrong before her discovery and after the discovery to contain her despair and to explore her anger at the tradition of polygamy. In the following pages I juxtapose passages from the four narratives.

Mary first tells of her personal anguish. In “Incidents” she writes, “First I will write about the saddest, and most poignant event of my life because I want to get it out of my thoughts.” In “More Notes” she penned, “When I was eleven years old a terrible thing happened to me that I wouldn’t repeat here because it still hurts me to remember it, if it weren’t something that should be known, in order to keep others from letting such suffering be inflicted ever again on any child. . . . It happened on an evening in spring, and it

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42 The title, “More Notes,” is curious. More than what? An oral history interview in the Bennion Collection at the Utah Historical Society is restricted (see register of the collection). Also, I am unable to date the order of these manuscripts with much certainty. In a letter written to Mrs. Brodie, whom I assume is Fawn McKay Brodie, dated 29 October 1960, Mary Bennion Powell refers to “Incidents” as “the true story of a few items that later appeared fictionalized in my novelette ‘A Utah Idyll.’” “End of Childhood” is marked by an editor or teacher and may be from the years she went to the University of Utah around 1950. This would make a tentative order of composition: 1. “Incidents,” 2. “End of Childhood” and “A Utah Idyll,” and 3. “More Notes.” Details and attitudes in the narratives are so similar that they may have crystallized in her mind before 1950.

43 For the reader’s convenience and to reduce distractions, I will cite each account in the text, either as part of my narration or in parenthesis, by short title and page number.

changed me from a happy, trusting child into a tortured adult, wishing for nothing but to die, quickly."\textsuperscript{45}

All four accounts establish that the discovery of the second and third wives transformed her feeling about the family. Before the discovery they were happy; afterwards unhappy. In "Incidents" she writes:

My family, up to the time of my twelfth year, seemed to me to be as happy as any family could be. We all loved each other very much. We had good health—all except mother—and our father was rich. We were a very religious family. Father was the bishop of our ward. Mother taught a class in Sunday School. We had family prayers in the mornings and evenings. We always fasted one day every month and gave the price of our missed meals to the poor. Father and mother did temple work for the dead. And whenever there was any slightest illness or accident to anyone of the family father would put his hands on our head, and after pouring consecrated oil on our heads would, in the name of the Lord command the illness to depart. It always did—in time. (7)

She further describes her family life in "Incidents:"

I thought he [her father] was as good as God himself. He was kind and loving to us all, and was especially tender and sweet to mother. In the evenings when all the chores were done, supper was over, and the hired men had gone to the bunkhouse, our family would sit around the diningroom table, under the hanging lamp and, in the winter with the light from the big open stove flickering about the room, and eat apples while mother, (and father if he were not away at a meeting) would read to us. (8)

The writing is saturated with nostalgia for a time when her family fit what she thought was the model of an ideal American family. But then she began collecting clues that all was not right. When she came home from school one day, she "could hear mama crying, out loud, sobbing, and sort of moaning too." She tried to talk to her mother, but Susan pretended to be asleep. "My knees were shaking and I couldn't have held my head up if I had tried to. Something had been wrong at our house a long time" ("Incidents," 8).

\textsuperscript{45}Mary Bennion Powell, "More Notes," Bennion Collection (USHS), 2-3.
As Mary explores what might be wrong in “Incidents,” her memory centers on her mother: overheard sessions behind closed doors in the parlor when her father shouts and her mother pleads; her mother singing a song which seems especially sad—“I’ll try to forgive him, but I cannot forget” (2); her mother weeping as she irons her father’s temple robes; a mysterious doll which appears at Christmas, complete with clothing made by someone secret (“no one in our family ever did hand sewing”) (5).

“Utah Idyll” also captures the undercurrent of wrongness in the family through Joan, the fictional point of view character representing Mary:

Joan went into her room and lay down to rest a bit before supper. But as soon as she got comfortably relaxed on her bed she felt the old uneasiness come back. What could the argument have been about between her parents the night before, after they had gone to bed? She had never heard her father speak to her mother except tenderly till about a year before, now he did it often, at night, in their room. (57)

As she mulls over this problem, she remembers times when her father has been aggressive or angry; he has always shouted at the hired men, and sometimes at the children. He is impatient when someone does something incorrectly. But she also remembers him lovingly reading the children stories at night (59).

In each of the four documents, the revelation of her father’s polygamy came on a single day during spring cleaning. “End of Childhood” dates it at just before the “Blossom-time Banquet” which her father gave yearly for the stake presidency and the high council (1).

The actual sequence of events is highly correlated in the four accounts and does not vary: Mary housecleans the bathroom; Heber and Susan return from a trip to Salt Lake City; Mary finds a note from the polygamous third wife; at dinner, Heber reads aloud from a newspaper account of a polygamy trial; Mary leaves the table and goes upstairs with her sisters where an older sister explains that their father has two other wives; Mary is plunged into deep despair until her mother asks her to write a letter to the polygamous wife.

The first event was housecleaning the bathroom. In “End of Childhood” Mary indicates:
All day I had worked “house-cleaning” the bathroom. I was tired, but satisfied, when the job was finished. But I wasn’t thrilled. Usually spring and housecleaning were times of pleasant excitement: painters and wall paperers all over the house, clean fresh smells, everything shining from being just polished, or brand new. And afterward papa giving the “Blossom-time Banquet” to the Stake Presidency and the High Council and their wives. But things weren’t the same this year.

Next, in all four narratives, Heber and Susan return from Salt Lake City just in time for dinner. The details in the three nonfiction narratives are so similar that I will compare only the nonfictional “End of Childhood” and the fictional “Utah Idyll.” These passages read:

I hurriedly got supper cooked—and just in time for the return of the family from a trip to Salt Lake where they went to meet my mother’s eldest sister, Mrs. Delia Booth, who often came from Provo to visit us, and whom [sic] we all loved very much. (“End of Childhood,” 6)

Joan . . . hurried into the kitchen just in time to see the carriage drive past the kitchen window. Her father and mother and Harry had gone to the city and brought Aunt Amelia, who was visiting with Aunt Agatha, to stay with them for a few days before going back home to Bountiful. (“Utah Idyll,” 60)

The descriptions of the next narrative movement, finding Mayme’s note to Heber, are identical, except that Mary in the nonfiction versions is more aware of the impending unhappiness:

I had the table set and the food all ready to serve when the family trooped through the kitchen and gathered around the supper table. Mother came out to help me carry the food into the dining room. I was taking a last satisfying look in the direction of the bathroom when my eye caught a white spot on the floor. It was a folded piece of paper, the kind my Aunt Augusta used when she wrote to us from Japan—we called it onion skin. I picked it up and unfolded it. Instead of being addressed to “Dear Susie” as I expected it to be, it was addressed instead to “Dear Heber,” and it wasn’t from Aunt Augusta; the writing

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46 In “End of Childhood” her mother has been weeping in her room, giving the children the excuse that she has a headache. However, in “Utah Idyll” she accompanied Heber to Salt Lake.
was round like a child's. I turned the paper over and looked at the signature. It was simply "M." My puzzlement grew into a sickening premonition of some evil I couldn't even guess at. "Mama", I said, "Whose letter is this?" Mama was carrying the last dish into the dining room and didn't even send a glance in my direction as she said, very low, "I'll tell you after supper." ("End of Childhood," 7)

Mary then realizes that her mother knows the writer of the note but does not want to talk about it in front of others. Twelve-year-old Mary enters the dining room like a "sleepwalker," and sits in her usual place. The essayist allows the impending revelation to cast a shadow over her younger self's mind.

The narrator in "Utah Idyll" allows Joan less knowledge, making the revelation more of a shock. Joan is more childlike, less able to read the faces of the adults:

Harry was putting the team away, and the family was seated at the table, when Joan got to the dining room. Evelyn was lighting the hanging lamp over the table, and her mother, when Joan got to the kitchen, was pouring the creamed vegetables into a bowl. Joan picked up another bowl and began dishing up the potatoes; her father didn't like to be kept waiting at meal times. Her foot touched a crackly piece of paper. Setting the dish on the back of the stove, she picked it up. It was a letter. "Dear Harry," it said, "Little Sarah is sick; I wish you were here." Turning the page over she read the signature. It was just "M." Who, in such a round girlish handwriting, could be addressing her father by his first name? It must be some poor widowed cousin of her father's, Joan thought, as she handed the piece of paper to her mother saying, "Who wrote this?" Her mother took the roast out of the oven and swiftly slid it onto a platter. She didn't answer till she was starting toward the dining room door, then, "I'll tell you after supper," she said very softly, without turning her head. (60-61)

In all four versions the meal is strained, her father preoccupied as he reads the account of a polygamy trial. "End of Childhood" portrays Mary as grown up enough to know that something is not right:

No one was talking. No one was eating. Papa had forgotten to "ask the blessing." Instead he was reading from the newspaper and his face was white. Mama and Aunt Delia were keeping their eyes steadily on his face. In a moment he began reading aloud: "The girl's mother,
Mrs. Bringhurst, refused to testify at the trial today.” No one asked, “What trial?” No one said a word.47

“Utah Idyll” allows the reader to know more than the naive child, but the effect in both forms is increased tension. Joan cannot understand her father’s preoccupation with the newspaper:

Joan took her place at the table between Lucy and Evelyn. Why didn’t her father ask the blessing? He was reading the newspaper. Funny! He had never read, at mealtime before. Her mother and Aunt Amelia were staring at him. So was Evelyn. The little boys were giggling and making faces at each other. Ellen and Lucy were looking at some sparrow eggs Lucy was holding in her hand. Suddenly her father began reading aloud.

“Mrs. Bingham, the girl’s mother, refused to testify at the trial today.” Then he stopped as abruptly as he had begun. He looked pale. Poor father, Joan thought, with his sciatic rheumatism coming on him without warning, and nothing anyone could do about it. But she wished he would ask the blessing. She was starving. (61)

As a child might, Joan misreads the cause of her father’s paleness, his obvious realization of the danger to him and his wives.

In all four versions the daughters leave the table and go upstairs where Mary learns the secret of her father’s polygamy. “End of Childhood” shows her reaction, but never speaks the words of the unhappy revelation:

Suddenly my sister Ethelyn squeezed my hand under the table, got up, and, going behind my chair, whispered to Lucile. Little Helen pushed back her chair and followed the three of us wonderingly as we went into the hall and upstairs to the south bedroom where we girls slept. Ethelyn sat on the bed she and I shared. The rest of us gathered in a circle on the floor close to her. We waited for we knew not what revelation.

Though the lamps were lighted down stairs, it was still twilight

47“End of Childhood,” 7-8. My graduate assistants and I have been unable to find the newspaper reference to this trial, apparently Mayme Bringhurst’s. Although the act of reading the newspaper is in all four versions, it may be that Mary Bennion Powell has created a story confined to one day which is actually a composite of a longer range of experiences.

48Maida Bingham is the name given to Mayme Bringhurst in the novel.
outside and the windows framed a softly tinted sky fretted with budding tree branches. The air was mild and scented with blossoms. The world seemed to be holding its breath with pity for what was about to happen to the soul of a child. For I was as unprepared to meet the blow that then descended upon me as a newborn baby would be to defend itself from the attack of a maneating tiger. As I write this I weep for the little girl that was I. (8)

Even here, in a memoiristic essay, she chooses not to name clearly her father's act. However, in the other three accounts, she records the actual words spoken by her sister.

"Utah Idyll" uses almost the same language to describe the act of leaving the dinner table, but the girl is still innocent of the impending revelation:

Evelyn had gone so fast up the straight steep stairway that she was seated on the edge of her and Joan's bed by the time Joan got to the big bedroom where the girls slept. Evelyn had some secret to tell them, that was sure, and it must be pretty important, thought Joan, to have the four of them leave the table before they had started to eat. (62)

Joan's preoccupation with her own hunger increases the irony in the scene; the reader suspects what the character doesn't know. "Utah Idyll" continues:

They were all looking up at Evelyn but her head was bent so low they could hardly see her face. There was something strange about this, and also about the way her hands lay so limply in her lap, and the way her shoulders sagged. . . . "Papa is married to Maida Bingham, and she has a baby."

Slowly Joan sank back on the floor, as the words clanked together like links of an iron chain dropped on the ground. But they didn't belong together. They didn't make the slightest kind of sense. She couldn't have heard them rightly. But Evelyn didn't move—or speak again. Just sat there, still, with her head sinking till not even any of her face showed.

A sheet of blackness appeared in front of Joan's eyes and she couldn't breathe. Then her breath came back and she could see but there was a suffocating pain in her chest. She couldn't move or make a sound. (62)

Both "Incidents" and "More Notes" describe in similar lan-
language the despair which possesses her at this news. In both she feels
she is having a nightmare from which she may soon wake, but then
she realizes that her sister has spoken the truth. In “Incidents” she
writes:

I was totally blind and was suffocating. A sheet of blackness
had shut out the pale silhouette [sic] made by the windows and the
French doors, and my chest was contracting with such force that for
a moment I couldn’t breathe, then an agonizing pain took the place
of the feeling of suffocation. . . . I had thought I was dying and this
gave me some comfort. I thought that God in his mercy was going to
release me from the horror that had, without warning, descended
upon our family. (12-13)

Writing at least a decade later in “More Notes” she describes
her reaction in similar language: “Everything went black, as a terrible
pain came in my chest and I couldn’t breathe.” (8)

The next event in all of the versions except for “End of
Childhood” is a voice from the stairway that startles the children:

“Girls!” The children’s faces jerked as though attached to a wire,
toward the door to the stairway where they could see a dark form,
below a white blur, that was a face.

“Never breathe to a living soul what you have just heard.” The
words roared out of the darkness. It was their father who had spoken
to them. . . . In the silence that followed, an owl called to its mate in
the orchard. It sounded like a woman’s moan, “Oh, oh.” The smell of
blossoms became heavy in the room but there was silence like that in
a mortuary. (“Utah Idyll,” 63)

Mary uses the same detail—the scent of blossoms—in both “End of
Childhood” and “Incidents” to symbolize the death of her child-
hood, her innocence, and her family’s happiness.

No one moved or spoke. The smell of blossoms became heavy in the
room and in the awful silence a night owl somewhere out in the
orchard called softly. It was as if Nature herself felt pity for the poor
shattered lives that had so quickly and ruthlessly been torn away from
all that had kept them secure and happy till this fateful hour. It
reminded me of the smell of flowers at a funeral and the soft singing
of a funeral hymn. For this was a funeral. Murder had just been
committed in that quiet room, where joy and innocence had dwelt
for so long, but never could again. (“Incidents,” 13-14).
Was twelve-year-old Mary actually aware that night of the smell of blossoms, or did this detail come into the narratives later as she struggled to create meaning of that night? Whichever way it happened, the memory of smell is powerful. A scent which previously symbolized domestic security and beauty now reminds the narrator of death.

In like manner Mary came to read many details of her home and family differently after her discovery, in part because her father commanded silence concerning his polygamy, making it difficult or impossible for her to rebuild through discourse her previous feeling of family identity. While “End of Childhood” does not include his command to silence, his words are recorded in both “Incidents” and “More Notes.” Mary followed his injunction in her early journals, and her marginal notes imply that the family never talked even privately about the revelation that he had three wives. When she does write about the event, the language is melodramatic, referring to physical pain, death, even murder.

According to all four narratives, Mary wakes up the next morning disappointed that she had not died in the night. She remains in her room trying to understand the transformation of her previous feeling of family security and identity. The process the adult writer uses is to assign new meanings to familiar details and people. However, here, not the scent of blossoms, but her father’s character has a transformed meaning.

In “Incidents” Mary hears her father assigning the day’s chores as if nothing unusual had happened the evening before. “How mother must have been suffering all these terrible months, she too, pretending nothing was wrong. Now what should I do? I couldn’t go downstairs and look at my father who had suddenly descended from near Godhood to a level below that of a beast” (14-15). The language in “More Notes” is even harsher: “How could our father turn from a saint to a demon? For no one but a demon could do what he had done. Mama would live on, with a broken heart, loving him so much she couldn’t leave him” (9). As she struggles to assign meanings within the new context of her parents’ marriage, she naturally uses the cultural stories available to her. In the culture of her youth, which was influenced by national culture through mass media and educational changes, three people in a love relationship
could only have been understood in the context of an adulterous love triangle which produces destructive jealousy and disloyalty.

In “End of Childhood” Mary reinforces her story with Church doctrine. Her father has married after the Manifesto, thus breaking God’s law through his prophet, but his disloyalty cuts deeper than a mere violation of formal law:

And even if polygamy had no law of any kind forbidding it, papa should have known that if he practiced it, it would break mother’s heart. Mama wasn’t like other women. She was sensitive to the slightest hurt. And this was the greatest hurt in the world. It would kill her, and he would be her murderer. She would hide her agony till she died, just as she had been doing all this past year. (“End of Childhood,” 8-9).

Looking back Mary remembers many clues of her father’s polygamy: his reading to her mother out of a book entitled *Celestial Marriage* which, in hindsight, she says was filled not with reasons but excuses; several odd visits by Mayme Bringhurst to her mother, one while her mother was sick. She remembers that Mayme wore a “fully gathered unbelted mother-hubbard dress—the kind worn in those days only by women who were pregnant” (“End of Childhood,” 9). She also remembers coming upon Mayme asleep in a chair in the parlor:

I stood still for minutes looking at her—spell-bound by her beauty. Her skin was waxlike in its clear creamy color, her lashes were thick and long, and curled on the ends; and her hair was a shining mound of heavy golden braids on the crown of her head. I don’t know how long I should have remained in this trance of admiration if mother hadn’t come indoors just then. She went past me into the parlor without speaking and shut the door. I went away puzzled. (10)

Mary’s bewilderment arises in part because the girl watching the sleeping woman is caught between two opposing stories about how relationships between men and women work—that attraction is singular and governed by romance or that it is plural and governed by duty.

In all four versions Mary is pulled out of this moral and spiritual stupor by her mother. As Mary hears her mother’s steps on the stairway, she quickly spreads out some photographs as if she has been examining them. Neither mother nor child, despite the knowl-
edge they share, can break the injunction to silence by explicitly addressing the feelings engendered by the oldest daughter’s revelation; but in all four versions her mother asks Mary to write a letter to Mayme. In “End of Childhood” she writes that the “riddle was dark—unfathomable, and my heart was slowly breaking” (10). She continues:

If it could only break, literally, and I could stop living. This pain was unendurable. I cried out to God for help. God had always answered my prayers before and, as I knew, He would, He answered this one. For I heard my mother’s soft slow footsteps on the stairway. I suddenly came alive in every fibre of my being. (Mother mustn’t guess how I felt.) I reached the floor by my trunk in one panther-like movement and carefully raising the lid took out a boxful of pictures and letters and strewed them around me, keeping one in my hand, and keeping my eyes on it as though with fascinated interest. Even when mother spoke my name, I couldn’t and didn’t look up. “I came to ask you to do something for me,” said mama, and, as though sensing that I was unable to speak, she went on, “I want you to write a letter to Mayme telling her you—we all—love her and want her to come home soon.” Mercifully she did not pause for my answer, but went on, her beautiful voice that had spoken comfort so often in the past was now meeting a supreme test, but it never faltered. “She is so young to be far away from all her family and friends, and gets so frightened when the baby is sick. Use your nicest stationery, the box you got for Christmas. I brought you pen and ink.” She handed me the pen and set the bottle of ink in the tray of the trunk. When I looked up there was no one in the room but me. If I had been a mystic I would have said I had been visited by an angel. . . .

Slowly my taut muscles relaxed. I took a sheet of paper out of the Christmas box, opened the bottle of ink, dipped the pen, just doing something—anything—was a relief. I started writing. With no feelings of any kind I wrote the words my mother had suggested, as though I had been hypnotized. I didn’t know what address to put on the envelope, so I took it to mama—still effortlessly. My mother had made a way for me to get back into my life—however broken—and now I had hope that God and mama would always be able to make things come out right in the end, maybe it would be a long time—maybe not in this world—but sometime, somewhere things would come right. God and mama couldn’t fail.

So that is why I didn’t die, or kill my father, or go insane. I had a mother—the best mother that ever lived. (10-11)
That last line is the end of “End of Childhood,” and the language, detail, and rhetorical force of the other two nonfictional versions are almost identical. Her mother appears in the form of an angel, and the narrator is left hoping for a future in which wrongs are made right. The story is angled to show her mother’s angelic but passive, victimized nature.

“Utah Idyll” is more open-ended if taken as a whole; however, the end of the passage which describes the day of revelation ends with a similar epiphany. Joan’s mother comes up and asks her to write a letter to Maida. Joan obeys and takes the letter downstairs.

No one was there but her mother, who smiled as she said, “I will address the envelope. We can’t let anyone know where Maida is, or Papa might have to go to the penitentiary, like so many of the brethren had to do in the old days of polygamy.” Joan handed her mother the sheet of paper and walked through the parlor. Then she ran through the dining room and the kitchen, closing the screen door noiselessly. She would go to the grove of trees by the road and hide there until she could control herself. She longed to scream, but there was no place to go where she wouldn’t be heard. (63-64)

All the narratives except “End of Childhood” describe Mary rushing out the door after writing the letter, nearly into the pathway of a team of horses driven by her brother. He shouts at her in an effort to “shock her into her senses” (13). Two hired men, who have been sitting in the barn doorway, move so that her brother can drive the wagon inside. In “Utah Idyll” the narrator makes a curious observation:

Off toward the corral fence two pigs were making a horrid noise, and a strong familiar odor struck Joan’s nostrils. She ran as fast as she could through the corral and down the road to where the cows were grazing. But she had seen the embarrassment of the men. She hated men—all men! (65)

What caused the men’s embarrassment? Perhaps they were supposed to be working instead of sitting. Or, a more logical possibility, which fits better the emotion of the passage, is that the pigs were breeding and the men felt awkward because of the girl’s presence.

“Utah Idyll” continues with an outpouring of emotion in the form of an angry prayer:
Sobbing, she threw herself down in a mass of sweet clover that edged the irrigation ditch. Her tears seeped into the root-filled ground. God had made him do it, she thought, just as he had Joseph Smith and Brigham Young and all the others. "I hate you, God, I hate you," she shrieked. "Kill me. Go ahead, kill me. I'd be glad." She beat the ground with her clenched fists, then buried her face in the clover stalks, her body twisting and writhing with agony. After awhile she lay still. She could hear the crickets singing. They seemed to be trying to tell her something. She rolled over on her back. The tall clover shaded her face as its tops drooped over her. The sky was a deep clear blue, and a few white clouds were piled high like bunches of cotton. When Joan was younger she had imagined they were angels looking down at her. (65)

In this passage she is soothed by her surroundings, just as in "End of Childhood" the girl had been soothed by her mother. Once again the anger subsides, but it is simply set aside instead of being resolved through any real communication. However, in subsequent pages "Utah Idyll" moves to a more complex questioning than occurs in "End of Childhood":

Her mother had said that the angels brought babies to the earth. For a while it had hurt her—the lie. But she knew her mother wouldn't have said it if she hadn't thought that sometimes it was right to lie. Maybe that's the way it was with her father. Maybe he thought what he did was right. And maybe it was. It might seem wrong—terribly wrong. But God could see ahead, and he knew what people must do. Sometimes they had to kill in wars. It was wicked to kill, and yet sometimes it was right. (65-66)

This meditation breaks off as Joan's sister calls that the cattle are crossing into the alfalfa where they might bloat.

The rest of "Utah Idyll" describes the difficult dance of a marriage between one man and three women. It is unfinished, breaking off at page 121—the arguments still unresolved. But in the part that is completed, Joan emphasizes her father's cruelty to her mother who is sick much of the time. The narrative is filled with anger at the father and Maida. Watching the father sitting between the mother and Maida, she writes, "They were torturers that surpassed, in cruelty, the masters of the Inquisition, or the witch burners of Salem" (74).

Similarly, in "More Notes" she describes an intimate moment
between Mayme, who was only ten years older than Mary, and her father. Mary and her brother Heber Jr. are studying at the kitchen table in Mary’s apartment near the agricultural college in Logan. Then she sees her father and his third wife: “Mayme was lolling on his lap, her arms around his neck, and her fingers running through his hair as she gazed smilingly into his face.” Mary was so shocked that “my brain all but refused to accept as reality what I saw” (15). She rushed from the apartment and stood outside in the cold so long that Heber Jr., afraid for her health, took her to an aunt’s house for the night. One possibility is that Mary was shocked by all human sexuality; however, she had by this time finished her training as a nurse. A more obvious explanation is that she was shocked at seeing this blatant intimacy between her father and a woman who is not her mother.

Although Mary’s early journals are silent about her anguish and her anger at her father and his third wife, that anger is expressed in her later journals. On Mother’s Day, 11 May 1924, when she was thirty-four, she and her husband of six years, Charles Powell, were struggling with the financial difficulties common to young families. Her mother was living with Mary’s sister, Helen Bennion Barker, in or near Salt Lake City, while her father was living with Mayme in Lehi. She writes:

We went to Helen’s to visit mother as it is Mother’s day. . . . Fred’s mother [Fred is Helen’s husband] and Aunt Eliza were dinner guests, also father. . . . Aunt Eliza and father and I, being three of a kind (the outspoken kind), plunged into precarious and exciting discussions about financial and family problems. I did not enjoy the visit much for that reason. Then, when we were about to leave father said, “Come down to Lehi before you go to the ranch. Aunt Mayme says she has a ham and some groceries to give you.” After we got home and to bed I lay awake till nearly morning trying to decide just what we should do about that. I know Aunt Mayme never had a kind impulse toward me in all her life and never will have and I just can’t figure out what her motive is this time, or what scheme she has in mind. I don’t look forward to the visit with anything but dread, but perhaps we should go for the sake of our children, just making as sure

49Probably Heber’s half sister Elizabeth, born to John Bennion and Esther Wainwright.
as we can that they won’t have to go hungry this summer. I have worked for Aunt Mayme without any pay when her family was small, I was her nurse when John was a baby, but I didn’t do it because I wanted to but because father made me, and I don’t want return favors from her. Father certainly owes me help because it was thru his coercion that I overworked and broke down before I was married. He said he would give us some groceries; and now he makes it appear that we are accepting charity from Aunt Mayme, the worst enemy we have in the world. O how horribly sordid life can be at times.

This entry expresses Mary’s weight of anger against Mayme, clearly greater than that against Emma Jean Webster, her father’s second wife, who is described in neutral or positive terms in the journals. Apparently personality difference as well as the polygamous relationship caused some of her lifelong unhappiness with this marriage to a woman three years younger than Mary’s oldest sister.

LISTENERS AND A VOICE

Because Mary could never accommodate herself to her father’s story of righteous marriages to three women, she worked most of her life through fictional and nonfictional accounts to establish her version—that his second and third marriages were cruel and unrighteous. We can never know completely why her reaction was so violent and enduring, but some understanding can be gleaned from imagining her experience. I have already discussed three possible causes of her hatred of plural marriage: her belief that polygamous marriages were no longer performed by authority in the Church, friction because of personality differences between her and the third wife, and her observation of direct harm to her mother. She attributed her mother’s sickness to her father’s polygamy. The form her unhappiness took was influenced by at least two other factors—her education and stories about marriage she received from the national media and her female relations.51

Mary’s education had a more scientific or secular bent than her

51Although polygamous children often suffered social ostracism and mockery, Mary’s peers, like herself, knew about polygamous incidents but simply didn’t talk about them.
father's. She studied nursing and read widely. She believed polygamy was a product of ignorance, a harmful and superstitious practice that would disappear in the light of science. In 1912 she wrote that she was “helping Ethel B. get statistics of the Bennion family for Dr. Titus of the A. C. who is conducting an investigation in Eugenics.”

One of her interests in that area of study was to use scientific methodology to prove that polygamy was psychologically and genetically harmful. In her correspondence file are notes taken from her reading of “Ideas from a Study of Mormon Polygamy” by Dr. Edward Hulett Jr., apparently a survey of nearly 100 descendants of polygamous families in Utah. She says she paraphrases because his thesis is unpublished and, therefore, she cannot quote directly from it. Although I have been unable to find Hulett’s original document, I suspect that Mary may have expressed herself freely using language which is more hers than his.

She first summarizes evidence that polygamy was so unnatural that it unsettled mentally the people who participated in it. “One woman said that though she helped to court other wives for her husband, and that after polygamy was entered into her husband never slighted her, she thought she was going to lose her mind with the awful feelings that were caused by it.”

Polygamy also affects children psychologically:

As a rule, children were doubtful of their father’s sincerity and could not understand how he could do such a cruel thing as to be disloyal to their mother. They could not be sure of his affection for their mother, or for them, and so could not feel loyalty toward him. Cunning and extreme selfishness [were] often shown by a plural wife, who would secretly put money away for her own & her children’s future. . . . Most of the cruelty of polygamy was hidden from the public. Wives could never feel sure of their husbands unchanged love, and were thwarted in their need of constant devotion from their mate.

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53 Mary Bennion Powell, Notes on “Ideas from a Study of Mormon Polygamy,” typescript, Bennion Collection (USHS), Box 7, Fd. 2. The notes are written on the back of scrap paper entitled “Open Season for Spiders.” Mary, especially during the poverty-stricken years of her marriage, wrote her diary on the backs of previously used pages.
With enough authority people can be forced to pretend things they do not feel. . . . Social psychologists agree, generally, that there is a basic human need for intimacy in the human personality which can be supplied only in marriage. This relationship demands exclusive association of the mates, in the physical sex relationship. Polygamy made this necessary intimate exclusiveness impossible. . . . All the responses that a wife expects from her husband could, and in countless cases must have been, lacking in polygamy—as is shown by the bitterness often expressed about the man, later in his life, by members of his households. He reigned in a kingdom of heartbreak, his victims became psychologically ill, never to recover their emotional stability, and also often, even their physical health was impaired.

The latter part of this document summarizes the social inequality which occurs when men could take several wives but women could not take more than one husband. “Many polygamous as well as monogamous men were childless, yet there was no command that they give their wives other husbands. Also the old men kept many of the young men from marrying the girls they loved and who loved them. Many of the wives of polygamous husbands had fewer children than they might have had in monogamy. Some men and their plural wives purposely practiced birth control.”

Another interesting aspect of her notes is that toward the end of the document she describes the ill effects of the kind of silence she felt she was subjected to by her father’s command to never tell anyone about his polygamy: “Mystery arouses curiosity and curiosity binds thoughts to a subject that should be put into the background of the mind, in order that it will not stir up painful emotions. But Mormons, as a rule, do not want to discuss polygamy. They arouse curiosity, and also suspicion of their motives, by taking this uncooperative attitude.” I wonder how different her life might have been if she had been able to talk openly with her parents about her father’s plural marriages.

A second major influence on her hatred of polygamy was the idealized stories of passionate and blissful romantic love from the Ladies Home Journal, stories which countered the narratives of sacrifice, submission, and obedience about those who entered polygamy that she heard at Church. Often in her journals she mentions spending an afternoon or evening reading the Ladies Home Journal; in “Utah Idyll,” Joan sees herself as the heroine of a Ladies Home
story of monogamous love. Mary and her sisters were certainly socialized by the articles on style and sewing, the advertisements for beauty aids and clothing, and the practical housekeeping articles. It seems certain that the romantic sketches had an equal effect. In 1906-07 she may have read such titles as “All Because of Susie: The Search of a Man for a Christmas Wife,” “The Princess Virginia: The Royal Romance of a Princess and an Emperor,” “Between the Lines: The Diary of a Young Girl,” “When a Girl Became a Girl to My Boy,” and “The First of the Romantic Legends of Venice: Whom Death Could Not Part.”

One 1907 story, “The Prophet and the Girl,” concerns a young woman who moves in with her fiancé’s family in Wisconsin in preparation for the wedding. She meets James Jesse Strang, the Mormon excommunicant and polygamist. Strang gathers a crowd around an oak tree in the forest and directs two men to chop it down. Entangled in the roots they find an ancient casket which contains some brass plates with engravings on them. The young woman is entranced by Strang, especially after observing this miraculous event. One night she goes to meet Strang, planning to elope with him. When he aggressively kisses her on the mouth, she pulls back and returns to her fiancé. Strang follows and the fiancé confronts him and debunks the miracle. Strang apparently had drilled a tunnel from a nearby bank and pushed the casket filled with brass plates under the tree. The polygamist leaves and the young man and woman are reconciled. He looks down at her sitting in a chair:

She was so girlish, so slender—her little frame was so charged with sentiment! The outline of one small hand, resting on the arm of the chair, suggested dainty, subtle things, which, if he could not wholly understand, he could, at least, hedge about from contact with the realities of this western life. . . . What better work could a strong man ask, he thought, than to keep this gentler influence, with all its frail sweet qualities, alive out here?

This ideal—a passive, frail woman protected by a man—may have seemed attractive to a young woman who felt she was over-

54Ladies Home Journal, 14 (1906-1907).
worked. Mary also felt that her father had destroyed the protective cocoon of love established in the early years of his marriage. Growing into womanhood, Mary had limited choices—in both the monogamous romance and the polygamous marriage of duty, the wife is passive and submissive. Consequently, when she tries to write her story, the language turns to invective, melodrama, or bursts of emotion. Her narratives are more a wail against injustice than a tool for forging new definitions for women.

Another romance narrative with a historical setting which Mary may have read in the 1907 *Ladies Home Journal* is “Her Marriage: A Romance of Pioneer Days in the West.” In the story a man and woman have a daughter they treasure. After the father’s death in an accident with an ax, a young man shows up at the door of their cabin in a storm. He lives with the mother and daughter for three years, working for the two women as if he were a son and brother. On the mother’s deathbed, she asks for the village priest to come marry her daughter and this man. Her last act is to draw her daughter close: “‘My own, own dear child,’ whispered the mother hoarsely, ‘Roger must be everything to you—father, mother, husband. You must learn to love him, and obey him as you have obeyed me. He will be kind to you, beloved’” (17). Touched by her childlike nature, the new husband says to her, “‘You are a sacred legacy to me from your mother, who was my friend. The priest’s words have made you my honored wife’—she shivered—‘but I swear to you by her dear memory that I shall never claim you as my wife unless I can teach you to love me’” (17).

The cabin has two rooms; she is established in the inner room. He gives her a gun to protect herself from wild beasts but also apparently to protect herself from him should he lose self-control. One day in the forest, he falls and is paralyzed from the waist down. Realizing she will perish without him, he drags himself back to the cabin just as wolves attack. She promises to stay in the inner room with her gun while he defends them. A wolf crashes through the window; he shoots it and the seven wolves following feed on their fallen comrade. He continues shooting the wolves inside the cabin

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while they continue feeding until there is only one wolf left. It comes for him, but as he prepares to use his gun as a club (he has run out of ammunition), a gun is fired above him. His wife has saved his life. He rebukes her for disobeying him and coming out of her inner room. But then he confesses his love: “She trembled before the compelling beauty of his gaze, but could not escape the encircling arms. A soft flush tinted her delicate face, and satin-smooth as a butterfly’s wing her lips brushed his cheek” (17) The story ends with that barely sexual kiss, emblem of the girl’s new love for her protector.

These stories trained Mary to think of marriage as a romantic bond between one man and one woman. On the day she discovered her father’s polygamy, every romantic dream she had imagined for her mother or for herself turned to ashes.

In addition to these highly sentimental narratives, Mary received stories from her maternal grandmother and others that, rather than inspiring her to make similar sacrifices for her faith, filled her with dismay at the crushing price polygamy exacted. In “Incidents” she writes about two examples; the first concerns her maternal great-grandmother, Mary Ann Frost Sterns Pratt, who married Apostle Parley P. Pratt on 9 May 1837. Both had lost a spouse through death, and this “second marriage was not the romantic kind. It was rather like a marriage from motives of religious duty. She believed she should bring more children into the world, and Apostle Pratt seemed a very worthy man. When polygamy began to be practiced in Nauvoo, she dutifully gave her husband a plural wife in a tender ceremony. But she soon began to wonder if her husband had not only lost his love for her but if he had lost all interest in her welfare” (“Incidents,” 1-2). Mary says that her grandmother waited several months to have her baby blessed because Apostle Pratt was gone on a mission and she wanted him to perform the ordinance. The day he returned, instead of coming to church, he went to dinner at the home of his latest plural wife. Mary records that he then


weeks. My great grandmother drew on her vast fund of patience, bringing the meals of the couple to their bedroom door three times a day because she had been told by the new wife that “Parley is writing a book and cannot be disturbed.” However when this excuse was given for her husband’s refusal to be bothered with the fact that there was no more money with which to buy groceries, she decided that she was no longer “needed” by him. She left him, and got a divorce. The strange thing to me is that after she left him he professed to be heartbroken. He told Brigham Young that grief over the loss of Mary Ann had made him physically ill. He was due to go on another mission but he said he was too sick to go. But Brigham Young made him go. He wrote a long love poem about Grandma, but it left her cold. She never went back to him. (2-3)

When Mary Ann Frost Sterns left Apostle Pratt, she did not leave the Church but crossed the plains with her daughter from her first marriage, also named Mary Ann, who decades later passed on these stories to her own granddaughter, Mary Bennion Powell. Crossing the plains, the younger Mary Ann met and married Oscar Winters, and they settled in Pleasant Grove. “During that time,” Mary writes,

many [members of the Church] held firmly to the belief that to be worthy to go into the presence of God after death they must be polygamists. Mary Ann loved Oscar so much that she was willing to share him with other wives in order to secure a place for him to dwell forever in God’s presence. Oscar was of the firm opinion that no heaven would be worth working for if gaining it would bring unhappiness to his wife. But try as he would he couldn’t bring her around to his way of thinking. Finally he promised to become a polygamist if she could get some woman to marry him without his asking her to. Grandma told me that she asked every marriageable girl and woman in Pleasant Grove to marry her husband. They all said maybe they would if he would ask them to, but not otherwise. Finally she hit on a scheme she knew wouldn’t fail. She knew her mother loved her so much that she couldn’t deny her anything that was really important to her happiness. And that is why Oscar married his beautiful young mother-in-law, and then had the marriage annulled [sic]. When my grandmother told me the story she blushed and hung her head as she confessed, “Mary,” she said, “As soon as the ceremony was over I knew I couldn’t stand polygamy. I wasn’t good enough. I had the marriage annuled.” When I said to my mother “Why has this been kept a secret
from me all these years?” She said “Why should you ever have been told? It is all in the past.” I said “Grandma said she couldn’t stand polygamy.” My mother looked astonished, then laughed, “Mother?” she said “It was father who couldn’t stand it.” Does anyone wonder, really, why I almost worship my grandfather Winters? (4-6)

These stories told by her grandmother, the stories in the *Ladies Home Journal*, and scientific theory about the harmful effects of polygamy gave Mary reasons upon which she constructed her opposition to her father’s story—that his plural marriages were righteous. Because these stories taught her that a monogamous marriage was natural for humans, she felt that his plural marriages destroyed identity and violated the domain of women in the family. But her father’s story was very strong, supported by his authority as head of the family and by generations of Church tradition in obeying God’s law above the law of the land. His injunction to keep silent about the matter made it impossible for her to negotiate with him. She had no better luck going to others; neither family members nor her religious teachers would engage with her in dialogue as she struggled to confront her father’s act. Members of the Church were distancing themselves from polygamy and wanted her to leave the matter in silence. As a child and even later, she had no clear audience, voice, or form for her story; thus, her narrative attempts to reconcile or rationalize her father’s behavior result in either silence, sentimentality, or a strident or unbalanced voice, all of which finish a subject prematurely, either avoiding it or ignoring its complexity. But she could never give up.

Her preserved letters imply a project of writing to everyone she knew concerning plural marriage to gather evidence against her father’s act. Samuel Bringhurst, Mayme’s brother and a mission president at the time of his response, suggested that much sorrow could have been avoided if the family had been more open when they were all children:

I have re-read your letter several times and I understand to some extent your feelings, and if, as you state, I have been able to help you, I am very grateful. What you said about truthfulness, frankness, and straightforwardness surely rings true and if those affected by the polygamous marriage of your father to my sister Mayme had been told the facts frankly and truthfully in the first place, it would have
spared many heartaches and misunderstandings. I can never forget my feelings as a boy when Mayme came home during the night pregnant with her first baby. We were all told by my father that both her presence and condition must be kept a strict secret; otherwise, she would have to go to prison. That was all I knew and naturally thought someone had wronged my sister. It was not until the baby was a year old that I learned the truth. . . . I commend you for your desire to write the biographies of your parents and wish you success in that worthy project. I feel honored that you have asked me to contribute my experience with them, as I loved them so much.\footnote{Samuel E. Bringhurst, Letter to Mary B. Powell, 18 November 1949, Bennion Collection (USHS), MS B-16, Box 7, Fd. 2.}

But speaking about her father’s marriages, even in private was forbidden. Her father’s voice sounding at the top of the stairs—“Never breathe to a living soul what you have just heard!”—kept the young Mary from communicating with her family about her father’s polygamous lifestyle.

**THE CODE OF SILENCE**

The families of most polygamists kept silent about plural marriage because they feared legal prosecution and desired to protect the Church, but also perhaps because polygamy was shameful to a people who believed that civil law was almost as important as God’s law. However, though these reasons are valid, I believe that they fall short in adequately explaining the code of silence within Heber Bennion’s family and other plural families. In “The Repressive Hypothesis” Michel Foucault suggests that silence concerning sexuality was a tool of control in Victorian times.\footnote{Michel Foucault, “The Repressive Hypothesis,” in *The History of Sexuality*, 10 vols. (New York: Random House, 1980), 1:xxx.} Interest in sexuality magnified as discourse concerning it was repressed. Through silence, Victorian middle-class males protected their dominance and sexual freedom. Whatever her father’s reasons for wishing silence, Mary regretted, especially as an adult, being unable to talk about this central condition of her family life. This silence may be similar to that imposed in our own time inside alcoholic or abusive families; these families guard a secret which no member can mention. While Mary’s anguish concerning the discovery of her
father's polygamy may seem excessive, she suffered as much because of it as an abused child or a child of an alcoholic suffers. Only as an adult did she try to express her unhappiness.

Why didn't she pour out her heart to her journal? A diary is often a private medium, but Mary's journal was written as a log of acts and may have been considered a public document. Several times she refers to someone else reading her journal. On 31 July 1908 she copies into her journal another young woman's diaried description of a dance. At the end of Journal 9, written in 1917 when she became engaged to Charles Powell, she lists dates marked with a code. On the bottom of the sheet she has written, "1949—The blanks represent Charle's [sic] visits to Pine Cliff [her father's ranch]. Some people are shy." Because she was bashful about her courtship with Charles and because she wrote this bottom entry in 1949, she apparently thought of her journal as something which was or could be easily accessed by others and thus left blanks as the record of his visit. Rarely does she explore her own thoughts or feelings in the early journals; as a consequence, she had no private avenue for her despair. As an adult, she placed her papers in two public repositories, finally allowing her story to be read by others.

Her family was not silent only concerning polygamy. In a remarkable essay entitled "Notes on Communication or the lack of it," she describes a time during World War I when her parents and husband had her committed to a sanitarium. In April 1918, pregnant with her first child, she arrived in Taylorsville to visit her parents after a fatiguing journey from Pine Cliff. She read several newspaper accounts of the German advances in Belgium. That afternoon the family left her to rest while they went to church, but she had a real fear of being alone. She fell asleep and awakened twice, hearing screams which she believed were cries of despair because Germany had conquered. Much later she learned that the first cries were people rushing from the meeting house to their cars in a cloudburst; the second were a brother and sister fighting. But at the time she believed the United States had lost the war but her family had chosen

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61 Mary Bennion Powell, "Notes on Communication or the lack of it," Jan. 1970, typescript, Bennion Collection (USHS), MS B-16, Box 7, fd. 2.
not to tell her in an attempt to protect her fragile mind. Her parents and sister read her instability as a form of insanity and convinced Charles to have her institutionalized for six weeks. Ever after her release and after the birth of her child, she remained confused about what was happening in the war. Later she was unhappy about the lack of open and complete communication from her family during this time of emotional upheaval. Who can say from this distance in time whether her loved ones could have talked with her or whether she was in too much turmoil to listen? However, in her essay, she details the damage she felt because no one talked about their suspicions: “So now, you see (I hope) why it’s so necessary for people, especially families, to tell each other what they are thinking, and how they feel.”

She writes that the silence in her family began before my parents were married. For instance, after I was married, my mother told me that she had felt sure that she couldn’t endure being married to a man who would want to be a polyamist [sic] but she felt too shy to mention this to my father before their wedding. When she did, he was so angry that, (he told me this) he wouldn’t speak to her, and lay silent, with his back to her all night, on their wedding night. She should have told him this before. And then he and she kept it a secret when he married two other women. I wanted to die when I was finally told that he was married to a young girl and she had had a baby by him. After that I knew better than to ask them questions. If they didn’t want me to know the truth they wouldn’t tell it to me.

Later in the essay she warns: “Ignorance can be the cause of a person’s death, or loss of reputation, or standing in a community. It is Satan’s great Secret Weapon! that may destroy the whole world if not checked soon. . . . We can only hope intelligence and education can defeat destructive ignorance in time to save this planet as a home for living things.”

I believe that Mary made her papers available to the public because, although she clearly loved her family, she wanted to stop the secret-keeping. Certainly, her version of events is slanted, but it

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62 Ibid., 18-19.
63 Ibid., 19-20.
64 Ibid., 35.
is her version and she wanted it heard. During the last years of her life (she died in 1929), she placed her journals with the University of Utah and her other papers in the Utah Historical Society Library. Yet taking this step was emotionally traumatic for her. At the end of “Notes on Communication,” after writing her story one more time she notes, “Some people (not a few) have told me I should only write the happy things in my life story, that my grandchildren want me to write. I wish I knew if this would be right, or wrong. I don’t know.”

In “Incidents” she writes, “None of us know how long we may live. And I wouldn’t want to die without recording some of the most important happenings in the lives of my forebears and in my own life. Maybe even tomorrow I may not be alive. . . . And so, tonight . . . , I will write some of ‘the most poignant, pathetic and also the most joyous’ events of my life.”

65Ibid., 38.

66Mary Bennion Powell, “Incidents,” Bennion Collection (USHS), 6; she attributes the quoted words to her cousin, Howard Bennion, “whose advice I am trying to follow.”
THE ORIGIN OF THE
WORD OF WISDOM

Clyde Ford

THE WORD OF WISDOM contained in section 89 of the current LDS Doctrine and Covenants has been one of the more important revelations in terms of emphasis over the years and constitutes one of the most distinctive and recognizable aspects of Mormonism.

Given the emphasis on the Word of Wisdom over the years, it is surprising that there has been little work on its origins.1 Traditional histories on the Word of Wisdom have generally accepted the recollection of Brigham Young (described below). A complicating factor is that the Word of Wisdom is not easily read and interpreted. There are at least four reasons for this: (1) The specific questions which the revelation addresses are not recorded; (2) The wording is ambiguous; (3) The revelation was not given as a commandment; and (4) The revelation contains a complex literary structure includ-

1Some authors have attempted to relate the prohibitions to social and medical movements of the early 1830s. See, for example, Lester Bush, Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1993), 49; Paul H. Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1972), chap. 2.
ing duplications, apparent contradictions, and parts which seem relatively unrelated. In addition, the Word of Wisdom has undergone changes in interpretation and emphasis. Attempts to understand the revelation through the actions of early Church members are hampered since it is unclear whether such actions should be interpreted as going against a noncommandment or as harmonizing a contemporary interpretation of an active commandment that is different from our current understanding.

Robert Woodford's dissertation summarizes the early textual history and manuscripts of the Word of Wisdom. Three handwritten manuscripts of this particular revelation which antedate the original publication in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants are currently known. The earliest is an undated version that Wilford Woodruff copied in his Book of Commandments; Sidney Gilbert copied an undated version between June 1833 and June 1834; and Frederick G. Williams copied a version before August 1834 with the notation "Given February 27, 1833." A comparison of these and subsequent printed editions reveal minor changes in spelling, wording, and punctuation which have little impact on the meaning.

The Word of Wisdom was first published as a broadsheet in December 1833 and subsequently in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. A relatively unique feature in both the 1835

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Footnotes:

2For example, "wine and strong drink" are prohibited in verse 5 but only "strong drink" in verse 7. In verse 10 "all wholesome herbs" are for the use of man, but in verse 8 tobacco, an herb, is "not good" for man.


4Frederick G. Williams's copy is in the Kirtland Revelation Book, Historical Department Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter LDS Church Archives). Each revelation is separated from the next by a one-line space and division marker. The date has been added in the space following the revelation, clearly indicating that the date was added after the revelation was copied. A number of other revelations in the Kirtland Revelation Book have dates at the beginning. An unpublished revelation just preceding the Word of Wisdom has the same date added at the end.

5Sidney Gilbert's manuscript, compared to the other holograph and printed versions, shows several small omissions, none of them of primary importance for this study.

6The broadsheet is reproduced in Bush, Health and Medicine, 48.
(Kirtland) and 1844 (Nauvoo) editions of the Doctrine and Covenants is the lack of a date for the Word of Wisdom. Since a date was added to the Williams manuscript, one wonders why the first two printed versions were undated. When church historians George A. Smith and Wilford Woodruff compiled Joseph Smith's history in the 1850s, it naturally became necessary to place the Word of Wisdom in a chronological historical context. Since Joseph Smith's journal lacks entries for the first months of 1833, the compilers evidently accepted the date copied onto the Williams manuscript. This date has appeared in all subsequent editions of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Structurally, the Word of Wisdom consists of five separate parts: Introduction (vv. 1-3); Part 1 which proscribes wine and strong drink because of conspiring men (vv. 4-6); Part 2, which prohibits strong drink, tobacco, and hot drinks (vv. 7-11); Part 3 which endorses herbs, grain, fruits, and vegetables with restricted use of flesh for food (vv. 12-17); and a postscript (vv. 18-21). Parts 1, 2, and 3 are distinctive in wording and subject matter and are separated by the phrases “and again” and “and again, verily I say unto you.” The differences between these three parts of the Word of Wisdom are great enough to suggest the possibility that the parts may have been derived from three originally separate revelations. The lack of a recorded date of reception in the 1835 and 1844 printed versions would be understandable if the three parts were revealed at different times.

With this background in mind, I will now examine the parts individually and explore potential historical contexts and meanings for each. Quotations are from the 1981 edition of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants, since it is most readily available to a majority of the Journal’s readers and because there are no significant wording changes from the earlier versions.

**INTRODUCTION (vv. 1-3)**

A Word of Wisdom, for the benefit of the council of high priests, assembled in Kirtland, and the church, and also the saints in Zion—

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7A handwritten version by Willard Richards dated between August 1841 and August 1843 also dates this revelation as 27 February 1833. See Woodford, “The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants,” 1172.
To be sent greeting; not by commandment or constraint, but by revelation and the word of wisdom, showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days—

Given for a principle with promise, adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints, who are or can be called saints.

Vv. 1-3 were originally the heading of the revelation. ⁸

Significant parts of it include the identification of those to whom the revelation was addressed (v. 1) and the statement that the revelation was not given "by commandment or constraint" (v. 2).

An examination of the Word of Wisdom in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, the first published version, indicates that the revelation is addressed to three groups: the council of high priests in Kirtland, "the church," and the saints in Zion (Missouri). This heading is fairly unusual since the other revelations in the 1835 publication were either not addressed in the heading, addressed to a specifically named individual(s), or addressed to the church at Kirtland. Referring to the unusual Word of Wisdom heading, Sidney Sperry has noted: "The language is somewhat redundant, because the mention of the Church alone would have included the High Priests of Kirtland and the Saints in Zion." ⁹ If, however, we assume that the Word of Wisdom was derived from three separate documents, the complex address in the heading would be readily explained as the individuals to whom each of the three parts had been directed, respectively.

Periodically (including the time period during which the Word of Wisdom was given), councils of high priests met for varying purposes. An important item of discussion at some meetings was differences with the leaders in Zion. Letters from John Corrill, Algernon Sydney Gilbert, and William Wine Phelps had been written from Missouri to Kirtland accusing the Prophet Joseph of "seeking after monarchial power and authority" and expressing

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⁸The heading was first incorporated into the revelation in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, edited by Orson Pratt and approved by Brigham Young. Because Orson Pratt entered the School of the Prophets on 18 February 1833, he probably had first-hand knowledge of the Word of Wisdom. Evidently he felt that the heading was more than a simple introduction.

⁹Sidney Sperry, *Doctrine and Covenants Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), 446. He does not suggest a solution to this problem.
great concern regarding the physical needs of the Zion Saints. Letters from Joseph Smith and from a conference of high priests,
represented by Orson Hyde and Hyrum Smith, in response accused
the leaders in Zion of neglecting to read the commandments, of false
pretensions to holiness, and of covetousness and boasting, among
other personal faults. Considering this historical context of tension
between Kirtland and Zion, it is tempting to propose that the leaders
in Zion were those specifically addressed in the heading as “to be
sent greeting; not by commandment or constraint” in an attempt to
minimize the fears of those in Missouri regarding new regulations
from Kirtland.

PART 1 (vv. 4-6)

Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of
evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring
men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving
unto you this word of wisdom by revelation—
That inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among
you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father,
only in assembling yourselves together to offer up your sacraments
before him.
And, behold, this should be wine, yea, pure wine of the grape of
the vine, of your own make.

The prohibition on wine and strong drink in verse 5 applies to
“any man.” This is significant because “any man” elsewhere in the
Doctrine and Covenants refers exclusively to males. When both
genders are intended, references such as “any,” “any member,” “any-
one,” “any of you,” and “any man or woman” are used (D&C 6:12,
20:83, 42:80, 46:3, 58:60, 127:6). Thus Part 1 was apparently origi-
nally directed to a group of men, consistent with the hypothesis that this section was given to the council of high priests in Kirtland.

The original Word of Wisdom began with the current verse 4 in which the Lord reiterates a previous warning and instruction. The Church has been threatened by a condition which persists and will continue. The threat involves “wine and strong drink” and “conspiring men.” These verses raise two questions: What is the Lord warning the brethren about? Precisely what is being prohibited? The only recorded previous warning involving “wine and strong drink” was received in August 1830 in Harmony, Pennsylvania (D&C 27), which prohibited Joseph Smith from purchasing sacramental wine from “enemies.” There appears to be a close relationship between section 27 and Part 1. Similarities include: the mention of wine in the context of the sacrament, the instruction to use only wine of the Saints’ own make, and the implication that enemies (conspiring men) may intend to poison the Saints.

An immediate difference is that section 27 does not proscribe wine and strong drink but rather affirms that the Savior and many prophets will drink the “fruit of the vine” in a future setting of social interaction and fellowship. Thus it is important to determine whether a change in Church attitude toward alcoholic beverages, especially fermented drinks such as wine, occurred between August 1830 and the reception of Part 1.

If there was no change in attitude, then the apparent interpretation of Part 1 is that the Saints should not partake of wine and strong drink because these could, at that time of Church poverty, only (or primarily) be obtained by purchase from potential enemies. Ebenezer Robinson, a close associate of the Prophet Joseph Smith, supports this interpretation: “Soon after the revelation was given . . . he [Joseph Smith] quoted the first clause, ‘In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you and forewarned you,’ and proceeded to explain that various and dangerous adulteration would be used, especially in liquors, tea and

12 Although section 27 was expanded in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants from the 1833 Book of Commandments, this particular concept was in the original revelation.
coffee, that the enmity of nations would become such that certain importations would contain various slow poisons inimical to health and life."\(^{13}\)

Hyrum Smith noted in an 1842 address on the Word of Wisdom: "But importation of foreign products might be the means of thousands of people being poisoned at a future time, through the advantage that an enemy might take of us, if we made use of these things that are thus spoken of as being evil; and be it remembered, that this instruction is given in consequence of evils that do exist in the hearts of conspiring men."\(^{14}\)

That the early Saints followed the command of the Lord in section 27 to make their own wine for the sacrament is shown by John Murdock's recollection: "Sisters gathered currents and made wine for our communion and the cloth they strained the currents through."\(^{15}\)

The interpretation that wine and strong drink were prohibited because enemies might poison them is consistent with section 27, and the Lord's admonition that the Saints make their own wine is easily understood. This Word of Wisdom interpretation is also consistent with the subsequent teaching and conduct of Church leaders and Church practices. For example, following a wedding in 1836, the Prophet Joseph Smith recorded in his journal: "We then partook of some refreshments, and our hearts were made glad with the fruit of the vine. This is according to the pattern set by the Savior Himself, and we feel disposed to patronize all the institutions of heaven."\(^{16}\)

On the other hand, drunkenness was clearly contrary to the law of the Church. John Murdock's missionary journal describes an ecclesiastical court held for Charles Avery in March 1834: "It was witnessed against him that he walked disorderly and made too free

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\(^{13}\)D. R. Baldwin, "Hot Drinks," *Saints Herald*, 26 February 1902, 183.


\(^{15}\)John Murdock, Journal, 11 July 1833, LDS Church Archives.

a use of strong drink And the Church lifted up their hands against him and he was disfellowshipped.”

Conversely, if we conclude that Part 1 originally prohibited all consumption of wine and strong drink outside of the sacrament, regardless of where it was obtained, we encounter significant problems. For example, we would be forced to conclude, as some authors have, that Joseph Smith and other Church leaders openly and repeatedly violated the Lord’s counsel in full view of members. The argument that the Word of Wisdom was not taken seriously in the early Church, especially among leaders, is not consistent with early Church teachings.

Thus Part 1 of the Word of Wisdom seems originally to have been a reiteration of section 27, renewing the proscription on the use of wine and strong drink purchased from potential Church enemies. The need for Part 1 may have arisen from a question, presumably from the Kirtland high priests, regarding the continued application of section 27 since the Saints had moved to Ohio. The answer was that there were conspiring men in Ohio as well as elsewhere; and, therefore, the prohibition was still in effect. It is unlikely that Part 1 under its original interpretation totally proscribed the use of alcoholic beverages, especially wine, by Church members. Drunkenness, however, was probably considered a violation of the Word of Wisdom.

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17Murdock, Journal, 4 March 1834. Despite the specific mention of “strong drink,” it is possible that Avery was disfellowshipped on general moral principles rather than for a specific infraction of the Word of Wisdom. I am not aware that this revelation was discussed in sermons prior to 1835, and its first publication was as a broadsheet in December 1833, three months before this trial. See Bush, Health and Medicine, 48.


PART 2 (vv. 7-9)

And, again, strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies.

And again, tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and is not good for man, but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle, to be used with judgment and skill.

And again, hot drinks are not for the body or belly.

Part 2 is the best-known section of the Word of Wisdom because of its prohibition on strong drinks, tobacco, and hot drinks. It is also the most difficult section in the Word of Wisdom.

Three early Mormons recorded their recollections about the origin of Part 2 of the Word of Wisdom. In 1864, Brigham Young related the oft-quoted version suggesting that Joseph was concerned about excessive smoke in the School of the Prophets, while Emma complained about tobacco juice on the floor. These dual concerns prompted Joseph to inquire of the Lord about tobacco. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses who later left the Church, recollected in 1884 that Emma had complained about chewing during a party and one of the brethren had suggested that tea and coffee might also be prohibited as “a counter dig at the sisters.” Zebedee Coltrin, a member of the original First Council of the Seventy, recalled that the revelation was received during a meeting of the School of the Prophets and “when they heard it they all laid aside their pipes and use of tobacco.” These memories all concern only vv. 8-9 (i.e., only of Part 2). Consistent with the three-part hypothesis, these recollections identify the Saints at Kirtland as the recipients of Part 2.

Young’s and Whitmer’s suggestion that the entire Word of Wisdom was received in response to Emma’s pleas, however, presents a number of problems. For example, why is the revelation not

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22 Minutes of the School of the Prophets at St. George, Utah, 23 December 1883, 3, as qtd. in Woodford, “The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants,” 1170.
addressed to Emma or why does it not even mention Emma? If tobacco was the principal question, why does tobacco occupy only one verse? And why are not the chewing and smoking of tobacco specifically mentioned? How does the proper food for an ox relate to Emma’s concern regarding tobacco? Such problems raise the question of whether the usually quoted sources provide an entirely adequate explanation of Word of Wisdom origins.

The reminiscences of Young, Whitmer, and Coltrin leave little doubt that Part 2 was included in the Word of Wisdom in response to concerns regarding tobacco and possibly the other substances mentioned. A significant problem, however, is that, unlike the relative clarity of Parts 1 and 3, Part 2 is characterized by words and phrases which seem unnecessarily vague given the relatively simple problem addressed. As is well known, difficulties in interpretation developed almost immediately, such as the meaning of “hot drinks.” A possible explanation for the unusual wording, which we will explore further, would be that Part 2 was derived from a previous source which may have addressed a somewhat different question. The introductory phrase “and again” (v. 7) could then be interpreted as stating that, like Part 1, Part 2 is restating a previous communication. Unfortunately, we are left with only the text to determine what such a previous context may have been.

Among the most important unique phrases in Part 2 are “for the body” and “for the belly.” From an examination of the wording of Part 2, I would suggest that “for the belly” refers to internal consumption and “for the body” to topical application. According to Part 2, tobacco and hot drinks are not for the body or belly, and strong drinks are for the washing of the body rather than for the belly. Strong drinks, therefore, are apparently “for the body”—meaning, for external application. This is evidently Wilford Woodruff’s understanding when he describes cleansing his body “with Pure water & also with strong drink or spirits” and summarizes the decision of a Church council that wine is appropriate “at the

23 Like “wine” and “strong drink,” these phrases reflect the language of the King James Bible (1 Cor. 6:13). Archaic language is not a totally adequate explanation for the difficult wording, however, since additional nonbiblical material is also present.
Sacraments & for external Washing.” Likewise, “for the belly” meant internal consumption. This was the understanding of the Seventies in 1836: “We speak definitely and pointedly on this subject,” wrote an unidentified editor, “because we feel the weight and importance of it. If, as the Lord has said, strong drinks are not to be taken internally, can those who use them thus be held guiltless?”

The definition of “hot drinks” generated controversy from the publication of the Word of Wisdom. Current evidence suggests that at least two interpretations were present in the early Church. The earliest likely referred to a limited prohibition on drinks of increased temperature which did not include tea and coffee. In Kirtland, this early understanding evolved into a combined prohibition of tea and coffee and other drinks of increased temperature. W. W. Phelps wrote his wife in 1835 that the Kirtland Saints “drink cold water, and don’t even mention tea and coffee.” Ebenezer Robinson recalled that on one occasion “one of the leading elders” suggested that “hot milk was as much a violation of the revelation as hot tea and hot coffee.” Patty Bartlett Sessions, a nineteenth-century Mormon midwife, noted that “I never tasted tea nor coffee. While I was gone I drank cold water.” And as late as 1948, Joseph Fielding Smith took this same position, holding that “all hot drinks, whether they are stimulants or not are harmful to the body.”

Conversely, when David and John Whitmer were brought before the high council in Far West in 1837 for apostasy, a minor charge against them was breaking the Word of Wisdom by partaking of tea and coffee. Their reply was that “they did use tea and coffee but they did not consider them to come under the head of hot drinks.” Likewise, Hyrum Smith, speaking about the Word of

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26 Phelps, qtd. in History of the Church, 3:15; Robinson qtd. in Baldwin, “Hot Drinks,” 183; Donna Toland Smart, ed., Mormon Midwife: The 1846-1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions (Logan: Utah State University, 1997), 348; punctuation added for clarity; Joseph Fielding Smith, Church History and Modern Revelation (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1948), 147-8.
27 Cannon and Cook, Far West Record, 136.
Wisdom in 1843 in Nauvoo, implied that at least some members still questioned whether tea and coffee were included: “And again hot drinks are not for the body, or belly: there are many who wonder what this can mean; whether it refers to tea, or coffee, or not.”

Smith then proceeded to emphasize, in a frequently quoted passage, that tea and coffee were indeed against the Word of Wisdom. These events demonstrate that some Church members interpreted the Word of Wisdom as including hot drinks but excluding tea and coffee; this understanding persisted into the Nauvoo period. It is evident that this interpretation could not have prohibited all drinks of increased temperature or there would have been no question about whether coffee and tea were included. Thus, it appears that many early Saints understood “hot drinks” as originally referring to a specific and limited usage. Additionally, since the Whitmers lived in Missouri, it is possible that differences in interpretation between the Kirtland and Missouri Saints may have developed in the mid-1830s.

Given the above discussion, how then should we understand the prohibition on strong drink taken internally, and tobacco and hot drinks both applied topically and taken internally? I hypothesize that the original prohibition on strong drinks, tobacco, and hot drinks referred their use as medicine. Additional support for this conclusion comes from the wording of Part 2, which contains one specific exception to the generalized prohibition: tobacco may be used as “an herb” in the treatment of bruises and sick cattle. The use of herb to characterize tobacco implies medicinal uses, as does its application to treat bruises and sick cattle. “Herb” was often used in early nineteenth-century medical treatises, and herbs were used as medical treatment in the early Church (D&C 42:43). Nineteenth-century medical practitioners used tobacco internally and topically for a variety of illnesses. The 1843 Dispensatory of the United States of America described the use of tobacco enemas, suppositories, and topical applications.

Probably more accessible to the early Saints were popular texts

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describing large numbers of home remedies. For example, as treatment for colic, Jonas Rishel recommended “an injection [enema] of tobacco smoke”; John Gunn suggested “a poultice made of common smoking tobacco and fresh butter” for piles (hemorrhoids); and William Buchan suggested an “infusion” (steeping in hot or cold water) of tobacco orally as a diuretic. Among the Saints themselves, Wilford Woodruff describes the use of topical tobacco for injuries, a scorpion sting, and oral canker. Thomas Bullock treated his own hemorrhoids with “cooling medicine,” an ointment which probably included tobacco, whisky, and other ingredients. In his negative comments on the Word of Wisdom published in 1834, Eber D. Howe seemed to be familiar with the use of tobacco in treating sick cattle but emphasized the dangers of incorrect use.

Similar to tobacco, distilled spirits were used internally, and hot liquids were used both internally and on the skin as nineteenth-century treatment for various human maladies. For example, Jonas Rishel suggested that “a tea of arse-smart may be used freely, both internally and externally” for bruises.

Thus I would propose that Part 2 may have been derived from an earlier document which was concerned with the treatment of an unstated specific medical condition. The historical context can probably no longer be recovered with certainty. However, I would like to put forward a tentative suggestion.

While sporadic cases of flux (dysentery), ague (malaria), and smallpox are recorded in the journals of Church members during the early 1830s, the greatest health concern in early 1833 as judged...
from Church and other periodicals was the cholera pandemic. The *Painesville Telegraph*, which was published nine miles from Kirtland, systematically followed the pandemic in 1832 from Europe to the eastern and southern United States to Ohio with articles describing theories of spread and methods of prevention and treatment. Likewise, Church periodicals also carried the bad news, interpreting the pandemic as an apocalyptic event: “Not since the flood, if we think right, has the Lord sent the same pestilence, or destruction, over the whole earth at once.”35

The November 1832 edition of the *Evening and Morning Star* published a letter from “A mercantile house in St. Louis” to Algernon Sidney Gilbert: “We have the painful duty to perform of communicating the melancholy death of your brother, William L. who died in this place on Wednesday night, the 24th inst. of the Cholera, after a few hours illness. . . . The cholera has raged here for the last few days, with unprecedented violence.”36

Therefore, it seems clear that the Saints would have been concerned over the epidemic’s spread, especially after the first cases in Ohio were reported in the 18 October 1832 edition of the *Painsville Telegraph*. Probably few members would have disagreed with the assessment of the compilers of *History of the Church* that “the ravages of the cholera were frightful in almost all the large cities on the globe”37 or the July 1832 edition of the *Evening and the Morning Star* that “it is no wonder that the approach of such a pestilence has struck the deepest terror into every community.”38

In the early nineteenth century, cholera’s cause and transmission were not known. A contemporary medical text devoted ten lectures to the treatment of cholera, listing as recommended therapies warm or hot drinks, coffee, tea, weak chicken soup, port wine, hot water blister, hot saline injections (enemas), and

35See, for example, *Evening and Morning Star* 1, no. 4 (September and December 1832), 1.
36“Cholera,” *Evening and Morning Star* 1, no. 6 (November 1832): 6.
37*History of the Church*, 1:301.
tobacco enemas. For a different malady, colic, the same work recommends “the tobacco stupe” (a topical application to the abdomen). Thus alcoholic beverages, tobacco enemas, and hot liquids consumed orally, administered by enema, or applied topically were orthodox medical treatments which were applicable to the symptoms and signs of cholera.

Not everyone agreed with such treatments, however. The prominent botanical physician, Samuel Thomson (1769-1843) listed tobacco among “poisons” and cautioned against its use. Thomson did not describe a specific therapy for cholera, but his treatment for dysentery included “a little brandy” and cayenne administered orally and by enema to “raise and retain the internal vital heat of the system.” Medical historian Robert Divett has pointed out: “The advocates of botanic medicine treated their cholera patients with a dose of lobelia and bayberry to induce vomiting. This was followed by an enema to clean out the bowels, and then the patient was alternately steamed and chilled.”

In contrast, Sylvester Graham and his health reform movement, known to have reached much of the United States including Ohio during the early 1830s, taught that cholera was not necessarily a dangerous disease. The real danger lay neither in the “disturbing cause” nor in the body’s symptomatic reaction to it, but in the general condition of the body at the time of its disturbance.

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40 Ibid., 355. Colic is not usually a symptom of cholera but “cramp of the fingers, toes, and abdomen” was not unusual due to the rapid fluid shifts in the disease. Ibid., 388.
42 Ibid., 80, 87, 124.
44 Sylvester Graham (1794-1851), a Presbyterian minister, lectured widely on health maintenance during the 1830s, advocating temperance; a diet of unprocessed cereals, fruits, and vegetables; cold showers; and hard mattresses. He is best remembered for the graham cracker. Graham’s teachings influenced the Shakers (D&C 49). See Stephen J. Stein, The Shaker Experience in America (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 1992), 156.
According to Graham, cholera was fatal only when the organic nervous system had been so seriously impaired by prolonged exposure to artificial stimulation that it was incapable of responding in a natural way when beset by irritation.\textsuperscript{45} What substances did Graham feel impaired the system? Graham, in his lecture on cholera, noted: “Worst of all, the habitual use of artificial stimulants, such as the heating and irritating condiments of the table, and more particularly the various narcotic and alcoholic substances— all act upon the stomach to disturb its functions and to impair the health.”\textsuperscript{46} That these prohibited substances included tobacco is clear since, according to Graham, tobacco was “that most loathsome of all substances, one of the most powerful narcotic poisons in the vegetable kingdom.”\textsuperscript{47}

Clearly a significant dispute regarding the proper medical uses of the substances mentioned in Part 2 of the Word of Wisdom was raging at the time the Word of Wisdom was received, and the dispute was focusing on the proper treatment and prophylaxis of cholera. Thus, it is reasonable to propose that certain Saints may have asked Joseph Smith for clarification regarding the status of strong drink, tobacco, and hot drinks in cholera treatment/prophylaxis. The answer that these substances were not appropriate treatment for cholera was augmented with some appropriate medical uses.

The reasons for prohibiting strong drink, tobacco, and hot drinks as remedies for cholera may have included the relative rejection in the early Church of professional medical practitioners in favor of priesthood blessings and domestic herbal treatments. Thus, when cholera struck the men in Zion’s Camp, Joseph first “attempted to lay on hands for their recovery,” finding not only that these blessings failed to arrest the disease but that he himself was struck down.\textsuperscript{48} Contemporary journals record numerous examples of priesthood blessings as the only treatment for a variety of maladies. Indeed, Eber Howe objected to the medical practices of the


\textsuperscript{46}Quoted in ibid., 92.

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{48}\textit{History of the Church}, 2:114.
Kirtland Saints because “all diseases and sickness among them were to be cured by the Elders, and by the use of herbs—denouncing the Physicians of the world, and their medicines, as enemies to the human race.”

Thus the difficult wording of Part 2 may be explained by the hypothesis that, in responding to questions about tobacco use in the School of the Prophets, Joseph Smith restated the language of a previous communication regarding medical uses possible in the context of the cholera pandemic which had also prohibited tobacco, along with forbidding the consumption of distilled liquors and liquids of elevated temperatures.

Shortly after Part 2 was included in the Word of Wisdom, it underwent a period of evolution in interpretation. Potential subsequent factors impacting on Word of Wisdom interpretation and observance may have been the Ohio temperance movement, Emma Smith’s dislike for tobacco, and Graham’s teachings. (In addition to his hostility, mentioned above, to tobacco and alcohol, he characterized tea and coffee as “decidedly pernicious to health” and to be used “very sparingly” if at all.)

**PART 3 (vv. 10-17)**

And again, verily I say unto you, all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man—

Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving.

Yea, flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless they are to be used sparingly;

And it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine.

All grain is ordained for the use of man and of beasts, to be the staff of life, not only for man but for the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, and all wild animals that run or creep on the earth;

And these hath God made for the use of man only in times of famine and excess of hunger.

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50 Quoted in Nissenbaum, *Sex, Diet, and Debility in Jacksonian America*, 98. See also Peterson, “An Historical Analysis,” chap. 2.
All grain is good for the food of man; as also the fruit of the vine; that which yieldeth fruit, whether in the ground or above the ground—Nevertheless, wheat for man, and corn for the ox, and oats for the horse, and rye for the fowls and for swine, and for all beasts of the field, and barley for all useful animals, and for mild drinks, as also other grain.

Part 3 is closely associated in wording and concept with Doctrine and Covenants 59:16-20, a revelation given earlier to the Saints in “Zion” (Missouri). Similar teachings were incorporated into the Evening and Morning Star, also published in Missouri. In addition, as discussed below, textual similarity suggests that the postscript (v. 18-21) originally may have been associated with Part 3. Thus, it would be reasonable to conclude that Part 3 and the postscript may have been directed to “the saints in Zion,” consistent with the three-part hypothesis. To summarize, I do not believe that the Word of Wisdom arose from the influence of health reformers but would not rule out a subsequent influence.

Part 3 is concerned with the proper use of the Lord’s creation for the sustenance of humans and animals—particularly proper nutrition—and is, I think, strongly associated with the emphasis on millennialism in the early Church, a characteristic that distinguishes it from Parts 1 and 2. It is even possible that a precursor of Part 3 gave rise to the Evening and Morning Star editorials already quoted. Unlike Parts 1 and 2, however, Part 3 does not proceed smoothly from verse to verse, indicating that it may not be a literary unity. The abrupt change from the first person “I say” to the third person in verse 10 suggests that “and again, verily I say unto you” has been added to harmonize the addition of Part 3. Verses 10 (beginning with “all”), 11, 14, and 15 may be a unity constituting an original core since these verses include similar words (for example, ordained), refer to God in the third person, and follow a logical development. In vv. 12-13, “the Lord” speaks in the first person. Verse 15 duplicates the thought of vv. 12-13, and vv. 16-17 duplicate and expand on v. 14, suggesting a secondary addition. While a number of issues arise from these observations, I will focus on the presumed original

51“All Flesh,” Evening and Morning Star 2, no. 13 (June 1833): 102.
52These words are not present in the A. Sidney Gilbert manuscript.
core which is divided into two parts: the appropriate use of wholesome herbs, and the proper diet for human beings and animals.

While grains are ordained for the "use of man," herbs are for the "constitution, nature, and use of man," suggesting that herbs have other purposes in addition to nutrition, namely health maintenance and therapy. Much has been made of the Lord's supposed endorsement of herbal medicine in verse 10. In addition to herbal practitioners since the Joseph Smith period, it has been proposed that the Word of Wisdom's herbal endorsement demonstrates a preference in the early Church for organized botanical medicine, especially the Thomsonian system, and an opposition to conventional or "heroic" medicine which emphasized such therapies as bleeding, purging (often with a favorite regimen such as calomel), and blistering. In addition to the Word of Wisdom, the prominence in the Church of several Thomsonian physicians, such as Thomas B. Marsh and Frederick G. Williams, has been used to support this conclusion.

Previous authors, however, have often failed to recognize that almost certainly the impoverished early Saints received most of their medical care from amateur domestic medical practitioners, not from trained orthodox or botanical physicians. Madge Pickard and R. Carlyle Buley conclude that, since physicians were often not available and were usually costly, "much of the medical treatment in pioneer days was domestic and primitive . . . home remedies or folk cures" which were usually delivered by "the mother, wife, or woman of the house. . . . If home resources did not suffice, there was usually someone in each community . . . steeped in his or her lore or system of cures—a combination of homemade science, empiricism, and superstition." Popular texts described a large number of home remedies which were composed of herbs, spirits, and other available materials as well as the use of lobelia, bleeding, etc., by the amateur practitioner. Thus, there undoubtedly existed among the early

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54 Madge E. Pickard and R. Carlyle Buley, The Midwest Pioneer: His Ills, Cures, and Doctors (Crawfordsville, Ind.: R. E. Banta, 1945), 35.

55 See for example William Buchan, Domestic Medicine or, the Family Physician
Saints a core knowledge of home remedies which was taught to daughters, shared among families, practiced by amateur community specialists, and sometimes even published in Church periodicals. For example, the *Evening and Morning Star* published this “Remedy for Vomiting—Common Coffee—Prepare it in the following manner:—Roast half pint of Indian corn in an iron pan or kettle. . . . give half a tea-cup full without milk. . . . This receipt cures nine times out of ten.”

Furthermore, journal references to medical care also suggest that early Mormons preferred domestic remedies to professional botanic or heroic physicians. For example, when William E. McLellin became ill with the “flux” (dysentery), he treated himself with teas, mild medicine, and castor oil. McLellin’s antagonism toward professional practitioners is evident: “. . . with bro. Lewis was called to visit Sister . . . who had been taken with the bloody flux—we prayed with and laid hands on her. She was healed. But the same evening a menial Doctor of the world who had been called came in and went to work. She became immediately worse and her case is doubtful.”

During the Nauvoo malarial epidemic when Joseph Smith went to administer to Elijah Fordham, he notes that he was being treated with “Indian meal poultices” rather than calomel or lobelia. This Indian-meal treatment is described in popular books of home remedies. In his Nauvoo journal, Hosea Stout records that he had never taken lobelia, an indication of his reliance on domestic remedies.

The Nauvoo journals of Thomas Bullock are a particularly rich source of home remedies. Although working daily with Dr. Willard Richards, a Thomsonian physician, Bullock appears to be the main physician for his own family, treating them with a number of

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56 *Evening and Morning Star* 1, no. 4 (1 September 1832), 7.
58 Ibid., 134.
60 Rishel, *The Indian Physician*, 66.
remedies which are described in Dr. Gunn's popular text of home remedies. On one occasion a Mrs. Toole brought an herb for the ailing Mrs. Bullock. As already noted, Bullock doctored his own hemorrhoids. Bullock also describes preserving "pennyroyal" (an herb for indigestion) for his home medicine collection. Thomas Bullock's disdain for professional medicine can be seen in his description of Nauvoo as "fallen," being filled with "Taverns . . . Whorehouses. Lawyers and Doctors." In addition, although statements of the Prophet Joseph Smith have been used to support the conclusion that Thomsonianism was endorsed in the early Church, a close reading suggests the opposite. It is true that Smith referred to Levi Richards, a Thomsonian, as "the best physician I have ever known." However, in the same quotation, Smith actually goes on to praise his own abilities as an amateur healer, since "I have never failed in administering comfort where the patient has thrown himself unreservedly on me, and the reason is that I never prescribed anything that would injure the patient." Smith again lauded his own record of healing and "spoke of Lobelia when the patient was too weak to bear it—as being destructive & said calomel would corrode the stomach when it was empty—said it was a poison—still said it was a med. and useful if used skillfully." At another time, he noted that "doctors in this region don't know much. . . . Doctors won't tell you where to go to get well. Calomel doctors will give you Calomel to cure a sliver in the big toe . . . and calomel on an empty stomach will kill the patient, and the Lobelia doctors will do the same. . . . If you feel any inconvenience take some mild physic 2 or 3 times and then some good bitters." Furthermore, Levi Richards records in his journal the Prophet's criticism of a Dr. Brinks, a botanical physician. In addition, the Word of Wisdom's admonition to use herbs "in season" also suggests antago-

63Ibid., 80.
64*History of the Church*, 7:366.
66Ibid., 193.
67Ibid., 249.
nism to organized herbalists such as Thomsonians and Shakers who, for a fee, taught the preparation of or provided dried preserved herbal medications.⁶⁸

This antagonism toward organized medicine continued after Joseph Smith's death. Linda Wilcox has described Brigham Young's criticism of professional medical practitioners, many of which echo the views of Joseph Smith and likely derive from their association.⁶⁹ From his negative comments, Brigham Young's concept of ideal medical care emerges: not paid, not full time, not using harmful remedies, and a preference for women practitioners. Young also noted: "I would rather have a wife of mine that knows what medicine to give me when I am sick, than all the professional doctors in the world."⁷⁰

In summary, verse 10 supports the use of herbs for food (use) and medicine (constitution) but does not endorse organized medicine—either heroic and botanical. Just as the Lord has prepared grain for food, he has given herbs for medicine. Church members should have knowledge in the preparation and use of both. Such views were typical of the times. For example, Jonas Rishel stated that: "The all-wise creator, has made ample provision for the support and comfort of man. He has provided food as the proper remedy for hunger . . . and medicine for sickness and pain. Using these gifts according to the intention of the giver, they will prove blessings."⁷¹ John C. Gunn noted "that there are herbs to cure all diseases provided by our Heavenly Father, if we would but seek them out and test their virtues."⁷²

Verses 12-17 of the Word of Wisdom relate to diet and endorse grains and vegetables as the major staple. Meat should be limited but is not forbidden. This limitation has been suggested by previous authors as originating from orthodox medical opin-

⁷¹Rishel, The Indian Physician, 60.
⁷²Gunn, Gunn's New Domestic Physician, 387.
ion of the time, a reaction to the health reform movements of the 1830s, or good health advice supported by modern science. It is true that during the 1830s, health crusaders like Sylvester Graham campaigned against “stimulating” foods, among which he included meat. Such movements reached Ohio. Some medical specialists of the time also recommended limiting meat in the diet although it is difficult to show that such opinions were known among the Saints and even more difficult to show that they were observed.\(^73\)

It is more likely that Part 3 reemphasizes respect for the animal creation revealed already in Doctrine and Covenants 49:18-21 and in Church periodicals. For example, an editorial in the *Evening and Morning Star* stated: “Trees, herbs, flowers, and grain, were made for the use and benefit of man: and that, too, that he might not waste flesh.” A separate editorial pointed out that no meat was eaten before the Fall:

> There is something beyond expression, cheers the heart of the saint, while contemplating such a happy day to come (i.e., the Millennium), when every thing will be turned to its proper use; the Spirit of God upon all flesh, will cause all to fill the place of its creation, as in the day when all was named by Adam in the garden of Eden. . . . When these days come, every thing will be in its place. The beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, instead of feeding upon flesh, will feed upon the herb and the grain, as was given them in the beginning. Then man will not shed the blood of his fellow man, nor beast the

\(^{73}\)Lester E. Bush, “The Word of Wisdom in Early Nineteenth-Century Perspective,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14 (Fall 1981): 47. For a discussion of the history of nineteenth-century vegetarianism, see Nissenbaum, *Sex, Diet, and Debility in Jacksonian America*, 39-52. It is my personal hypothesis that some strong millennialists may have suggested that the Missouri Saints refrain from eating meat, anticipating the condition that would exist in the millennium, which they expected shortly. Grains would have been considered the natural replacement food for carnivores. It is also my personal belief that the injunction to use “all wholesome herbs” may have been countering some internal competition among Saints who suggested that their favorite herbal regimens were more efficacious or superior in the Lord’s sight than their neighbor’s remedies. I stress that these hypotheses are conjectural; I have found no evidence to support them, but also none to contradict them.
blood of its fellow beast, nor fowl the blood of its fellow fowl; but the Spirit of the Lord will be poured out upon all flesh.⁷⁴

During the later nineteenth century, especially during the presidential administrations of Wilford Woodruff and Lorenzo Snow, the rights of animals were the most emphasized aspect of the Word of Wisdom.⁷⁵

Although the meat-eating prohibition probably did not originally relate to health, verse 17 implies that eating the correct grains was important to health maintenance while the incorrect ones might cause disease. Thus, for example, Wilford Woodruff blamed a mare's sickness on the fact that she had been fed oats with "considerable wheat in it."⁷⁶

**POSTSCRIPT (vv. 18-20)**

And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. Amen.

Verses 18-20 constitute a postscript containing promises of physical and intellectual vigor and long life to the Saints who live by the recommendations of the Word of Wisdom while "walking in obedience to the commandments."

The use of the first person and specifically "I, the Lord" (v. 21) are found only vv. 12-13. This unique feature suggests that vv. 12-13 (Part 3) and 18-21 (postscript) may have been part of a

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⁷⁴Evening and Morning Star 2, no. 3 (June 1833): 6; ibid., 2, no. 13, p. 5.


previously existing source or may represent an expansion of the core of Part 3.

**CONCLUSION**

In summary, the Word of Wisdom is complex and possibly not a literary unity. The three main parts were not necessarily received at the same time, may not have been addressed to the same group, or probably were not responding to the same issues. The three parts also appear to arise out of three separate contexts: temporal threats to the Church, medicinal concerns, and millennialism. Comparing the revelations in the Book of Commandments (1833) and the Doctrine and Covenants (1835) easily establishes the fact that the Prophet Joseph Smith expanded some revelations after they were originally received (e.g., D&C 7, 27). Furthermore, other sections of the Doctrine and Covenants appear to be compilations of two or more individual revelations. That the process may also have produced the Word of Wisdom is suggested by the comments of John Taylor who, responding to objections when Brigham Young designated the Word of Wisdom as a binding commandment, noted: “Some ask what right had Prest. Young to do this? Just as much right as Joseph had to give a portion of a revelation at our time and then add to it afterwards.”

While Parts 1, 2, and 3 of the Word of Wisdom seem originally to have addressed separate issues, their combination generates new conclusions. The placement of Part 2 after Part 1 suggests that tobacco and hot drinks, which could also be obtained from non-members, should be avoided because of the possibility of poisoning by conspiring men, a suggestion which has continued to our own

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77Note that “Amen” and “Even so, Amen” end many of the revelations. Some sections of the current LDS Doctrine and Covenants have these endings in the middle as well as at the end of the revelation, suggesting that two or more original revelations have been combined. Often the next verse begins with: “And again.” Examples include Sections 30, 72, 75, 96, and 124. Other sections, such as 88, are also composite (see heading of section).

78Minutes of the School of the Prophets, Salt Lake Stake, 11 October 1883: 24-5, quoted in Woodford, *The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants*, 1175.

century. If Part 2 originally prohibited the use of strong drink, tobacco, and hot drinks as therapies, then the mention of domestic herbal remedies which begins Part 3 would logically follow. If vv. 18-21 were originally directed only to the Saints in Missouri, then combining the three parts would extend the great blessings which conclude Part 3 to the entire Word of Wisdom, and the consumption of strong drink, tobacco, and hot drinks would constitute rebellion against the Lord’s creation. In short, the combination became greater than its parts.

We walked about the streets some, afterward, and glanced in at shops and stores; and there was fascination in surreptitiously staring at every creature we took to be a Mormon. This was fairy-land to us, to all intents and purposes—a land of enchantment, and goblins, and awful mystery. We felt a curiosity to ask every child how many mothers it had, and if it could tell them apart; and we experienced a thrill every time a dwelling-house door opened and shut as we passed, disclosing a glimpse of human heads and backs and shoulders—for we so longed to have a good satisfying look at a Mormon family in all its comprehensive ampleness.¹

This quotation from Mark Twain’s satiric spoof, Roughing It, typifies the fascination of nineteenth-century Americans and Europeans with Utah’s isolated Mormons and their unique beliefs. The overwhelmingly negative image of the Mormons reflected in nov-

¹Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens), Roughing It (Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing Company, 1872), 108.
els, periodicals, and newspapers published throughout North America and Europe fueled that curiosity. Anti-Mormon novels played a significant role in molding the unfavorable stereotypes and opinions of most of the general public. The influence was intensified because periodicals and newspapers reprinted portions of novels as though they were fact and filled their columns with unsubstantiated reports of the evils of polygamy. One 1866 British observer noted: "The attack upon Mormondom has been systematized, and is conducted with military skill." This flurry of negative reporting extended beyond the United States and Great Britain to Germany.

This unsavory traffic created its own market for more information on the Mormons, and a relatively large number of travelers ventured to Salt Lake City to observe Mormons first hand. Unexpectedly, their eyewitness accounts, for the most part, paint quite a positive picture of the Mormons. In contrast to the sensational novels, periodicals, and newspapers, travelers' accounts, regardless of the authors' nationality or background, expressed astonishment at the Saints' industry and accomplishments, recorded favorable impressions of Brigham Young and other Mormons, attempted impartial and balanced observations, and often contrasted their views with the popular negative Mormon images. Though these authors certainly had personal biases and prejudices, only their discussions of polygamy come close to matching the disapprobation of the popular press—and even here, many travelers tempered their condemnations with positive information on the Saints' otherwise exemplary morality. However, these first-hand reports were relatively ineffectual in changing the public's overall negative image of Mormons.

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3Charles Wentworth Dilke, *Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in English-Speaking Countries During 1866 and 1867* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1869), 117.


Most studies of the Mormon's nineteenth-century public image have drawn their data from novels, periodicals, and newspapers of the period, while the more sympathetic descriptions in the travel narratives have received relatively little attention. These accounts merit more attention for three reasons: their writers are, for the most part, well-educated and sophisticated travelers in search of knowledge, not just sensation; they report a more balanced picture of the Saints in their Zion that stands in conscious contrast to the flamboyant popular press; and they collectively provide detailed information on Mormon daily life that all historians of nineteenth-century Mormonism in the West should consider.

This paper examines eighteen selected travel narratives written in or translated into English that detail a visit to Salt Lake City between 1849 and 1867 and that were printed between 1851 and 1872. I have excluded books which announce themselves as exposés and also excluded authors, whether Mormon and Gentile, who were long-term residents in Salt Lake City. I have also excluded books that were not written as travelogues, such as John W. Gunnison's famous Mormon historical and doctrinal record. Though travel accounts were written throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, I limit this study only to journeys made prior to the railroad's completion in 1869, when the Salt Lake Valley remained relatively isolated and

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when visitors were often required to make a serious investment of
time and experience a certain amount of discomfort in reaching
their destination. Most of these authors would have agreed with
William Chandless, an 1855 traveler, that Utah was, “if not one of
the most interesting, at least one of the most out-of-the-way places
in the world.”

To encourage sales and a wide readership, travel books often
emphasize the unusual at the expense of the commonplace, sensa-
tionalize descriptions, and base generalizations on relatively few
incidents. These travel books are no different. Although the writers
had their own areas of special interest, this study focuses on seven
themes with which all eighteen dealt: Salt Lake City and its environs;
the Mormons; Brigham Young; sermons in the Tabernacle and
Bowery, the theater, dances, and other major attractions; polygamy;
and the “Mormon question”—meaning, what political steps should
be taken to regulate and control Mormonism.

THE EIGHTEEN TRAVEL NARRATIVES

The Mormons and their capital in the 1850s and 1860s are
perhaps unique in the annals of the settlement of the West in
fostering such an extensive array of eyewitness, contemporary ac-
counts. Writers include adventurers, naturalists, government of-
ficials, Army officers, famous authors, humanitarians, artists, and
newspaper correspondents and editors from England, France,
and the United States. Because travel required time and money,
many were wealthy, well-educated, and sophisticated; they wrote
for the same kind of audience. Overall, they were not ordinary
tourists.

The narratives fall naturally into two groups: seven date be-
tween 1849 and 1855, prior to the Utah War. The final eleven visited
the city after the Utah War of 1857.

The first two travelers through the city were not curiosity
seekers but gold-seekers—forty-niners on their way to California.
William Kelly, an Irishman, lingered in the young city for a weekend

8William Chandless, A Visit to Salt Lake: Being a Journey Across the Plains and a
Residence in the Mormon Settlements at Utah (London: Smith, Elder and Company,
1857), 133.
in 1849, just long enough to attend a party, visit some Mormon homes, soak in the warm springs, and observe a Sunday service. Three years later, he published *Across the Rocky Mountains, from New York to California: With a Visit to the Celebrated Mormon Colony, at the Great Salt Lake*, (London: Simms and M'Intyre, 1852). The second forty-niner, Franklin Langworthy, was an Universalist preacher who stayed from 11 July to 29 August 1850, and recorded his observations in *Scenery of the Plains, Mountains and Mines: or a Diary Kept Upon the Overland Route to California, by the Way of the Great Salt Lake: Travels in the Cities, Mines, and Agricultural Districts—Embracing the Return by the Pacific Ocean and Central America, in the Years 1850, '51, '52, and '53* (Ogdensburgh: J. C. Sprague, Bookseller, 1855). For both, the Utah phase of their book was only part of their adventures and descriptions of “many of the wildest and most picturesque scenes to be found upon our globe.”

The third writer, Captain Howard Stansbury of the Corps of Topographical Engineers, was assigned to explore and map the Salt Lake Valley and region by the War Department. He and his party lived among the Mormons from August 1850 to August 1851; and his *Exploration and Survey of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake of Utah, Including A Reconnaissance of a New Route Through the Rocky Mountains* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Company, 1852) mingles impressions of the Mormons with his scientific observations of the region.

Fourth, a Mrs. Ferris accompanied her husband, Benjamin G. Ferris, secretary of Utah territory in 1852-53. She “could not well avoid some intercourse with the female society” and profited from the occasion to publish a series of letters that were collected as *The Mormons at Home; with Some Incidents of Travel from Missouri to California 1852-53* (New York: Dix & Edwards, 1856).

Solomon Numes Carvalho, a Jewish artist and daguerreotypist, accompanied John C. Frémont’s fifth western exploration expedition through the Rocky Mountains during the winter of 1853-54. In *Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West; With Col. Frémont’s Last Expedition Across the Rocky Mountains: Including Three Months’ Residence in Utah, and a Perilous Trip Across the Great American Desert*,

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to the Pacific (1856; reprinted New York: Derby and Jackson, 1858), he describes how he arrived in Salt Lake City on 1 March 1854 after living on horse soup, leaving a member of the party to die on the trail, and nearly dying himself during the winter crossing from Colorado through Utah to Parowan. He recuperated in Salt Lake City until 6 May 1854, absorbing considerable local color and customs.

William Chandless, a British traveler, member of Parliament, and explorer, crossed the plains as a “teamster for pay,” reaching Salt Lake City on 7 November 1855. He stayed in the city for the remainder of the year and left on 1 January for California. During his stay, he did not reveal his upper-class status, which enabled him to live among and study the average Mormon family. He was the first British visitor to write his observations of the Mormons in their Utah Zion in A Visit to Salt Lake: Being a Journey Across the Plains and a Residence in the Mormon Settlements at Utah (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1857).

The seventh narrative was written primarily by Jules Rémy, a French naturalist, from information gathered with his British companion, Julius Brenchley, as part of their adventures throughout the world. In addition to producing one of the first travel narratives about the Mormons originally published in a non-English language, Rémy and his companion were also somewhat unusual in approaching Utah from the West, traveling from San Francisco to Salt Lake City. They arrived on 25 September 1855 and stayed a full month, observing, as they put it, “a religion at the very moment of its birth.” Their book was first published in France in 1860, then was translated into English and published the next year as A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake City (London: W. Jeffs, 1861).

Utah’s increased accessibility, thanks to the development of regular stage service by at least 1859 and the completion of the telegraph line in 1861, made visits to Utah more appealing especially to American newspaper correspondents and editors. Six of the remaining eight American travelers discussed in this paper were associated with newspapers. Another visitor during the 1860s was an American businessman, and the final American considered was an Army officer stationed at Camp Douglas. Five of the eight used their series of letters to newspapers as the basis for their travelogues. They were primarily motivated by economic opportunity, wrote with
great optimism of the future possibilities for the West, especially following the Civil War, and felt they were facilitating the region's tremendous growth by providing "reliable information of the people, resources, progress, and destiny of the Rocky Mountain Territories." They noted that "very great and rapid changes in most of the region lying directly between Missouri and California are inevitable" and considered "those great, pressing public themes of the Pacific Railroad, the Mormons, and the Mines" in their accounts.

The first of these newspapermen was Horace Greeley, the famous editor of the New York Tribune who made the trip West in 1859 and published his narrative as An Overland Journey, From New York to San Francisco, in the Summer of 1859 (New York: C. M. Saxon, Baker, and Company, 1860). He visited with the Mormons for about ten days in July. The remaining American travelers of the 1860s followed the model set in Greeley's book.

Samuel Clemens or Mark Twain, the famous author, passed through Salt Lake City for two days in 1861 on his way by stage to Carson City, Nevada, from St. Joseph, Missouri, with his brother, the Secretary of Nevada. The travel narratives had become so standardized and uniform by the end of the 1860s that he had ready-made material to satirize them and the Mormons in his own famous description of his trip west, Roughing It (Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing Company, 1872).

The next correspondent was the young writer, Fitz Hugh Ludlow, who stopped in Salt Lake City in July 1863 on his way to San Francisco with painter Albert Bierstadt. He first published his impressions of the Mormons as "Among the Mormons" in the April 1864 issue of Atlantic Monthly, later expanding it into The Heart of the Continent: A Record of Travel Across the Plains and in Oregon, with an Examination of the Mormon Principle (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1870).

Two newspapermen who journeyed as part of Speaker of the House of Representatives Schuyler Colfax's fact-finding party following the end of the Civil War in May and June of 1865 produced travel

10 McClure, Three Thousand Miles, 3.
12 Bowles, Across the Continent, v.
narratives. One, Samuel Bowles, editor of the Springfield *Daily Republican*, wrote *Across the Continent: A Summer's Journey to the Rocky Mountains, the Mormons, and the Pacific States, with Speaker Colfax* (Springfield, Mass.: Samuel Bowles and Company, 1865). The other, Albert D. Richardson, chief Civil War correspondent for the New York *Tribune*, included his description of the trip in *Beyond the Mississippi: From the Great River to the Great Ocean, Life and Adventure on the Prairies, Mountains, and Pacific Coast, New Edition Written Down to Summer of 1869* (Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing Company, 1869). They spent eight days in June in the Mormon capital before heading to California, Oregon, Victoria, and Yosemite. The final American correspondent was A. K. McClure, who combined his letters to the New York *Tribune* and *Franklin Repository* into *Three Thousand Miles Through the Rocky Mountains* (New York: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1869). He arrived in Salt Lake City on 12 June 1867 and left on 19 June on his way to the Montana gold fields.

In addition to the newspapermen, Demas Barnes, president of several mining companies, spent one day in the Mormon capital in July 1865 on his mine inspection tour in Colorado, Nevada, and California. He published his series of letters as *From the Atlantic to the Pacific Overland* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1866). The final American visitor considered is William E. Waters, an Army officer who arrived at Fort Douglas in 1867. Because of the "extraordinary opportunities of familiarizing myself with the practices and inner life of that strange people," a friend, the editor of the New Orleans *Advocate*, requested Waters to write letters detailing his experiences and views which he later published as *Life Among the Mormons, and a March to Their Zion* (New York: Moorhead, Simpson and Bond, 1868).

The three British visitors to Salt Lake City in the 1860s wrote polished and sociologically interesting travel accounts, their motives for undertaking the journey and the focus of their attention providing interesting variations from that of the Americans. Richard Burton made the long excursion to the North American continent for the sole purpose of observing and writing about the Saints in their Mecca and of adding them to a growing list of exotic peoples

\[13\] Waters, *Life Among the Mormons*, vi.
visited and described. His *The City of the Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861) was one of the best accounts of the Mormons written during the nineteenth century, and its enduring popularity is apparent by the fact that Knopf issued it in a new edition in 1963 with an introduction by Fawn M. Brodie. William Hepworth Dixon, editor of *The Athenaeum* in London, included the Mormons with the Shakers, the Spiritualists, and the Oneida Perfectionists in his *New America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1867), concluding, “It is only after seeing what kind of forces are at work within them, that we can adequately admire the strength of these societies and churches.” Dixon’s companion after Omaha, Charles Wentworth Dilke, son of the *Athenaeum*’s owner, passed through the Mormon capital on a grand tour of English-speaking lands throughout the world. He wrote *Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in English-Speaking Countries During 1866 and 1867* (London, 1869; reprinted, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1869), using the “conception, however imperfect, of the grandeur of our race, already girdling the earth, which is destined, perhaps, eventually to overspread.”

For the most part, these travelers of the 1850s and 1860s, though certainly not free of bias, presented their motives as an objective search for knowledge and their methods as broad-ranging and intensive, whether their stay was a few days or whether it lasted months. Jules Rémy and Julius Brenchley, finding the information procured from the Gentiles “absolutely false,” endeavored to enlighten themselves by “inviting to our residence every evening, a number of Saints, selected equally from the enlightened and from the most simple.” William Chandless lived in a polygamous household, thereby receiving an opportunity for close observation. Solomon Carvalho “received a good deal of marked attention from his excellency, Governor Young; he often called for me to take a drive in his carriage, and invited me to come and live with him.” Several approached their topic in a scientific spirit, visiting the Mormons in

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14Dilke, *Greater Britain*, ix.


16Carvalho, *Incidents of Travel*, 146.
their homes, asking direct questions of the leaders and lay membership, attending parties, dances, the theater, and Sunday services, and making other observations “with a view to enlighten the public who may feel any interest in the matter.”

All were aware of the public’s stereotypes and prejudices about the Mormons and the tremendous interest their religion and settlement in the isolated West had created. Most of them positioned themselves as conscious, purposeful, and intelligent factfinders, disassociating themselves from the almost prurient scandal clad in moralizing that characterized the popular press. Rémy’s announced stance was that “the works published on Mormonism and the Mormons are so overloaded with inaccuracies, or rather with misrepresentations, that I thought it a good subject to treat.” Chandless observed: “Probably few people have been more abused than the Mormons. Feelings and prejudices against them are very natural and very strong. By natural prejudices, I mean opinions that appear very natural deductions from admitted facts, but which when you come to actual observation, are found to be untrue, and are therefore prejudices.”

Burton noted that “‘Mormon’ had in fact become a word for fear” and that he traveled to Deseret to see if they “might turn out somewhat less black than they were painted.” With barely concealed contempt, Dilke even classified the three myths about Mormons: “that the Mormon women are wretched, and would fain get away, but are checked by the Danites; that the Mormons are ready to fight with the Federal troops with the hope of success; that robbery of the people by the Apostles and Elders is at the bottom of Mormonism.” Setting the record straight was a strong motivation for the majority of these travelers.

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17Waters, *Life Among the Mormons*, 194. Among those who tried to take a somewhat scientific approach are Rémy and Brenchley, Burton, Dixon, and Dilke.
18Rémy and Brenchley, *A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake City*, iii.
19Chandless, *A Visit to Salt Lake*, 190.
21Dilke, *Greater Britain*, 125. Two of these travelers, however, merely repeated the stereotypes: Mrs. Ferris, who spent six miserable months in the “prison-house of mountains,” nervously wrote: “We are unquestionably in the midst of a society of fanatics, who are controlled by a gang of licentious villains, and will require all our
SALT LAKE CITY AND ENVIRONS

Most travelers as they entered the Salt Lake Valley were amazed at the beauty and progressiveness of the city. Like Stansbury in 1850, most agreed that the city gave an “appearance of prosperity, peaceful harmony, and cheerful contentment that pervaded the whole community.” Rémy in 1855 was “struck with the cleanliness which everywhere prevailed, and the comfort exhibited in the external appearance and good preservation of their dwellings.” Dixon remarked in 1866:

No beggar is seen in the streets; scarcely ever a tipsy man; and the drunken fellow, when you see one, is always either a minor [sic] or a soldier—of course a Gentile. No one seems poor. The people are quiet and civil, far more so than is usual in these western parts. From the presence of trees, of water, and of cattle, the streets have a pastoral character, seen in no other city of mountains and the plains.

Even the forty-niners noted the rapidity of city building. William Kelly, en route to California in 1849, praised the achievement: “It certainly speaks volumes for their energy and industry to see the quantity of land they have fenced in, and the breadth under cultivation, considering the very short time since they have founded the settlement in 1847.” Stansbury in 1850 felt that “the founding, within the space of three years, of a large and flourishing

circumspection to get along smoothly.” She avoided making friends; the few Mormons she came to know personally she liked but considered them exceptions. Her landlady was “a veritable Yankee housekeeper, active and managing—her table is exquisitely neat, and provided with the best,” but almost everyone else were cutthroats and spies. Ferris, The Mormons at Home, 94, 102-3, 113. Forty-niner Langworthy, after a stay of six weeks, accused the Mormons of “imposing and collecting taxes from travelers, . . . stripping them of their property, . . . breaking open letters,” holding courts that were “a cruel mockery of justice,” murdering travelers, and “trampling all justice and liberty under their feet.” Langworthy, Scenery of the Plains, 95-96.

22 Stansbury, Exploration and Survey of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake of Utah, 130.
23 Rémy and Brenchley, A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake City, 196.
24 Dixon, New America, 139-40.
25 Kelly, Across the Rocky Mountains, 161.
community, . . . presents an anomaly so peculiar, that it deserves more than a passing notice.”

Dilke, who had visited English-speaking countries throughout the world, was generous in his praise: the Mormons had built “in the most frightful desert on earth, . . . an agricultural community which California herself can not match.”

In 1855 Rémy recorded his pleasure with the “gardens and orchards” flanking the street they followed into the city. “The trees, especially the peach, were laden with fruit.”

Greeley, during the summer of 1859, praised the city’s layout:

The houses—generally small and of one story—are all built of adobe (sun-hardened brick), and have a neat and quiet look; while the uniform breadth of the streets (eight rods) and the “magnificent distances” usually preserved by the buildings (each block containing ten acres, divided into eight lots, giving a quarter acre for buildings and an acre for garden, fruit, etc., to each householder), make up an ensemble seldom equaled. Then the rills of bright, sparkling, leaping water which, diverted from the streams issuing from several adjacent mountain canons, flow through each street and are conducted at will into every garden.

Burton, during his visit in 1860, was also delighted upon entering the city with “the number of gardens and compounds, . . . the dark clumps and lines of bitter cottonwood, locust or acacia, poplars and fruit trees, apples, peaches, and vines—how lovely they appeared, after the baldness of the prairies!”

Burton compared Salt Lake City to other exotic locales: the fields of corn and “sweet sor-

26Stansbury, Exploration and Survey of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake of Utah, 123.

27Dilke, Greater Britain, 125.

28Rémy and Brenchley, A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake City, 190.


30Burton, The City of the Saints, 218. For other positive first impressions of Salt Lake City, see Greeley, An Overland Journey, 206; Ludlow, The Heart of the Continent, 322; and Barnes, From the Atlantic, 54. A negative view, probably owing something to the earliness of the trip, is Kelly, Across the Rocky Mountains, 159: “Instead of a charming valley, beautifully diversified with wood and water, there was a bald, level plain, . . . without bush or bramble to cast a shade from the scorching rays of a flaming sun.”
ghum strengthened the similarity to an Asiatic rather than to an American settlement.” Similarly, Richardson’s picture of the 1865 city stressed its strangeness: “Before us was the city, with its flashing streams, its low, adobe houses with trellised verandahs; its green garden, and shade-trees of locust, aspen, poplar, maple, walnut, elder and cottonwood; its bustling marts of trade, and cloistered retreats for the offices of a strange religion.” Businessman Demas Barnes, also an 1865 traveler, described “houses half hid amid dark green foliage, with curling smoke arising therefrom—not a spire to remind us of an American city.” The picture was “soft, mellow, peculiar, and beautiful.”

**THE MORMONS**

Most visitors to the City of the Saints described the Mormons with glowing adjectives: industrious, frugal, peaceable, orderly, moral, fair dealing, and hospitable. Rémy found a graceful metaphor in the territorial symbol: “The whole of this small nation occupy themselves as usefully as the working bees of a hive, perfectly justifying the emblem erected by the President of the Church on the summit of his mansion.” Dilke termed Mormonism “the religious and social system of the most successful of all pioneers of English civilization.”

They purposefully challenged many of the negative stereotypes of Mormons. Rémy declared “that the Mormons are not wicked nor immoral, as they have often been represented to our too credulous minds. . . . They are industrious, honest, sober, pious, and it is just to say, since we believe it to be the case, even chaste in their polygamic relations.” Burton noted that while Mormons are held “to be an intolerant race,” he “found the reverse far nearer the fact.” Greeley asked rhetorically: “Do I regard the great body of

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32 Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi*, 347.
33 Barnes, *From the Atlantic*, 54.
these Mormons as knaves and hypocrites?” He answered resound-
ingly, “Assuredly not.” He singled out for scorn “the current Gentile
presumption, that Mormons are an organized banditti—a horde of
robbers and assassins.”

Réméy backed up a similar conclusion with personal statistics:
In Salt Lake City he was robbed only twice, by Gentiles both times.
Burton remarked that no murders occurred in Salt Lake City during
his three-week stay, while Carson City had three during the three
days he was there. Dixon in 1866 observed “no loose women, no
pickpockets, no ragged boys and girls, no drunken and blaspheming
men.” During ten weeks’ residence Carvalho “never heard any
obscene or improper language; never saw a man drunk; never had
my attention called to the exhibition of vice of any sort. There are
no gambling houses, grog shops, or buildings of ill fame.” Even A.
K. McClure, a not overfriendly reporter, exclaimed, “Here are one
hundred thousand people, the most industrious, as a class, on the
face of the earth,—sober, neighborly, of good repute as a rule, and
most of them sincerely and devoutly pious in their way.”

Most visitors were curious about the type of women who would
accept and live in polygamous relationships and, tellingly, much less
curious about Mormon men. Nearly all narratives brought up the
topic, though most had limited opportunities to make more than
superficial observations. Many considered only the women’s physi-
cal appearance, with Kelly gallantly praising “the softer tints of
female loveliness” that proved Mormons “have very correct notions
of angelic perfectibility” and Richardson appraising “nearly all” as
“plain—many extremely so,” though “very few . . . impress one as
vicious.” Réméy “emphatically” declared the women “pious, mod-
est, chaste, faithful, devoted, sincere, laborious, honest, honorable
in all respects.” The paranoid Mrs. Ferris described one of the few
Mormon women she met socially as “one of those good-natured,

38Greeley, An Overland Journey, 223.
39Réméy and Brenchley, A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake-City, 214; Burton, City of
the Saints, 248; Dixon, New America, 143; Carvalho, Incidents of Travel, 143. McClure,
Three Thousand Miles, 167-68.
40Kelly, Across the Rocky Mountains, 159; Richardson, Beyond the Mississippi,
357.
41Réméy and Brenchley, A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake City, 158.
stupid fools, that would gulp down the most preposterous proposition. . . . I am quite ready to conclude that a large portion of female Mormonism is made up of similar materials.”

MEETING BRIGHAM YOUNG

A third topic that nearly every writer included was impressions of Brigham Young. He willingly accommodated requests for interviews whenever possible; and after spending a couple of hours discussing Utah’s economy, the Indians, stock, agriculture, and general political issues, most writers left with impressions that were in marked contrast to the image in the popular press of a “hypocrite, swindler, forger, murderer.”

Most visitors thought him courteous, unpretentious, warm, kindly, frank, and intelligent, though some commented on his imperfect grammar. Rémy concluded: “It is impossible to leave Brigham without bringing away a permanent impression of mingled respect and affection, so true is it that conviction united with kindness does tend to captivate the heart.” Greeley stressed Young’s lack of pretention: “He was very plainly dressed in thin summer clothing, and with no air of sanctimony or fanaticism. . . . His associates are plain men, evidently born and reared to a life of labor, and looking as little like crafty hypocrites or swindlers as any body of men I ever met.” Ludlow stressed that “outside of the arena of his fanaticism, [Young] is not surpassed in honesty of purpose, clear-headedness, purity of motive, and justice of feeling, by any man I ever met.” Dixon reported at the conclusion of his sojourn that “among the Mormon presidents and apostles, we have not seen one face on which liar and hypocrite were written.” Burton echoed many observers’ impressions that “the Prophet is no common man, and that he has none of the weakness and vanity which characterize the common uncommon man.”

McClure spoke for a minority of visitors when he concluded:

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42 Ferris, The Mormons at Home, 119.
43 Burton, The City of the Saints, 264. Burton did not share these views.
44 Rémy and Brenchley, A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake City, 304; Greeley, An Overland Journey, 216; Ludlow, The Heart of the Continent, 320; Dixon, New America, 208; Burton, The City of the Saints, 271.
"I would put him down, after meeting him in his office and hearing him in the pulpit, as a finished impostor, singularly able, versatile, and unscrupulous." Another critical visitor, Waters, "was rather disappointed in the man. I think he is without the strength of intellect which is generally attributed to him by both Mormon and Gentile."\(^45\) When Speaker of the House Schuyler Colfax visited Young in 1865, he boldly suggested that "the prophets of the church would have a new revelation on [polygamy], that would put a stop to the practice." Young responded that "he should readily welcome such a revelation; that polygamy was not in the original book of Mormons: that it was not an essential practice in the church, but only a privilege and a duty, under special command of God." He also defended the practice and "the discussion thus opened, grew general and sharp, though ever good-natured."\(^46\)

**VISITING LOCAL ATTRACTIONS**

As a result of the tremendous amount of sensational and negative press, traveling writers reached Salt Lake City looking for evidence of mystery and intrigue. They found very little and, with the exception of the neat and thriving city itself, there were relatively few natural features to draw their attention. They had seen the mountains during their transcontinental passage and described with fascination their first encounter with Mormons, often in one of the rural settlements prior to entering the city. They made the trip out to the Great Salt Lake, the major natural feature, and many examined the salty water. They soaked in the mineral warm springs just north of the city, viewed the major buildings including the temple foundations, and interviewed Saints and Gentiles in search of information. Overwhelmingly, however, the Mormons themselves were the chief attraction, and Mormon society was largely closed to them except for a Sunday service, the theater, or a ball.

Many visitors devoted considerable space to describing a Sunday religious meeting, which would have been of great interest to their readers. These descriptions, for the most part, lack any evidence of strange cultic practices or deluded fanaticism. In


\(^{46}\) Bowles, *Across the Continent*, 111-12.
1849 Kelly attended a service in the large open space adjacent to the temple foundations. The townspeople sat in front on stools and chairs while "those from the country" stationed themselves on chairs in their light wagons in the back. After the first few years, most observers attended the services in the old tabernacle (the current egg-domed tabernacle was in use in 1867) during cold or cool weather and in the Bowery during the warm summer months. Both the bowery and tabernacle contained rough pine seats for the congregation, a stand with a row of seats for the apostles and principal men, and an orchestra pit in the Bowery containing, Burton recorded, "a violin, a bass, two women and four men performers, who sang the sweet songs of Zion tolerably well."48

When Mrs. Ferris ventured to attend, she complained that "it seemed like anything else than a religious meeting."49 Most of the others disagreed, describing a conventional sequence of hymns, prayers, and sermons. According to Chandless, "The service commenced with a hymn, followed by prayer; during which all stand up. . . After a second hymn . . . came the discourse."50 These sermons, however, delivered without advance preparation, rambled from topic to topic and were deliberately informal and plain, rather than striving for eloquence. Most travelers were not impressed. Greeley in 1859 appraised the music as "rather better than you will hear in an average worshipping assemblage in the states; the prayers pertinent and full of unction; the sermons adapted to tastes or needs different from mine. They seemed to me rambling, dogmatic, and ill-digested."51

Carvalho in 1854 and Ludlow in 1863 had the opportunity to attend a major ball and left their impression in detail. The ball that Carvalho attended was by invitation only: 200 women and 100 men. Young permitted Carvalho to open the ball with one of his wives, and the artist recorded: "A larger collection of fairer and more

47Kelly, Across the Rocky Mountains, 162.
49Ferris, The Mormons at Home, 149.
50Chandless, A Visit to Salt Lake, 206.
beautiful women I never saw in one room. All of them were dressed
in white muslin; some with pink, and others with blue sashes. . . . A
most unusual sight [was] to see a man dancing in a cotillion with
three wives, balancing first to one, then to the other. »

The Salt Lake Theatre, completed in 1861, impressed several of
the eighteen visiting writers including Dixon, Dilke, Richardson, and
Bowles, who recorded their observations. Bowles and Richardson
both noted that it was the largest building of its kind west of New
York; although actors and actresses were amateurs consisting of
merchants, mechanics, carpenters, wives, and daughters, they were
enthusiastic about the range of costumes and the variety of scenery.
Bowles summarized, “I have rarely seen a theatrical entertainment
more pleasing and satisfactory in all its details and appointments.”
The difficult Mrs. Ferris ventured out once to view a performance in
the earlier Social Hall in 1852 and found the performance “so much
better than we anticipated, that I should have enjoyed it well enough
had it not been for some side acting in the crowd, which must pre-
clude us from going again to the same place.”

In 1866 Dixon astutely noted that Brigham Young, “high-priest
of what claims to be a new dispensation,” had “got his theatre into
perfect order, before he has raised his Temple foundations above
the ground.” He also provided a detailed description of the theater’s
architecture. Probably most of the travelers agreed with Dilke that
attending the theater was “our best opportunity of judging of the
Mormon ladies.”

POLYGAMY

The nineteenth-century media focus on the evils of Mormon

52 Carvalho, Incidents of Travel, 157-58.
53 Bowles, Across the Continent, 103; Richardson, Beyond the Mississippi, 357.
54 Ferris, The Mormons at Home, 149.
55 Dixon, New America, 141-42: “Outside, his theatre is a rough Doric edifice
. . . ; inside, it is light and airy, having no curtains and no boxes, save two in the
proscenium, with light columns to divide the tiers, and having no other decoration
than pure white paint and gold. The pit, rising sharply from the orchestra, so that
every one seated on its benches can see and hear to advantage, is the choicest part
of the house.”
56 Dilke, Greater Britain, 115.
polygamy had mixed effects on the writers. On the one hand, the insatiable thirst for more information assured that a book about Mormonism would probably sell well, but it also obligated them to analyze polygamy. However, visitors to Salt Lake City often could obtain nothing more than superficial information. McClure complained, “I had much anxiety to see polygamy in the household but have failed. Not only are strangers practically denied acquaintance with plural wives, but the subject is never a welcome one in conversation.” In this vacuum of good information, many travelers fell back on gossip and generalized stories, adding generous amounts of their own preconceptions. Still, most accounts were more sympathetic than that portrayed in the popular press.

Most travelers expressed their distaste for polygamy and their conviction that monogamous marriage was a requirement for the continuation and advancement of civilization. Carvalho explained, “If we look to those nations where bigamy, or plurality of women prevail, we see men both physically and constitutionally enervated—effeminacy of character, and little or no desire to cultivate those sciences which it is designed that the human mind should grasp.” Barnes agreed that “a general system of polygamy would retard civilization and work the downfall of any advanced nation.” Dixon took the position that polygamy was unnatural: “Nature has put the human family on the earth in pairs; rejecting by her own large mandate all those monstrous and irregular growths apart from the conjugal relations established by herself between male and female.” Remy remarked that “polygamy is a two-headed sword that wounds him who strikes as well as him it strikes” and recognized that it seemed to be “a contradiction” in the industrious new Mormon society. Some actually realized the contradiction between their commonly held beliefs concerning polygamy and the industrious Mormon society, as noted by Remy: “Polygamy appears to us, therefore, a contradiction in a new society like that of Mormonism.”

Many of the eighteen, including Langworth, Greeley, Remy,

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58 Carvalho, *Incidents of Travel*, 152; Barnes, *From the Atlantic*, 58; Dixon, *New America*, 210; Remy and Brenchley, *A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake City*, 90, 96.
Ludlow, Bowles, Richardson, Dilke, and Dixon, found the practice degrading to women: According to Dilke, "All our modern experience is favorable to ranking women as man’s equal; polygamy assumes that she shall be his servant—loving, faithful, cheerful, willing, but still a servant." Greeley also argued "that the degradation (or, if you please, the restriction) of women to the single office of child-bearing and its accessories, is an inevitable consequence of the system here paramount." Dixon also felt that "Mormonism is not a religion for women. I will not say it degrades her, for the term degradation is open for abuse; but it certainly lowers her, according to our Gentile ideas, in the social scale. In fact, women [are] not in society here at all."59

To reinforce their preconceptions, many visitors included generalized stories of polygamy’s hardships and horrors. Some writers frankly retailed them as hearsay; others interviewed apostates, unhappy wives or Gentiles eager to solidify public opinion against the practice. One common account was that of a sincere English convert who sacrificed all to gather to Zion and marry the missionary who had converted her, only to find herself one of several wives. Another was the beautiful young maiden forced to marry a hideous, older polygamist, often a Church authority or even a relative, but managing to escape to her freedom at the last moment.60 Chandless, one of the few who actually stayed with a polygamous family, described these tales as "the exceptions" and countered: "One must look to the average."61

Already quite familiar with other types of polygamy from his travels in Africa and the Near East, Burton acknowledged that

60Carvalho, Incidents of Travel, 160-74; Rémy and Brenchley, A Journey to Great-Salt Lake City, 164-67. Mark Twain, as part of his satiric humor in Roughing It, describes a beleaguered Brigham Young who cannot remember his wives by name and hence refers to them by number and whose life becomes perfectly miserable when he is set upon by clamoring wives demanding a breast-pin for themselves after he gave one of the wives such a gift. Thus, a single $25 breast-pin ended up costing him $650, and that was not the end, he laments. His wives in other parts of the territory would soon hear about the breast-pin and enter their claims.
61Chandless, A Visit to Salt Lake, 192.
polygamy was an effective way to increase population in an under-populated area. Furthermore, when "servants are rare and costly[, it is cheaper and more comfortable to marry them." This system also benefited the woman: "A division of labour is necessary, and she finds it by acquiring a sisterhood." He further observed the stability of the system: "When a man has four or five wives with reasonable families by each, he is fixed for life; his interests, if not his affections, bind him irrevocably to his New Faith. But the bachelor... is prone to backsliding." Rémy made some effort to provide the Mormon viewpoint. After making a long philosophical argument against polygamy, he reported the careful and logical defense of an unidentified Mormon woman, who summarized her reasons for accepting the practice, then claimed: "Our condition is as happy as it is possible for any human lot to be; mine, for instance, I would not exchange for that of any of your women." Three of the travel writers dealt with the paradox that, despite this repugnant practice, Mormons were moral. Rémy went so far as to say that "Utah is the most moral country in the world." Ludlow added that "the Mormons are by no means a grossly sensual people. ... The Mormon is a polygamist not for indulgence, but from conviction." Stansbury, after a year's residence among the Mormons, acknowledged that plural marriage, "has been supposed to be nothing more nor less than the unbridled license of indiscriminate intercourse between the sexes, either openly practiced by all, or indulged, to the invasion of individual rights, by the spiritual leaders." He then countered: "Nothing can be further from the real state of the case." Carvalho, during his three-month stay, "never observed the slightest indications of improper conduct, or lightness, amongst them—not only by conversation or otherwise. Their young ladies are modest, and unassuming, while their matrons are sedate and stately." Dixon, whose contact with actual polygamists consisted of social contacts during his fifteen-day stay, refused to grant Mormons morality: "Call it, with the Saints, desire of the spirit; call

62 Burton, The City of the Saints, 481, 483.
63 Rémy and Brenchley, A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake City, 107.
64 Ibid., 157; Ludlow, The Heart of the Continent, 563; Stansbury, Exploration and Survey, 4-5; Carvalho, Incidents of Travel, 178.
it, with the Gentiles, desire of the flesh; the fact remain—that a license for making love to many women, for sealing them as wives, for gathering them into secluded harems, has acted in the past, and is acting in the present, as a powerful and seductive bribe.”

Despite their general lack of access to Mormon women’s thoughts and opinions, some of these visitors, including Corvalho, Chandless, Rémy, Greeley, Bowles, Richardson, Dixon, Dilke, and Waters, felt compelled to offer opinions about how the women themselves felt about polygamy. According to Bowles, they “are taught to believe, and many of them really do believe, that through and by it they secure a higher and more glorious reward in the future world.” Rémy wrote, “They learn to sacrifice themselves under the persuasion that they are powerfully contributing to the glory of their husbands.” Richardson, who records having a conversation with three Mormon women, “the women regard it as a sore trial, to be compensated only by the happiness of eternity.” Greeley believed, “There is not a woman in Utah who does not in her heart wish that God had not ordained it, I am confident.” Ludlow, more convincingly, stuck to his observations: he “looked for dejected faces, faces that knew, felt, and showed their owners’ degradation; or hard, defiant faces, glorying boldly in their shame. Nothing of the kind appeared.”

The four lucky visitors who had a chance to be a guest in a polygamist household usually expressed surprise at how well it functioned. Stansbury found that “peace, harmony, and cheerfulness seemed to prevail.” Chandless commented that “by Mormon law every wife must have a separate bed-chamber.” In the four-wife household where he roomed, the four women shared two sitting rooms, but all had access to the whole house and took meals together. Chandless concluded that “neither their characters, nor feelings, nor manner of life, materially differed from those of women elsewhere in the world.” Greeley, who had the opportunity to visit and converse with Mormons in their homes, observed that

65Dixon, New America, 207.

66Bowles, Across the Continent, 114; Rémy and Brenchley, A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake City, 145; Richardson, Beyond the Mississippi, 360; Greeley, An Overland Journey, 241; Ludlow, The Heart of the Continent, 333.
“their manner toward each other was most cordial and sisterly.” Burton directly attacked the negative stereotype of the “Mormon household” as “a hell of envy, hatred, and malice—a den of murder and suicide.” Like reports of “the Moslem harem,” he attributed these views to “prejudice or ignorance.” In contrast, “rival wives do dwell together in amity; and to quote the proverb ‘the more the merrier.’”

Two travelers who saw Mormon home life from afar or as a dinner guest, also found interactions among wives cordial, but deduced that polygamy imposed low social status on Mormon women. Richardson “dined at the house of a leading Saint, whose two wives [were] present at the board, but only as waiters, were dressed precisely alike and really seemed to regard each other as sisters.” Dixon noted, “They are brought into the public room as children are with us; they come in for a moment, curtsy and shake hands; then drop out again, as though they felt themselves in company rather out of place.”

THE MORMON QUESTION

Polygamy and theocracy, two anti-democratic characteristics, formed the bulk of what was referred to in nineteenth-century America and Europe as the “Mormon question.” They were considered intolerable, cancers, barbarisms. They must be dealt with. After the Civil War freed up the moral energy that had been expended on the abolition of slavery, the general public accepted the necessity of crushing polygamy in much the same way. While polygamy provided moral fervor and focus, economic forces were also at work: Utah had undeveloped mineral resources (though these never proved to be as important as Nevada’s or Colorado’s) and the railroad brought Utah into the national marketplace.

Because of the intense interest in the Mormon question, almost all of the eighteen travel writers included a discussion and their personal solutions as a standard component. Samuel Clemens wryly commented on this feature:

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67Stansbury, Exploration and Survey, 136; Chandless, A Visit to Salt Lake, 198, 202; Greeley, An Overland Journey, 240; Burton, The City of the Saints, 482.
68Richardson, Beyond the Mississippi, 362; Dixon, New America, 234.
We left Great Salt Lake City . . . not so very much the wiser, as regards the “Mormon question,” than we were when we arrived, perhaps. We had a deal more “information” than we had before, of course, but we did not know what portion of it was reliable and what was not. . . . All our information had three sides to it, and so I gave up the idea I could settle the “Mormon question” in two days. Still I have seen newspaper correspondents do it in one.69

He may have been thinking of forty-niner Langworthy who, after a single weekend in Salt Lake City, carped: “The Mormon community appears to be so corrupt and diseased a limb of the body politic, as to admit of no cure, except by amputation.”70 Rémy and Greeley took the position that the United States should leave the Mormons alone and grant statehood to Utah. Rémy’s reasons were eminently practical: “Leave the Mormons at peace in their desert, giving them the satisfaction of governing themselves according to their own laws. Society in general would not be injured by it, and, we repeat, either the Mormons would destroy each other, or else they would live happily together.” Furthermore, statehood would “tranquilize the Mormons, extinguish hatred, drive away discord, avoid civil war, and bind them to your great republic.”71 Greeley’s reasons were also decidedly practical: “Let the Mormons have the territory to themselves—it is worth very little to others, but reduce its area. . . . ‘Popular sovereignty’ in a territory backed by a thousand sharp federal bayonets and a battery of flying artillery, is too monstrous a futility, too transparent a swindle, to be much longer upheld or tolerated.”72

Polygamy was the unavoidable problem, and other writers could not accept any solution that allowed its practice in the United States. But the proposals about how to eliminate it varied widely. Bowles rather ingeniously took the position that “Mormonism is not necessarily polygamy. . . . The Nation and its government may oppose it and punish it, without at all interfering with the existence of the Mormon church, or justly being held as interfering with the

69 Twain, Roughing It, 136.
70 Langworthy, Scenery of the Plains, Mountains, 97.
71 Rémy and Brenchley, A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake City, 248, 257.
72 Greeley, An Overland Journey, 229.
religious liberty." Richardson felt that integration into mainstream America would eliminate polygamy: "Brought in contact with our national civilization, the power of Brigham and his associates will cease forever; and the one repulsive and monstrous feature of their domestic life no longer stain a community whose history contains much to challenge respect and admiration." Ludlow felt that Mormonism was a one-man power and prophesied that Brigham Young's death would also end Mormonism. Waters urged missionaries for Utah because "to eradicate the evil the influences of Christianity are required."73

**INFLUENCE ON THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF THE MORMONS**

Though these eyewitness accounts related a largely sympathetic and positive view of many aspects of life in the Mormon capital, they seem to have been upstream swimmers against the powerful and enormous current of negative novels, periodicals, and newspapers exclaiming over the evils of polygamy and Mormonism. A reviewer for *The Athenaeum* summarized the situation in 1857:

"Literature of Mormon Life has succeeded to Literature of the War. Every week turns out its Female Life among the Mormons,—Sayings and Doings at Deseret,—The Mormon Husband,—From St. Louis to Utah,—or other works with a seductive title. Nor need we wonder at this fertility. Public curiosity is more exercised on Mormonism than on most other topics in our day; and, indeed, the facts are strange enough to warrant excess of curiosity."74

It is probably safe to say that general readers in the nineteenth century were more apt to read a newspaper, magazine, or novel than a nonfiction travel narrative. The readers of these eighteen books were probably limited to the more educated class. In sheer numbers, novels far overwhelmed even the most widely read travel books. One of the more popular novels, *Female Life Among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years' Personal Experience, by the Wife of a Mormon*

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Elder, Recently from Utah, sold more than 40,000 copies in the first few weeks when first published in 1855, and was then reprinted numerous times throughout the nineteenth century. In comparison, the most widely printed travelogues—Stansbury's *Expedition to the Great Salt Lake* and Burton's *The City of the Saints*—went through comparatively few printings of relatively small editions. Many of the other narratives were printed in a single edition.

The reading public and the newspapers of the period treated the novels, though fiction, as at least partly true. They often reported with amazement the crimes of Mormonism as detailed in the novels. Many probably felt as a reviewer of *Female Life Among the Mormons*, when he noted that "if one half of the statements made are true, Salt Lake City is no better than a nest of robbers and assassins, whom our government should at once sweep from the face of the earth." In addition to these reviews and the reprinting of extracts of the novels, newspapers and periodicals continued a relentless editorial and news attack on polygamy.

Furthermore, even readers of the travel narratives were not always swayed to accept more sympathetic views of Mormonism. As reviewers' comments show, they thought that the Mormons had misled the gullible travelers. A review of Rémy's and Brenchley's book in *The Athenaeum* complained that "the 'excellent feeling' of the Mormons to Brother Rémy and Brother Brenchley no doubt had its effect in softening their view of the state of society in the New Jerusalem. When the Saints have in view two intelligent travelers as possible converts to their system, what endless instances of excellent feelings might they not be expected to manifest!" A reviewer of Stansbury's account criticized:

His natural kindness of disposition, and a grateful sense of the many kindnesses and courtesies bestowed upon him by this people, when called by duty to a point so remote from the comforts and enjoyments of his own fireside, have doubtless induced Captain

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75Arrington and Haupt, "Intolerable Zion," 253.
76Review of "Female Life Among the Mormons," *Portland Transcript*, 14 July 1855.
Stansbury to view with more toleration their wide departure from the habits and practice of all civilized and Christian people, than in other circumstances he would have permitted himself to do.\textsuperscript{78}

In at least some cases, the authors’ efforts at objectivity actually backfired. A reviewer of Chandless’s \textit{A Visit to Salt Lake} warned:

\begin{quote}
We close this book with a feeling of melancholy. It has impressed us with a conviction that this strange heresy and schism of the nineteenth century has a stronger vitality than we had previously dreamt. The picture which it yields of Deseret Life, if less black than some American female writers have painted it, is far from being altogether lovely. The more we see of the new social heresy the more we feel it as a reproach and an accusation. What are our churches doing while these thousands are wandering from their folds into a worship worse than that of Baal?\textsuperscript{79}
\end{quote}


IN THE MONTHS FOLLOWING the stock market crash of 1929, as the United States entered the most severe economic crisis in its history, Mormons in Salt Lake City staged an impressive festival to mark the centennial of the Church’s organization. The week-long celebration included the illumination of the Salt Lake Temple with floodlights and the presentation of B. H. Roberts’s multi-volume *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. A pageant written especially for the anniversary, “Message for the Ages,” entertained thousands of members and visitors for a month. Though Church leaders recognized the gravity of the nation’s economic situation, they also strongly believed that the celebration was a fitting way to close out the Church’s tumultuous first century and to symbolize its bright future. Turning their backs on the depression, at least for a time, Mormons celebrated in the midst of economic emergency.

This perspective—which saw recreation as both educational

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and as serving social values—also marked the Church’s approach to part of the problems of the Great Depression. Exploring the Church’s ambitious efforts between 1930 and 1940 to provide “wholesome” recreation for its youth, this paper reveals three interesting and little-recognized aspects of the accommodations that Mormonism was making to the American mainstream of the time.

First, LDS leaders1 saw recreation as an effective weapon against negative social forces such as juvenile delinquency and rising social unrest that made socialism and communism appealing. Second, they saw the effectiveness of recreational activities in “holding” youth close to the Church and promoting internal cohesion. Recreational programs rewarded increased attendance at meetings and activities, focused greater attention on the needs of youth, promoted closer adherence to Church teachings, and led to more effective proselyting activities. Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, was the method Mormon leaders employed to meet these dual goals. After almost a century of tension with the larger American society, one in which relations were marked by suspicion and hostility,2 Mormons willingly and openly sought the assistance of national specialists to craft the LDS recreational program, then creatively adapted these principles to meet the needs of the Mormon community.

CONTROLLING LEISURE TIME

The LDS interest in recreation did not simply spring into being

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1For the purposes of this article, I identify as Church leaders and officials both General Authorities connected with the recreational program and individuals on the general board levels of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA), Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association (YLMIA—it became the Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association, or YWMIA, in 1934), and Boy Scouting program.

2R. Laurence Moore, Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 25-47, argues that Mormons used separatist rhetoric during the nineteenth century to create their outsider status as a “deliberate invention.” While this device strengthened the internal bonds of Mormon community, it set off a spiral of increasingly negative interactions with neighbors that explains much of the persecution and hostility that marked Mormon-Gentile relations.
in the 1930s. From Joseph Smith's stick-pulling and wrestling to evening dances held along the Mormon Trail, recreation has always played a conspicuous though informal social role for Mormons. From 1900 to 1930, however, Church-sponsored recreational activities gradually became an institutionalized element of Mormon group life, especially for the youth.\(^3\) During these thirty years, the Church officially affiliated with the Boy Scout program (and temporarily with the Campfire Girls), sponsored the first interstake track meet in Salt Lake, supported the construction of the Deseret Gymnasium, and made several pro-Mormon motion pictures.\(^4\) By the advent of the Great Depression, then, a well-organized Mormon recreation program was an integral component of general Church activity. It thus dovetailed well with the rising emphasis on internal welfare program activities that mobilized both individuals and wards for increased self-sufficiency and greater cooperative efforts.

In the context of the larger economic scene, Utah had been in the throes of economic depression for almost a decade. Slow economic growth, low per capita income, and a steady migration from farm to city had combined to forestall recovery after the post-World War I economic downturn beginning about 1920. When the stock market crash touched off bank closures and economic collapse in 1929, Utah’s Mormons, like residents of other Western agricultural states, were pushed even closer to the brink. Within a year of the stock market crash, only 33.5 percent of the population of Utah was gainfully employed, a lower percentage than any other state except Mississippi. Declining agricultural and mining prices, excessive freight rates, weak labor organizations, a high birth rate, and a severe drought in 1931 exacerbated the downward spiral.\(^5\) Given these


\(^4\) Ibid., esp. chap. 8, “The Church Auxiliary Organizations,” 125-56.

conditions, it seems counterintuitive that recreation would have a high priority, yet such programs flourished.

It is probably true that Church leaders, most of whom had reached a hardscrabble maturity in the late nineteenth century, would have preferred to see members at work. Yet the economy forbade this solution. The depression had created a vast number of unemployed and underemployed Church members—seen as a temporary condition—but remarkable increases in industrial productivity had made “leisure time” a permanent situation. Though not fully subscribing to the aphorism that “idle hands are the devil’s workshop,” Church officials believed that the increasing amount of time spent away from productive work must either be directed into socially and spiritually productive channels or else it would propel the undisciplined toward destructive and harmful activities. Recreation filled this need.

Because recreation leadership fell largely under the aegis of the Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association (YLMIA) and the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA), this essay focuses on the recreational theories, activities, and programs reported in the monthly magazine published by the MIAs, the Improvement Era. The magazine’s pages, as well as other sources, reveal the goals and uses of Mormon recreation in the 1930s.⁶

At the MIA’s annual June conference in 1932, Oscar A. Kirkham, YMMIA executive secretary and Scouting executive, spelled out the relationship between mechanization and leisure: “We are grateful for the machine. It has raised the burdens from a million

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⁶Relying primarily on the Improvement Era has both strengths and weaknesses. Obviously, it communicates quite clearly the philosophy and goals held by the headquarters group providing general leadership. However, because of its official nature, an uncritical reading might lead to the impression that local units adopted the guidelines from Church headquarters swiftly, unquestioningly, and completely. This was definitely not the case. Local units often reworked the magazine’s proposals in ways that made more sense for particular areas; and these adaptations, along with successful local initiatives, were frequently reported in the Era. As a historical resource, then, the magazine, though not as complete as a study that involved a search of local diaries and the minutes of local units, provides a valuable perspective on Church-wide recreation in the 1930s.
backs, but it has thrown out a challenge to us. We must provide for the enrichment of leisure time, and in order for us to do that we must have more than technique, more than a bundle of tricks; we must have spirituality.”

G. Ott Romney, football coach at Brigham Young University and respected physical education teacher, believed that the Church had to teach its members “how to utilize [their] leisure time pleasantly and profitably” because “miraculous inventions and magic labor-saving machinery threaten to increase constantly and consistently the amount of leisure time which the average individual has at his disposal.” The main concern for Romney and others was not that leisure time had expanded so rapidly; rather, they worried about how it would be used. Along these lines, the LDS Business College advertised: “Make the most of leisure by enrolling for a business course.” An unsigned editorial warned starkly: “Watch the leisure time. Through it you may either make or break for eternity.”

Thus the struggle for the control of leisure time was part of the larger conflict between good and evil. As a participant in that momentous battle, the Church felt compelled to enter the fray. Under the general theme of “Building Latter-day Saints through Recreation” in 1932, the MIA sought to enlist recreation firmly as a force for good in the lives of Church members. Local leaders should “enrich leisure” and “spiritualize recreation.” One anonymous Mormon author looked heavenward for the guide to proper recreation: “Jesus said: Overcome evil with good. When the mind is filled with thoughts of beauty and an appreciation of the Creator through his creations, there is no place for that which is gross, ugly or debasing. Where there is clean, uplifting, joyous activity, evil cannot enter.” Harrison R. Merrill, the Improvement Era’s editor, also cited Jesus as

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7 “Broadcasting from the MIA Annual Conference,” Improvement Era 35 (July 1932): 529.
9 Improvement Era 35 (May 1932): 443.
the model of appropriate recreation: "Jesus stood for the enrichment of life—abundant life, abundant living. . . . He had but few years, but he lived them to the full. He was a social being enjoying his associations with his fellow men. He attended the wedding feast; He ate with publicans and sinners; He visited with his friends Martha and Mary and Lazarus. . . . How He dignified those social occasions." Possessing the ultimate combination of earthly affability and supreme spirituality, Jesus made the most of every occasion. Adolescent Mormons were expected to do no less. The Improvement Era also published the idealistic comments of Dr. Ray O. Wyland, director of education and relationships for the Boy Scouts of America. "Our recreation must be put on a higher level," he wrote, "for there is nothing that so much reveals what we are and there is nothing that so determines what we are going to be as the way we spend our leisure time. . . . Society will grow better if our recreation is wholesome."13

Although social improvement was certainly a worthy goal, Mormon leaders were more likely to focus on the state of the soul and warned frequently against the dangers of forbidden recreation. Expounding on the "poison" of idleness, BYU student Merrill Wood's prize-winning essay in a Church scholarship contest painted a picture of men sitting in a "smoke-filled room . . . wasting their time, playing cards, rolling dice, smoking, profaning, and telling smutty stories." The moral of Wood's story made clear the degenerative potential of improper recreation. "The social degradation we see all around us, the many wrecks and downfalls of the young people of our nation have been caused by an unprofitable, improper use of their idle moments. The leisure that is forced upon the world is tainted with bitterness and tragedy!"14 Such warnings reinforced

12Harrison R. Merrill, "We Stand for the Enrichment of Life," Improvement Era 35 (October 1932): 707. Merrill may have been influenced by Bruce Barton's characterization of Christ in The Man Nobody Knows: A Discovery of the Real Jesus (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1925). Merrill's treatment of the Savior as a social being conforms almost exactly with Barton's description of Jesus as the "Sociable Man." See Barton, chap. 6.
14Merrill Wood, "Enrichment of Life Through Constructive Use of Leisure,"
the value of Church-sponsored recreation for faithful Mormons. Under the direction of the Church, both parents and youth could be sure that the rising generation would avoid potentially destructive forms of recreation, increase in spirituality, and improve society. Thus, Church recreation was seen as an effective weapon against negative social forces (primarily juvenile delinquency) and also as a strategy for promoting internal cohesion within the Church. To construct this double-missioned recreation program, Church leaders willingly and selectively shopped among the nation’s experts on recreational theory and practice.

RECREATION IN COMBATTING SOCIAL EVILS

Church leaders recognized that certain social and political forces were largely beyond their immediate control; these included juvenile delinquency, mass political and social movements, and other social temptations. Yet Church leaders believed that the redemptive powers of recreation could relieve these ills.

Juvenile delinquency, like crime in general, had been on the rise in Salt Lake City since the 1920s and was an increasingly serious problem during the depression. Though the federal government had reported in 1931 that Salt Lake had “fewer major crimes in proportion to population than any other large city in the country,” city residents (including LDS Church leaders) were often reminded that lawlessness was growing.¹⁵ The uproar over delinquent adolescent behavior reached a crescendo in 1929 with the publication of Boys and Girls in Salt Lake City, written by Arthur L. Beeley, a sociologist at the University of Utah and a member of the YMMIA general board. Beeley reported that the local juvenile court and probation department had handled over 5,000 cases of juvenile delinquency between 1923 and 1928. Citing cases of offenders as young as six years old, Beeley’s study argued that existing youth programs were inadequate to counter the trend toward adolescent aberrance.¹⁶

¹⁶Arthur L. Beeley, Boys and Girls in Salt Lake City (Salt Lake City: University
Concern did not abate in the next five years. Writing in the *Improvement Era* in 1935, Utah educator and YMMIA general board member Philo T. Farnsworth referred to “This Thing Called Delinquency” as “one of our major problems” and enumerated specific types of delinquency that were to be guarded against: sexual misbehavior (both fornication and what he termed “perversions”), acquisitiveness (stealing, burglary), and actions caused by “wander lust” (truancy and running away from home). Farnsworth cautioned that in a society where adolescent crime was rampant, “every leader of boys should feel a double urge to prevent delinquency and to foster positive, constructive activities.” In the battle against delinquency, the Church recreation program was designed to turn out healthy, well-adjusted adolescents, thus preventing rather than reforming delinquents. Concurring with Farnsworth that prevention offered the best cure for anti-social behavior, Claude C. Cornwall, a former member of the YMMIA general board who had studied social psychology at New York University, encouraged youth leaders to get to the root causes of the problems: “If these causes can only be found and eliminated, the chances are that there will not arise any necessity for treatment of delinquent behavior. If it can be prevented, it just won’t happen.”

Foremost in the Church’s scheme to foster recreation as an alternative to anti-social behavior was the Boy Scout program. Because delinquency was primarily considered a male phenomenon (Beeley’s offenders were boys by a ratio of more than six to one), Church leaders stressed channeling young men’s energy into socially useful directions. Apostle Melvin J. Ballard spoke

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19 Boy Scouting had been integrated into the YMMIA program in 1913. In 1915, the YLMIA allied with the Campfire Girls but dropped the affiliation after a year, replacing it with its own Beehive program. The LDS connection to the Boy Scouts continues to the present. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 478.
specifically of the high expectations that the Church placed on Scouting in “dealing with the boy in his leisure time.” Calling on every boy to join that “appealing program,” Ballard made explicit the link between Scout activity and decreasing delinquency. “Many boys are in the State Reform School but there isn’t, I am told, a single Boy Scout among them.” He warned, “If you do not have your boy active in Scouting, he will be active in some unsupervised program in the pool hall or some other place where he is acquiring bad habits in both thinking and acting.” In a world filled with socially destructive options, Scouting had the weight of Church endorsement in helping youthful males avoid “the pitfalls that are in store for him.”

Later, the *Improvement Era* reported a recent survey of juvenile delinquency in a large western city: 85.5 percent of boys who had come before its juvenile court “never had the opportunity of participating in or belonging to any character building organization” like the Boy Scouts. Coupled with the doom facing boys without access to Scouting were numerous Scouting success stories. Oscar Kirkham told about a mining company in an unspecified city that

sent a check for $250 to the Scout council stating that up until the organization of a Scout troop in the town, the company had to employ a watchman to keep boys from breaking windows, light globes, and otherwise injuring property; but since the establishment of a troop there, depredations had ceased; and therefore, the $250 a month formerly used to keep the boys out of mischief could now be used to aid them in their Scout program.

Scouting had succeeded in turning these boys from delinquents into model citizens. Not only did Scouting prevent future delinquency, it also corrected existing anti-social behavior. Scouting, at least to some Church leaders, offered a potent answer in the battle to prevent juvenile delinquency.

The LDS recreation program was also designed to counter

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the expanding forces of social unrest that might lead to a rise in socialism or communism among Church members. According to G. Ott Romney, in making "adequate provision for the use of the individual's leisure time," society "takes out a splendid insurance policy to protect itself against the evils of restlessness, of anti-social activities, of the adoption of dangerous 'isms' and '-ologies and of perverted tastes." High-ranking Church officials understood the growing attraction of communism for the unemployed and impoverished. A march organized by the Communist Party in Salt Lake City in 1931 and a violent 1933 labor strike in Carbon County had brought the fear of collective social action close to home for Church leaders and Utah residents. As Apostle Joseph F. Merrill proposed, "All will agree that a happy, stable state of society cannot exist where idleness and want abound, for these are fertile fields in which discontent and revolution germinate and quickly grow." Helped by the dire economic circumstances of the 1930s, communism was also apparently appealing to some Mormons, disconcerting Church leaders. President Heber J. Grant issued a "Warning to Church Members" in 1936: "With great regret we learn from credible sources, governmental and others, that a few Church members are joining directly or indirectly, the Communists and are taking part in their activities." Grant called upon all Church members "completely to eschew Communism" for "the safety of our divinely inspired Constitutional government and the welfare of our Church." As countermeasures, recreational activities often promoted democ-


25Joseph F. Merrill, "The Problem of Unemployment," Improvement Era 42 (December 1939): 716, 765. Even more than communism, Merrill seemed afraid of the growing power of unionism and the increasing distance between the interests of capital and labor.

racy and American values. Patriotic Church functions, including a rather remarkable year-long celebration of the bicentennial of George Washington's birth, were undertaken to "bring into every home a reverential and patriotic feeling." Recreational, it was thought, might even help to stave off revolution as a "social-insurance policy" against dangerous political "isms" and "-ologies" that might prove tempting.

Other cultural "isms" more closely related to recreation also appeared threatening to Church leaders during the 1930s, particularly the growing influence of "commercialism." The popularity of movie houses, professional sports, and commercial dance halls concerned Church leaders because such businesses were outside the Church's control. Fully aware, as one author noted, that "we are competing with well organized activities and commercialized recreational activities," Mormon leaders tailored their activity programs to meet the popular amusements on their own terms. In some cases, the Church created programs to compete with specific commercial activities in a thinly veiled effort to destroy social activities which it could not supervise. For example, it built a community center in St. George because local authorities found the prospect of a commercial dance-hall undesirable. Juanita Brooks, a St. George resident best known for her landmark series of Mormon biographies and history of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, wrote about this episode from her perspective as a mother and schoolteacher for the Improvement Era. Posing the question: "Whose Business Is Recreation? The Profit-takers' or the Home-makers'?" Brooks reported in 1938 the success story of how a group of concerned citizens led by local Mormon leaders and financed by general Church funds responded when "certain commercial interests planned to put up a hall just outside the city limits where it would be free of supervision by the city officials." LDS

28Ira J. Markham, "Building Boys to Latter-day Saint Standards," Improvement Era 42 (October 1939): 618. Despite the pitfalls of commercialism, the Church did not simply proscribe all commercial social activity—a wise form of moderation. Rather, the Improvement Era urged LDS consumers to make wise choices and, as an example, provided a long-running series of movie reviews, "Lights and Shadows on the Silver Screen," which ran throughout the decade.
city leaders opposed the new building, fearing that it would be harmful to "the morals of the young people." A committee of four local leaders—one from each of the three wards and the fourth from Dixie College—decided that the most effective response was to build "a hall larger and finer than any private concern could afford to do, and to run it on a non-profit basis to cut out competition." With a large share of the capital coming from general Church funds, a $33,000 recreation hall was constructed. By charging only five cents to attend dances at the hall, the LDS-financed recreation center ended the threat posed by the private dance hall. "In sum, fearful of unsupervised recreation, local Mormon officials used their greater resources to ensure that young Mormons would dance "in the place where the priesthood [could] keep an eye on them." 

LDS recreation also took on another "ism"—the psychological theories of Freud. Eugene L. Roberts, former head basketball coach at Brigham Young University and a professor in the Physical Education Department at the University of Southern California, claimed that Freudian theories had "caused untold suffering." In the place of Freudian self-expression, Roberts called for the reenthronement of the "ideal of self-control and self-development." He queried, "Can we show that such Freudian abandon to desire has only the misery of mental and spiritual conflict at the end of its trail?" The best opposition was a recreation program that placed "special emphasis upon the socially cooperative activities such as were indulged in by our forefathers." Working and playing together in groups could rebuild community that had been splintered by Freud's emphasis on individualism.

Though not recreation's foremost target, the attack on Freudianism evidences the belief that wholesome recreation could positively impact a variety of social problems.


RECREATION AND INTERNAL COHESIVENESS

Despite the importance in Mormonism of using recreation programs to protect from outside influences, a more important function was to foster internal cohesion. Promoting attendance at Church-sponsored functions, encouraging obedience to Church leaders and doctrines, and spreading the Mormon faith through missionary work comprised the primary day-to-day goals and accomplishments of the recreational activities.

Local leaders used recreational activities to persuade youth to spend their leisure time at the meetinghouse. Leaders noticed that boys (and boys were their primary concern) who attended social outings during the week were also more likely to attend Sunday meetings. Deseret Stake in Salt Lake City noted an increase of 800 percent in monthly stake priesthood meeting after an outing was announced.\(^{32}\) "Contests" were popular in stimulating activity, and the *Improvement Era* reported dozens. In Ogden, Utah, the Aaronic Priesthood challenged the Melchizedek Priesthood to a contest based on attendance at weekly priesthood meetings, Sunday School classes, and sacrament meetings, and fulfilling ward teaching assignments for a period of six months. Winners would feast on strawberries and cream while the losers dined on Boston baked beans. In this case, the boys enjoyed watching the men (mostly their fathers) eating baked beans nearly as much as they enjoyed their own tasty desserts. But the point of this contest, like other Church competitions of the period, was "to stimulate greater interest and enthusiasm among the young men."\(^{33}\)

Athletic games were the backbone of the male-centered recreational program. Throughout the decade, wards, stakes, and the general Church held annual sports tournaments, the most popular of which (basketball) attracted over 10,000 participants each year. Young men spent countless hours practicing and playing in these tournaments. By using contests to promote activity, LDS leaders were not duping the boys into unwitting activity; rather they were


\(^{33}\) Field Notes," *Improvement Era* 35 (November 1931): 42.
providing suitable rewards for participation, and many boys found basketball and strawberries reason enough to maintain a connection with the Church.

Recreational activities also allowed young men and women to mingle socially and romantically. According to Western essayist Wallace Stegner, “even in the grave and decorous atmosphere of the Ward House, even in Sunday Meeting, the back rows were converted into a preserve for courting couples.” Local leaders were well aware that courtship was a primary reason for Church attendance among the young. The Alberta Stake in Canada explained its high attendance figures: “We are trying to stress the attendance of the ‘teen’ age girls at sacrament meeting. . . . We think that if more of the girls would attend, this would assist in getting a larger attendance of the boys.” All wards and stakes sponsored a number of dances each year, further fostering “wholesome” romantic associations. Unlike athletic contests which were typically gender-segregated, dances were the primary meeting place for adolescent Church couples. Romance may not have been the primary motive behind Church social functions; but once boys and girls coupled up, the Church recreation program did its best to capitalize on the situation.

The Boy Scout program was also used to increase Church attendance and adherence to Church principles. Apostle Ballard defined “the end of Scouting” as being “to make that boy an active worker in the Priesthood, to prepare him for the service of God, the missionary field and his responsibility at the head of a home. If we fail in that we have missed the objective for which Scouting was introduced.” Although the Boy Scouts of America was careful to promote only nondenominational religious ideals, in February 1936, LDS Church leaders announced that henceforth the “religious, spiritual, and moral phases of Scouting” were to be emphasized. Church-sponsored Scout troops must supplement Scouting principles with adherence to specific Church teachings

34Stegner, Mormon Country, 7.
as a “definite part of Scouting.” Before a boy could be advanced in Scouting, he had to prove his worthiness to the presiding officers by providing a record of his meeting attendance. Non-LDS boys in Church-sponsored troops were encouraged to be active in their own religions. Notwithstanding the major role that the Church had played in the Scouting movement for over two decades, this “Mormonization” of Scouting reversed the existing relationship between the Boy Scouts and the Church. After 1936, the Mormon Church was no longer the tool of Scouting; Scouting had become a method for increasing adherence to LDS principles.

The Church also used recreational values to promote the Word of Wisdom. Set forth by Joseph Smith in 1834, the dietary code remained a secondary requirement for Church membership throughout the nineteenth century. Despite lax enforcement in the past, by the 1930s, adherence to the Word of Wisdom had become a barometer of a Church member’s worthiness. Having noted the increasing numbers of both female and male smokers during the 1920s and troubled at the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, Church officials redoubled their emphasis on the advantages of abstention, reinforcing the scriptural prohibitions with scientific and medical statistics.

The Improvement Era also showcased “celebrity” sports personalities encouraging adolescents to avoid alcohol and tobacco. In so doing, it was following a national trend. As mass consumption expanded in the first quarter of the twentieth century, advertisers increasingly used celebrity endorsements by sports and entertainment figures to increase sales, especially among young people who were anxious to mimic celebrity behavior. In the 1920s and 1930s, celebrity endorsements of cigarettes and alcohol were especially popular and effective. The Church countered with celebrity anti-endorsements. The most conspicuous celebrity in the Church campaign was David Abbott Jenkins, a “superman of speed and endurance” widely known for setting world land speed records in his race

car, the "Mormon Meteor." "Ab" regularly appeared on the pages of the *Era* insisting that "the simple, clean and wholesome life" rewarded abstainers with physical strength and stamina. Boasting that he had "never tasted liquor or tobacco and does not use other milder beverages such as tea or coffee," Jenkins claimed that his abstemious lifestyle had allowed him single-handedly to defeat teams of three and four in marathon cross-country auto races. In addition to promoting Church activity and doctrinal adherence, Mormon recreation was important as missionaries tried to change the frequently negative image of Mormonism among prospective converts. Aware that door-to-door proselyting was usually unsuccessful and often demoralizing to the young missionaries, mission leaders experimented enthusiastically with sports. In 1935, a missionary reported from England: "Baseball in Britain is proving a powerful instrument for breaking down barriers of prejudice that existed for nearly a century and for opening the way to hear the Gospel message." Playing in leagues sponsored by the National Baseball Association of Great Britain, two missionary teams dominated competition and made new contacts along the way. "Scores of baseball friends, some of them players and league officials, are

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39Nephi L. Morris, "Ab Jenkins—Superman of Speed and Endurance," *Improvement Era* 39 (March 1936): 140. Jenkins was immensely popular both in the Church and in local politics. His restored "Meteor" is on permanent display in the basement of the Utah State Capitol.

40a "Would Not Be in the Majors Today If I Had Continued to Use Tobacco," *Improvement Era* 38 (November 1935): 700.
The Journal of Mormon History

attending both auxiliary and sacrament meetings."^41 The goal remained the conversion of souls, but recreation provided a non-confrontational way of securing goodwill and friendships that might translate into conversions.

The success of this program in Great Britain prompted other experiments throughout Europe and the United States. In Germany, a group of American missionaries instructed “likely candidates for the German Olympic Basketball team” in the fundamental skills of the game. Coaching sessions before large audiences were followed by an “interesting illustrated lecture dealing with Utah’s renowned national parks” after which over 1,500 LDS pamphlets were distributed to exiting spectators.^42 Other attention-getting activities were parts in a community play in Germany, a singing group (the “Millennial Chorus”) that performed over the British Broadcasting radio network, a variety of sports in the Netherlands, and American songs on Swedish television.^43 In the United States, a “Goodwill Quartet” canvassed the Midwest “with the hope of presenting to the people of this mission the Gospel through the medium of song."^44 Young Mormons in Civilian Conservation Corps camps were instructed to invite non-LDS camp members to Church activities: “A wonderful missionary work can be accomplished by making all young men in your vicinity welcome to all M Men functions,” which included athletic programs and courses of instruction, both practical and spiritual."^45 All over the globe, LDS-led recreational activities were designed to attract non-Mormons as a first step toward conversion.

Beyond promoting Church participation rates, fostering adherence to Church teachings, and proselyting, Mormon recreation also filled several other social functions. Deseret Clubs in California colleges created a recreational environment where the “idealism of LDS young people” would be safeguarded against the rampant “atheism” prevalent on many campuses.46 Recreational programs also taught young people skills that might lead to employment. In 1935 the Deseret Gymnasium sponsored a summer program for 150 adolescent boys from Salt Lake City who were “denied the advantages of living and working on a farm” and, in addition to recreational games, trained them in a “commodious well lighted and equipped shop under technically trained and experienced teachers.” One parent reported gratefully: “We were glad to have our son go to the Gym Summer School to keep him out of mischief. Now that he has learned so much about the technique of airplane construction and flight, we believe he may have found his vocation for life.”47

**LEARNING FROM THE “EXPERTS”**

Although the story of late nineteenth-century Mormonism is often told in terms of resistance to political and economic forces that gradually wore down the Church’s stubborn separatism, focusing only on the unwanted intrusion fails to tell the whole story. Equally one-sided is the view that Mormonism capitulated completely to mainstream America. As an analysis of LDS recreation in the 1930s shows, the Church’s contacts with the outside world were often complex and ambiguous. In designing and implementing LDS recreation programs, Church officials willingly turned to outside experts and professionals for ideas and techniques about recreation. However, they consistently used those borrowed techniques to strengthen Mormon community values, rather than simply making a wholesale accommodation to non-Mormon groups or value systems. Rather than “selling out” to Gentile experts, LDS

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leaders were cautiously “buying into” ideas that would serve their own ends.48

Judging from published statements and instructions to stake and ward recreation leaders, the parameters of the Church program were not drawn from prophecy, revelation, or prophetic direction, but rather were established in accordance with prevailing professional philosophies of appropriate social activities for adolescents and young adults.

There were important precedents for such borrowings. Mormon artists had honed their skills at the Académie Julian in Paris before painting various temple murals during the 1890s. Mormon scholars studied theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School in the late 1920s and early 1930s, returning to teach in the fledging seminary/institute program. Stephen L Richards, then a thirty-eight-year-old apostle, and Amy Brown Lyman, general secretary to the Relief Society general board and later its general president, promoted professional social work within the Church after attending a national social work convention in Kansas City in May 1918 to learn techniques and programs.49 Church leaders concerned about recreation during the depression first turned to non-LDS “experts” to gain sufficient knowledge and then applied that knowledge selectively to further internal Church goals, thus using secular learning to create programs that actually served as a “hedge against


secular influences” and reinforced a “sense of community among
the believers.”

Philo T. Farnsworth’s series on “The Boy, His Nature and His
Needs,” published in nine installments in the *Improvement Era* in
1934 and 1935, explained basic principles of adolescent psychology
so that youth leaders could create effective local recreation and
activity programs. Farnsworth did not conceal the sources of his
ideas; rather, he included extensive bibliographies with most of his
articles and quoted from such reputable academic sources as Ada
H. Arlitt’s *Adolescent Psychology* (1933), Fowler O. Brooks’s *Psychology
of Adolescence* (1930), and M. V. O’Shea’s *The Child: His Nature and
His Needs* (1924). Farnsworth argued that “the basis of success [in
the youth program] is the intelligent understanding of the nature
and the needs of these youths and the wisdom to plan a program of
activities that inspires respect, promotes confidence, and results in
meaningful and worthy social responses on the part of these
youths.”

Rather than quoting scriptures that focused on the sinful
and fallen nature of humankind to explain personal and social
problems, Farnsworth used psychology and sociology. In one article,
he explained the effects of a “bad environment” and how unsuitable
books, pictures, and companions “warp the social and moral trends
of growth” and lead to juvenile delinquency and “defective” person-
ality types. These bad influences should be replaced by Church social
activities, including Boy Scouting. Another article warned against
the “major dangers” of allowing youthful appetites to build up and
recommended defusing such pressures by “the satisfaction which
comes from athletic competition.” Farnsworth even instructed
youth leaders in the rudimentary skills of “case social work”—what
he called “the scientific approach to the solution of delinquency and
to the problem of defective personality”—by directing leaders to
probe “the social background” of the individual child and then to

52Ibid., 37 (March 1934): 180.
53Ibid., 37 (November 1934): 693.
create a matching program. Whether any leaders actually imple-
mented Farnsworth's ideas is not clear without further study.

Mormon recreation leaders also borrowed extensively from
the National Recreation Association, an organization of philanthro-
pists, playground workers, and other advocates of wholesome forms
of social recreation. Founded in 1906 in Washington, D.C., as the
Playground Association of America, it had become widely known
for its success in staffing playgrounds and implementing new meth-
ods of play for urban children. Though never officially allied with
the National Recreation Association, LDS recreation leaders fre-
quently attended its meetings, borrowed its ideals, and mined its
literature for suggestions.

In July 1932, a delegation of ten members from the MIA
general boards, joined by delegates from several stakes, attended
the First International Recreation Congress, sponsored by the Na-
tional Recreation Association, in Los Angeles. LDS attendees re-
ported that this exposure had broadened "their concept of the
meaning of recreation and their vision of its possibilities as a
character building and spiritualizing force." They expressed grati-
tude "that the leisure-time program of the MIA measures up so
completely to the ideals and methods presented by these national
groups." Certainly, as the delegates reviewed the Church recrea-
tion program they found much to make them proud, found rein-
forcement for their belief in the redemptive power of recreation,
and redoubled their commitment to using recreation for internal
purposes. Four months later in November 1932, the announced
theme for the monthly conjoint session of the ward MIAs was
"Building Latter-day Saints through recreation." Young men and
women gave presentations designed to "enrich leisure" and "spiri-
tualize recreation" by describing the spiritual force of music, the

54Ibid., 38 (May 1935): 325.
55Richard F. Knapp and Charles E. Hartsoe, Play for America: The National
Recreation Association, 1906-1965 (Arlington, Va.: National Recreation and Park
Association, 1979).
Kirkham, as YMMIA executive secretary, addressed the conference session entitled
"Recreation in Religious Groups." See "First International Recreation Congress
educational value of drama, and the "esthetic and spiritual values in the dance." It is likely that the National Recreation Association conference influenced this new emphasis.

Two months earlier, in September 1932, Elsie T. Brandley, associate editor of the *Improvement Era*, quoted from Judge Robert H. Scott's address to the National Recreation Association meeting: "The boy who steals a base is not likely to be stealing an automobile." Brandley claimed that Scott's conviction that proper recreation would reduce juvenile crime had "long been an unformulated statement" behind Mormon recreation programs. Brandley's use of "expert" judicial testimony exemplifies the LDS outreach to recreation specialists; the direct application of Judge Scott's words to Mormon programs typifies how much of that information was used.

National Recreation Association influence had earlier appeared in the "M Men Guide" for 1931-32, a course of study for young men. Author J. Ruel Griffiths, an associate professor of physical education at the University of Utah, included a chapter on "Recreation" and a chapter-length biography of National Recreation Association founder Joseph Lee. Based on texts written by recreation authorities, the lessons stressed the importance of choosing wholesome social activities as part of a healthy lifestyle and recommended further reading in experts like Eduard Lindeman and renowned sociologist E. A. Ross for ideas and explanations.

Other experts influenced the MIA's recreation plans. In 1933, at the *Improvement Era*’s invitation, Jay B. Nash—a professor of education at New York University, an admired member of the National Recreation Association, and a leading voice in the American Association of Leisure Time Educators—wrote on problems posed by increased leisure during the depression. One local MIA group took the advice of dance sociologist Marla War Lamkin that

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59 "M Men Guide: Course of Study and M Men Gleaner Program for 1931-32" (Salt Lake City: General Board of the YMMIA, 1931), 89-98.
"the modern dance is essentially a dance for two . . . [and] is usually stiff, formal, and unimaginative" and instituted new group dances that developed "friendliness and sociability." Other youth groups were invited to follow their lead in planning dances.61

There are even a few suggestions that the LDS recreational program influenced recreation professionals. Eugene L. Roberts observed in 1933, "The leisure-time program of the Mormon Church is the 'talk of the town' at present among the country's recreation leaders."62 In April 1938, a convention of recreation leaders from the western states gathered in Salt Lake City where they witnessed music, drama, singing, and speeches prepared by local MIA groups.63

The Era also regularly reviewed professional and academic books on recreation and child psychology in its monthly column "On the Book Rack." Sample titles included Ethel M. Bowers's Recreation for Girls and Women, Arlitt's Adolescent Psychology (1933), J. J. B. Morgan's The Psychology of the Unadjusted School Child (1936), Martin H. and Esther S. Neumeyer's Leisure and Recreation (1936), Ruth Lampland's Hobbies for Everybody (1934), and Sports for Recreation (1936), compiled by the Intramural Sports Department at the University of Michigan. The titles were evidently chosen because of their helpfulness to youth advisors struggling to make local programs more effective. "The Sunday School teacher and the expert in week-day religious education should rely on the psychology of the adolescence and childhood as fully as any other teacher," noted one analyst.64 The reviewer of Arlitt's The Adolescent (1938) explained that "all leaders of Scouts, Explorers, Bee-Hive Girls, and Junior Girls should read and re-read this helpful volume."65 By seeking guidance from so

63"Play Leaders Witness MIA Recreation," Improvement Era 41 (June 1938): 372. Recreation, the monthly publication of the National Recreation Association, contains virtually no mention of LDS recreational programs during the 1930s.
many “outside” voices, Church youth leaders sought to augment and refine existing approaches.

CONCLUSION

Although recreational activities largely formed the social foundation of the LDS Church during the 1930s, they were not the only concern of Church leaders, nor was the ability of recreation to change lives and improve society the only method of behavior modification espoused by Church officials. Church leaders, including President Heber J. Grant, continued to remind youth leaders and others that the “important thing for you is to have a love of your work and to do your work under the inspiration of the Spirit of the living God.” Scholarly learning and expertise had their place in Church recreation and social programs but, according to Grant, providence was more important than psychology, and the Spirit of God mattered more than sociology.

Likewise, the increasing attention given to recreation programs was balanced by a never-slackening emphasis on the importance of work. Recreation provided a partial answer to delinquency and unemployment during the depression, but hard work continued to be championed as the vital force ensuring social order. In Church conferences throughout the decade, Church leaders glorified the value of work, called for self-reliance, and implored all to give an honest day’s work, especially those employed on relief projects. Recreation was a temporary solution to idleness, a necessary sweetener for youth, and an earned reward for serious toil.

Church-sponsored recreation played a major role through the middle decades of the twentieth century, adapting to meet new circumstances. Beginning in September 1971, the popular all-Church athletic tournaments and music and dance festivals were replaced with regional tournaments and festivals staged in local areas. No explanation was given for the change in the athletic program; however, the *Ensign* reported that dance and music festi-

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vals were modified "to permit increased participation at the local level." Recreational activities are carried out on a similar local basis in the Church today.

This essay on LDS recreation during the 1930s invites exploration of other aspects. How did local leaders tailor the Churchwide programs to fit local conditions? As Mormon studies branches out to include social and cultural history, future inquiries might analyze how recreation programs were used as "sites" of negotiation between general leaders and local leaders and between local leaders and Church and community members.

ENCOUNTER ESSAY

FORGOTTEN HISTORY:
RECOVERING HELEN MAR WHITNEY’S STORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Jeni Broberg Holzapfel
and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel

TWENTY YEARS AGO we were in the process of finishing our undergraduate studies in Utah. During this exciting period of study, we surrounded ourselves with friends and acquaintances deeply interested in the past. Books, articles, lectures, classes, history conferences, seminars, and late-night discussions with classmates, professors, and friends dominated our extracurricular activities. It was a stimulating period for young university students interested in the Latter-day Saint past, because new interpretive essays, articles, and books on an increasing variety of topics were being published by some of the best qualified historians to ever...
study the Mormon past. Thomas G. Alexander, James B. Allen, Leonard J. Arrington, Donald Q. Cannon, and Larry C. Porter added depth and breadth to our personal studies through their classes and lectures on campus at the university. Richard worked for James B. Allen during the last year of his undergraduate studies, allowing us both to become more familiar with rich sources available at the archives at the University of Utah, Brigham Young University, LDS Church Historical Department, and the Utah State Historical Society.

It was during this last year of undergraduate training at BYU that we came across an obituary published on 16 November 1896 in the Deseret Evening News: "Helen Mar Whitney.—Her Death—A Sketch of her Personal History." Emmeline B. Wells, author of the obituary, reminded the readers, among other achievements, about Helen Mar's writing career: "Her writings were forcible and telling, and she had a natural gift for heroic composition. Her reminiscences of Nauvoo and the early days in the Church were published in the Woman's Exponent, covering a number of years and were greatly appreciated by the sisters."

Neither of us was familiar with this series and knew about the Woman's Exponent only from citations in published historical works.¹ A short time later, we went to the Lee Library's Special Collections to look through its issues of the Woman's Exponent. It did not take very long to locate an issue containing one of the segments from Helen Mar's published reminiscences. It seemed to us that this remarkable newspaper, serving as the primary public voice of Latter-day Saint women between 1872 and 1914, and, in particular, Helen Mar Whitney's recollections contained a gold mine of information regarding lesser-known aspects of the social world of early Mormons. It was a great personal discovery for both of us. Thus we began our journey down a long road to resurrect this forgotten history created so many years ago.

Helen Mar's reminiscences of early LDS Church history were

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forgotten history since, unlike letters, diaries, and other archival material usually intended for a limited audience by the authors, this series had already been published for a larger public audience but was no longer available to the average interested student in LDS history. Even many of the out-of-print books on Mormon history topics could be picked up in one of the many used bookstores near campus or were easily available on the open shelves of many of Utah’s libraries.  

We immediately began skimming through the microfilm of Woman’s Exponent, looking for everything Helen Mar had published there. In addition to the historical reminiscences, Helen Mar published letters and poems between 1 October 1880 and 1 March 1891, adding important details of her life and activity during this period. The process was not only educational, but enjoyable during the final spring term of our final year of undergraduate schooling at BYU. We discovered that Helen Mar began writing the recollections in 1880, the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the LDS Church. She notes in her first article published in the 15 May 1880 issue of the Woman’s Exponent:

This has been proclaimed as a year of jubilee. I truly rejoice that I have had the privilege of being numbered with those who have come up through much tribulation and gained a knowledge for myself that this is the work of God which neither wealth nor worldly honors could tempt me to part with. This is a world of sorrow and disappointment. Life and everything here is uncertain, but beyond is eternal life and exaltation. The experience of the Latter-day Saints during the

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3Not known to us at the time was Melvin L. Bashore’s excellent 1975 “Index to the Writings of Helen Mar Whitney in the Woman’s Exponent” (Salt Lake City: Historical Department Library, 1975).
past fifty years has disciplined and prepared them in a measure for
the great and wonderful changes which are coming, while those who
know not God are groping as it were in midnight.  

By the summer's end, we had identified all the articles in the
series. They had been published in ten sections: "Early Reminis-
cences," "Life Incidents," "Retrospection," "Scenes in Nauvoo,"
"Scenes and Incidents in Nauvoo," "Scenes in Nauvoo after the
Martyrdom of the Prophet and Patriarch," "Scenes in Nauvoo, and
Incidents from H. C. Kimball's Journal," "The Last Chapter of
Scenes in Nauvoo," "Our Travels Beyond the Mississippi," and
"Scenes and Incidents at Winter Quarters."

Additionally we discovered that Helen Mar's recollections
included not only the experiences of her immediate family, espe-
cially those of her father and mother (Heber Chase Kimball and
Vilate Murray Kimball) but also a panoramic picture of life among
the early Saints in Kirtland, Ohio; Far West, Missouri; Nauvoo,
Illinois; and Winter Quarters. Additionally, Helen Mar Whitney
describes her trek across Iowa—a long and difficult journey for the
refugees from Illinois in 1846. Finally, Helen Mar's recollections
of early Church history cover a wide range of topics, recounting
not only stories of people and places important to the Latter-day
Saint heritage, but preserving extracts from discourses, letters,
diaries, and public documents. Her articles illuminate the family
organization of some early Church leaders; nineteenth-century
practices of the washing of feet, speaking in tongues, adoption,
baptism for the dead, healing baptisms, blessing of children,
anointings by women, temple endowments, and sealings. They
reveal Latter-day Saint attitudes regarding the Sabbath day, danc-
ing, education, the arts, music, theater, and child rearing. Finally,
they help uncover the contours of life in the Mormon settlements
from a woman's perspective.

By the beginning of the new fall semester, we moved to
Southern California where Richard began M.A. studies in Ameri-
can history under the direction of B. Carmon Hardy at California

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4 Helen Mar Whitney, "Reminiscences," *Woman's Exponent* 8 (15 May 1880): 188. Unless otherwise noted, all additional quotations from this historical series are cited in the text by date and page.
State University, Fullerton. Graduate school, work, and family life focused our attention away from the surprisingly large body of writings Helen Mar had published in the *Woman's Exponent*. It was a decided disadvantage to be away from the main Mormon archival repositories, but our desire to eventually assemble Helen Mar's important contributions never diminished, especially as Dr. Hardy explored with us the importance of such unused sources in reconstructing the past.

Nearly five years later, Richard was completing a Ph.D. program in history at University of California, Irvine. During this time we finally carved out time and allocated some resources so we could make the long drive to Utah one summer and begin collecting photocopies of the entire set of *Exponent* reminiscences. We also launched an intensive quest for important information about Helen Mar's early life from additional sources. One of our first discoveries was that the published reminiscences were not Helen Mar's first attempt to tell her early life story. In an unpublished autobiography, apparently written during the first nine days in January 1876, she notes: "My life has been truly an eventful one like many others in the 'Mormon' Church, and at the solicitation of a few of my Sisters I have undertaken the task of writing a little sketch of my life for the benefit of the young and inexperienced more especially my own children who may read and profit by it when I am gone."5

This autobiographical attempt, covering only 1875, was apparently completed on 9 January 1876. It fills an important gap in her life story since she was not then keeping a diary, but it is her later efforts in the 1880s that reconstruct the shape of her early life, also a period in which no diary was kept.

Our successful research trip to Salt Lake City was exhilarating, and we returned to Southern California jubilant in possessing a complete photocopy of Helen Mar's published articles, letters, and reminiscences from the *Woman's Exponent*. Next came the long and arduous task of transferring the printed material into an electronic

5"Reminiscences and Diary 1876, November 1884-September 1885," 9 January 1876, Helen Mar Whitney Papers, Historical Department Archives (hereafter LDS Church Archives), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
format on our first computer, an IBM clone that we got a “great deal” on from the friend of a friend.

Within a few months, the transcription was complete. Then in a nightmare episode, our system crashed. We lost everything on the hard drive. Furthermore, the thin 5.25-inch floppies on which we had made our back-up copy had literally melted in the sunlight sitting in the back window of a car.

Totally dismayed—Richard’s dissertation research was also a casualty—we turned our attention to this higher priority. The “project,” our shorthand for this seemingly endless effort of collecting and publishing Helen Mar’s writings, again went on the back burner. It took three years to reinput the data.

This time, things clicked. We moved to Utah when Richard accepted a teaching position at BYU in 1993. We had access again to archives and libraries in Mormon country. More importantly, Richard’s department offered funding for student help to check our electronic copy against Woman’s Exponent. The “project” took on added impetus when our friend and former classmate, Todd Compton, learned of our efforts and asked for a copy to assist in his own research on biographies of Joseph Smith’s plural wives. He had already read through Helen Mar’s Exponent history; and his book, In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City, Signature Books, 1997), uses the reminiscences in the most comprehensive way to date by any scholar.

Collecting the published reminiscences was the first phase; preparing a definitive document was the second. Now came the third important task: placing them in a broader historical context. The years after our discovery of Helen Mar’s writings had brought us additional historical training and the tools necessary for interpreting her efforts. Additionally, we benefitted tremendously from the work done by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, and many others who made Mormon women studies not just a “footnote” to male history but an important part of the way we understand the past. Their published works and presentations helped us place Helen Mar’s reminiscences in perspective. Gratefully, we drew on their fresh scholarship to enhance our efforts.

One important contribution was a better understanding on the nature of autobiography. We discovered that autobiography was rare in antiquity before the Roman and Christian eras, begin-
ning about A.D. 100.\textsuperscript{6} Not until Roman times is there an example of a woman’s autobiography. Until the mid-seventeenth century, only about 10 percent of the total number of published autobiographies were written by women. However, the nineteenth century ushered in a plethora of autobiographies—the result of the revolution in printing, increased economic stability, and, especially for women, advancements in education. The general public was apparently eager to read about everyone—not just the famous.

During the late nineteenth century, women’s works included the usual diaries, letters, journals, captivity narratives, and spiritual autobiographies.\textsuperscript{7} Quakers and Puritans wrote most of the religious autobiographies published in the United States during this period. While some of these efforts were published before the death of the author, most were not. By the second half of the nineteenth century, many Latter-day Saints were also telling their own stories through journals, diaries and autobiographical works.\textsuperscript{8} Among the thousands of Mormon life records is a relatively small number of Latter-day Saint women’s stories. Some of their words went to print as living witnesses of the Restoration and their own sacrifices in following the Church through its movements and difficulties before their deaths.\textsuperscript{9}

An early attempt to record the life stories of Latter-day Saint women was Eliza R. Snow’s and Edward W. Tullidge’s 552-page compilation, \textit{The Women of Mormondom} (New York: Tullidge & Crandall, 1877). Containing the accounts of some forty women, the book is an important contribution to the preservation of Mormon women’s experience during the founding years of the Church.

Another opportunity to publish a positive view of the Saints


\textsuperscript{8}Davis Bitton, \textit{Guide to Mormon Diaries and Autobiographies} (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), lists more than three thousand autobiographies and diaries.

\textsuperscript{9}Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, ed., \textit{The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow} (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995), xv, suggests that the ratio of women’s material to men’s material in Bitton’s \textit{Guide} is one to ten.
came in 1880 when non-Mormon Hubert Howe Bancroft began collecting information for a multi-volume history project on the western territories.\(^\text{10}\) Enlisting the cooperation of LDS Church leaders, Bancroft began collecting material on Utah—including life stories of Latter-day Saint women.\(^\text{11}\)

During the same year, the Church's jubilee anniversary, Helen Mar Whitney began publishing her important series on early Church history which contained her own reminiscences.\(^\text{12}\) She also joined several other women in telling the story of Latter-day Saint women in Augusta Joyce Crocheron's *Representative Women of Deseret* (Salt Lake City: J. C. Graham, 1884).\(^\text{13}\)

Placing Helen Mar's published reminiscences in this broader context was the practical application of our academic training. We found our data along dusty roads in cemeteries, in attics and basements of old homes, in the vaults and storage areas in modern archives, in the closets and libraries of churches and courthouses in the United States.

Some of the best preserved and most easily accessible information has been preserved in the LDS Church Archives. We spent long hours with pencil and notepad in the search room on the second

\(^{10}\)Between 1874 and 1890, Bancroft published thirty-nine historical works dealing with the West, including the history of Utah. See Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1889).

\(^{11}\)Apparently, Elder Franklin D. Richards received the assignment to coordinate efforts to help Bancroft. He enlisted his wife Jane Snyder Richards to help collect the stories of Latter-day Saint women. See Beecher, *Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow*, 4.

\(^{12}\)Other Latter-day Saint women who wrote life stories in 1880 as a "memorial" to the jubilee anniversary include Mary Jane Mount Tanner, "Autobiography" (1837-1880), photocopy of typescript, and Mercy Fielding Thompson, Mercy Thompson Papers, Daughters of the Utah Pioneers Collection, LDS Church Archives. Carol Cornwall Madsen, *In Their Own Words: Women and the Story of Nauvoo* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1994), xi, indicates that several women, including Tanner and Thompson instructed that their stories be "read at the one-hundredth anniversary of the Church" in 1930 by their oldest female descendant.

floor in the east wing of the LDS Church Office Building. Whether we were looking at the holograph records or at microfilm copies, we began to feel a connection with Helen Mar as we read the words which wove the strands of her life.

One afternoon, twenty minutes before closing time, Jeni sat waiting for a box of material to be delivered from the storage area upstairs. Finally the requested box arrived, and a reading room employee handed over a folder. Inside the folder was a letter dated 30 March 1881 written with pen on three leaves of near-translucent paper. As Jeni began to read she came to this paragraph:

Now my children, I ask Him to bless and preserve these lines that my children & my grandchildren & their children's children may read them & may they all live so as to accomplish their designs of our Maker. Before they have broken this seal the writer of these few lines will most likely have passed onto another stage of action but I shall live until I have finished my earthly mission and rejoice in the day of salvation & may all my loved ones enjoy these blessings is the prayer of your affectionate mother. Helen Mar Kimball Smith Whitney.  

Jeni recalls this moment: “I had by now dropped my pencil and was absorbed in reading the letter written during the time that the reminiscences were published. I was carried back to a cold March day in 1881, when Helen Mar sat in her home not far from where I was sitting at the time to record her feelings about the story she had been telling in public through her articles in the Woman's Exponent. I felt as though Helen Mar was sitting across the table from me. She wanted her story to be remembered and wanted a future generation to understand why she had done what she had done—she wanted those alive today to understand her point of view. At that moment, though separated by time, I felt that she was speaking to me through this letter. Quickly I took up where I had earlier left off copying the contents of the letter. I now understood better than ever before the reason she took pen and paper in hand to write her story, now nearly forgotten since it was first published more than one hundred years ago.”

The document turned out to be a frank autobiographical letter

14“Autobiography, 30 March, 1881,” Helen Mar Whitney Papers, LDS Church Archives.
relating her parents' conversion to Mormonism and her own baptism. She discusses in intimate detail her feelings when she first learned of the doctrine of plural marriage from her father, Heber C. Kimball, and straightforwardly records the struggle and conflict that she and her mother confronted when Joseph Smith asked Helen Mar to marry him as a plural wife. She adds to her autobiographical letter a poem detailing this period of turmoil. Helen Mar continues her story past Joseph Smith's martyrdom and her marriage to Horace K. Whitney in the Nauvoo Temple in 1846. She mentions Horace's plural marriages and leaves her posterity a brief testimony and exhortation to remain faithful to God and his plan. Helen Mar affirms that, despite her earlier struggles and present trials, she would not change anything because of the eternal promises she has received.

What this document did was to crystalize in our minds Helen Mar's perspective on the effort she had undertaken. It also gave us an emotional connection with her. Apparently, Helen Mar published her story hoping that it would help the rising Latter-day Saint generation that was both physically and temporally removed from the Church's early history. She also desired to help non-Mormons interested in trying to understand the Latter-day Saint point of view—in particular, a woman's view of how Church members arrived at their present state of belief and practice. She spoke with hope and courage at a time of crisis in Mormonism; the battle lines had been drawn between the federal government who found plural marriage intolerable and Mormons who were holding firm to "the principle." Helen Mar communicated no doubts about which side she was on.

From the outside, Mormonism seemed to be a monolithic institution where all women were enslaved by polygamy. However, Helen Mar demonstrates from the inside that LDS women's lives were filled with a variety of experiences and freedoms. Sometimes her response to outside criticism was specific, as when she refuted attacks by Reverend J. M. Coynen and Joseph Smith III. She, like other Latter-day Saint women during the same period, took the time to present to the world a simple but honest account of her life,

hoping to deflect the hatred engendered by the last rounds of anti-Mormon sentiment circulating through the eastern press—sentiment that eventually had tremendous negative impacts on the lives of the Latter-day Saint women in the West. She wrote:

I can truly say that I feel an interest in the welfare of all, and if some of the incidents of my life could impress the minds of others, as they have my own, I would feel amply repaid for writing them. There seems to be a great curiosity in the minds of strangers about the ‘Mormon women’ and I am willing, nay, anxious, that they should know the true history of the faithful women of Mormondom. (1 July 1880, 18)

She obviously sees herself as a defender in the vigorously written letter she penned to the editor of the Woman’s Exponent just a few months after she began her series on Church history:

When reading [in] the last evening’s [Deseret] News the proceedings of our would-be tyrants, I confess that for a moment I felt warmed up and really indignant. It seems that we “poor, down-trodden women,” whose sorrows and suffering called forth so much pity until it was disgusting to every true hearted “Mormon” woman have disappointed our very “liberal” and sympathetic friends! We really love our husbands and prefer to be governed by our brethren instead of by our acknowledged enemies. We have also proved true to the principles of our religion, which is far dearer to us than are our lives, or anything else without it; and it seems we have become a power to be dreaded, and now the poor hypocrites are trying to undo what they have done. “To want to and can’t is their unenviable condition and will continue to be if we will be humble and united.” We shall see the hand of God in this, as we have in every other move made by our enemies. They can do nothing against us, but for us. These trials are necessary to separate the dross from the pure metal. We can look back through all our mobbings and drivings and can see the hand of God in every move. Instead of our enemies destroying us as they hoped and expected to do, we have become rich and popular and they are now filled with envy, and are really the ones to be pitied, for

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16The federal raid imprisoned their husbands and fathers or forced them on the underground, drove many women into hiding from federal officials, and took away their rights to vote and hold office in Utah Territory. Thomas G. Alexander, Utah: The Right Place. The Official Centennial History (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publishers, 1996), 186-201.
they are trusting in their own strength as did Goliath, and we trust in the Almighty, who will show forth his power in behalf of his people. (1 October 1880, 70)

Several sections of these reminiscences show that current political and social realities constrained Helen Mar to respond by telling her story—a woman’s story—from her personal point of view. Among the stories she chose to include in this important series on Church history, none is more emotionally laden than that of the introduction of plural marriage, a very public issue in the 1880s. Apparently, Latter-day Saint women were at first reluctant to respond publicly; but as pressure continued to mount, they began to defend themselves and their rights to practice their religion as they chose. Pressure from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which took the official position that Joseph Smith had never practiced or taught plural marriage, added to the need to respond. As both a plural wife and as a daughter in a polygamous family, Helen Mar attempted to refute anti-Mormon attacks on polygamy from her perspective as a willing participant who had struggled with and then fully accepted the principle.

The story of plural marriage did not begin in Salt Lake City in the 1880s, but Nauvoo in the 1840s—a place and time with which Helen Mar Whitney was intimately acquainted. Therefore, her personal remembrances of those days constitute an important source which, taken with other first-hand accounts by participants, provides a more complete view of the introduction of one of the most distinctive features of nineteenth century Mormonism. Whether unpublished private documents or published public documents, they constitute important historical records to be taken seriously by the modern reader or historian.

Helen Mar was initially unaware of her father’s plural marriages in Nauvoo. Thinking back forty years when Heber C. Kimball first told her of the principle, she recalls vividly:

I remember how I felt, but which would be a difficult matter to describe—the various thoughts, fears and temptations that flashed through my mind when the principle was first introduced to me... Suffice it to say the first impulse was anger. My sensibilities were painfully touched. I felt such a sense of personal injury and displease-
ure... but [he] left me to reflect upon it for the next twenty-four hours, during which time I was filled with various and conflicting ideas. I was skeptical— one minute believed, then doubted (1 August 1882, 39).

She asks for the reader's sympathetic understanding of the plight of the sister-Saints who moved forward to practice a principle they believed came from God:

What other motive than real faith and a firm conviction of the truth of this principle could have induced them to accept and practice a doctrine so opposite to their traditions and the rigid training received from their sectarian parents and ancestors? Who would wish to become objects of derision, to have their friends and associates turn the cold shoulder, and be subjected to the sneers and scoffs of persons prejudiced by the extravagant tales spread by certain ones who, while professing friendship and faith in the principle, were two-faced and treacherous to their brethren and sisters; the latter, though virtuous and modest in their demeanor, and their motives as noble and pure as were those of Ruth and Naomi, had to silently bear the title of *lewd* women. (Ibid.)

Helen Mar returned to the question of motives a second time: “No earthly inducement could be held forth to the women who entered this order [plural marriage]. It was to be a life-sacrifice for the sake of an everlasting glory and exaltation” (1 March 1883, 146). Although she does not say so explicitly, it is obvious that her initial anger and repugnance, typical of many, both men and women, yielded to faith; she consented to become Joseph Smith’s plural wife some time in May or June 1843. Following his death in June 1844, she married Horace Kimball Whitney, apparently her teenage sweetheart. He eventually married additional wives, again placing Helen Mar Whitney in a polygamist marriage. In these articles she not only defends her personal choice to live the principle but she speaks for all faithful Mormon women. We can only imagine her poignant

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emotions on the day in February 1846 when she finally married Horace:

At early twilight on the 3rd of February a messenger was sent by my father, informing H. K. Whitney and myself . . . that we were to present ourselves there [the Nauvoo Temple] that evening. The weather being fine we preferred to walk; and as we passed through the little graveyard at the foot of the hill a solemn covenant we entered into—to cling to each other through time and, if permitted, throughout all eternity, and this vow was solemnized at the holy altar. (1 November 1883, 81; emphasis ours)

She was sealed to Joseph Smith for time and eternity because of religious faith, family loyalty, and obedience to her father's wishes. Following Joseph Smith's murder in June 1844, Horace Whitney stood proxy for Smith in the Nauvoo Temple on 3 February 1846 to have the ordinances reconfirmed. Then, as they knelt together Helen Mar and Horace were sealed for time. On the following day, Helen Mar stood proxy for a deceased woman, Elizabeth Sikes, who was sealed to Horace for eternity, giving both of them an eternal marriage partner. She had married Joseph and gone through a second ceremony confirming her union with him in which Horace, the choice of her heart, participated to confirm Joseph's eternal claim on her. Her desire to "cling to [Horace K. Whitney] through time and . . . throughout all eternity" is the only time in which she states her own preference. She never alludes to the subject again, leaving the modern reader with many questions.

Apparently, the Kimball, Young, and Whitney families were fully aware of Helen Mar Whitney's marriage to Joseph Smith, but it was not publicly acknowledged in the 1880s. She, like many other plural wives of the Prophet, was not anxious to publicly declare their relationship. It is only in the 1881 autobiography that she tells this story. She does not mention her sealing to Joseph in the Exponent articles, the brief autobiographical chapter in Representative Women of Deseret, nor the two important pamphlets on the subject published in 1882. Apparently the first sympathetic public announcement of her marriage to Joseph Smith was Andrew Jenson's listing of plural wives of Joseph Smith in 1887.19

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During the final process of preparing Helen Mar’s reminiscences for publication, we examined and reexamined the documents that helped us to create a fuller context for the published articles. We often marveled that these records had been preserved and felt an emotional attachment to Helen Mar because of our sense that we were sharing her private thoughts and confidences.

As we encountered Helen Mar’s nineteenth century world we recalled Muriel Rukeyser’s poetic tribute to diarist Käthe Killwitz: “My lifetime listens to yours.” Our listening was not only cognitive but also emotional as we opened our hearts to this complex woman who defies the stereotypical models offered of Mormon women either by nineteenth-century critics or twentieth-century Latter-day Saints. Her first-person narrative invited us to identify with her value system and thought patterns. And while we immersed ourselves in her world, another part of us remained outside. We sometimes noted where our spiritual, emotional, and social landscapes were varied, sometimes in subtle ways and at other times in fundamental ways. Encountering situations we will hopefully never experience and would not even wish to, especially the practice of plural marriage, caused us to pause and reflect.

Through our late twentieth-century lenses we looked at Helen Mar’s life in polygamy and were at times mystified. Our monogamist relationship and personally fulfilling emotional intimacy separates our world from hers in dramatic ways. The gulf between her world and ours was just as wide when we considered her relationship with her parents, especially as they induced her to begin a life utterly different from what she had been taught to expect. Our interactions with our children seems to be based on a whole new set of expectations and assumptions. The social reality of the nineteenth century, as portrayed by Helen Mar, reveals a world where women were required by tradition, and even by law in some cases, to be obedient to parents and a husband in ways unimaginable today. In all likelihood the whole society, even beyond gender relationships, could hardly imagine the equality expected and often times experienced in the postmodern world. And while Helen Mar’s story contains aspects difficult to grasp and situations totally alien to our own life.
experience, it was nevertheless impossible to read her story of plural marriage and remain unchanged as a couple or as individuals. This forgotten history was a gift that sometimes challenged our previous assumptions about nineteenth-century Mormon life. In the end we found Helen Mar a likeable and sympathetic person who hungered to be understood; we found her record frank, open, and revealing as she discussed the dynamics of interpersonal relationships complicated by a unique marriage system. And while autobiographies generally impose a coherent pattern on the events of a writer’s life, her narrative reveals her fondest dreams and dashed hopes, it tells of false starts and of safe arrivals, and finally it demonstrate an ordinary woman’s struggles to understand herself in the most challenging circumstances.

In August 1997, we received from our publisher our first copy of *A Woman’s View: Helen Mar Whitney’s Reminiscences of Early Church History*. It was a solemn and joyful moment. We felt that Helen Mar’s desire, articulated in a frank letter written more than one hundred years ago, was being fulfilled for a new generation of people interested in the early days and practices of the LDS Church. Certainly, whether chronicling the broader events of Church history (based on years of thought and reflections) or the intimate family experience within the larger historical context, Helen Mar recreated her life as she wanted the public, including her own children, to remember it. As Maureen Ursenbach Beecher notes: “It would seem that in life writings truth is a matter of purpose and point of view.”20 Carol Cornwall Madsen adds: “Understandably, these women were selective in what they recorded, and the reader (and the historian) must always recognize the historical limitations of personal discourse.”21

It is true that Helen Mar Whitney, like others who wrote of their experiences, was selective in what she recalled and what she chose to include as additional documentary sources. Yet her serialized history lets us hear the voice of an individual woman experiencing her own unique life. She responded as an individual to the institutional history of the Church. The shape and content of her recollections are her own. Yet Helen Mar also shared much with

\[\text{20Beecher, } \textit{Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow}, \text{ xviii.}\]

\[\text{21Madsen, } \textit{In Their Own Words}, \text{ x.}\]
other women who gathered with the Saints during the 1830s and 1840s. Additionally, at the heart of her effort to record her life story is the common purpose shared with many: a commitment to the restoration, a need to place on the record their testimonies to the truth of Mormonism.

Whatever we find in such personal recollections, they often provide a window to the past that not only allows us to imagine a time and place that has been lost but also provides an opportunity to hear the “personal voice” of some truly interesting human beings who lived in a world much different from today. Additionally, reading a life story often connects us as modern readers intimately with other lives and stories—in this case with a woman’s life. To fully appreciate her story, we should identify with a different perspective—Helen Mar’s perspective. As we read these recollections, we share the experience of the author through the inevitable stages of human experiences. When Helen Mar describes her feelings of loss when her child dies in Winter Quarters, we relate because we feel the same way as we say good-bye to someone we love today. In this sense, our efforts to recover Helen Mar’s forgotten history allows us to reflect on our personal lives and our efforts to help others understand us from our own point of view.

Reviewed by Donald Q. Cannon

John C. Bennett was a man people took notice of. He was a complex person with interests in medicine, theology, education, military affairs, animal husbandry, and horticulture. Whether founding a college or publishing an exposé, he was always a promoter. Arriving in Nauvoo in the fall of 1840, he quickly rose to power in political, military, and religious affairs.

Andrew F. Smith has a scholarly and historical interest in tomatoes, resulting in the publication of *Tomato in America: Early History, Culture, and Cookery* and *Pure Ketchup: The History of America’s National Condiment*. He came across Bennett’s name in a British reference and, piqued that Bennett was promoting tomatoes at a time when most Americans shunned them as poison, tracked him down, a complicated process that is a fascinating story in itself.

Smith’s study of Bennett is broad-based, providing a context dealing with all of the man’s varied interests. The book is divided into twelve chapters, and the basic organizational scheme is chronological rather than topical.

After providing background biographical information, Andrew Smith describes Bennett’s promotional efforts in selling diplomas and founding colleges—especially medical schools. He then moved to Bennett’s interest in promoting tomatoes for health reasons—a rather short-lived fad that reveals Bennett’s considerable talents as a booster and publicist. Andrew Smith clearly demonstrates that Bennett was hardly a serious student of the properties and value of the tomato but that he easily and quickly shifted his interests—and the same set of talents—from tomatoes to the military, to Mormonism.

In the summer of 1840 John C. Bennett wrote several letters to Joseph Smith. In these letters he expressed a desire to help the Mormons in their efforts to build a community in Illinois.

How sincere was Bennett? Mormons have generally believed that Bennett was sincere and that his motives were pure when he first came into the fold but that he afterwards became corrupt and corrupting. Andrew Smith, while disagreeing that Bennett was ever quite as vile as most Mormons see him, also disagrees that Bennett had altruistic or spiritual promptings that
led him to Mormonism. “Bennett was not likely to have become a thunderstruck convert in the summer of 1840” (56). Rather, he argues that Bennett saw the Mormon cause as just another likely target for his incessant activity as a promoter.

Joseph Smith, on the other hand, took Bennett at face value. To him John C. Bennett seemed sincere. Certainly he was effective in securing a charter from the Illinois Legislature for the incorporation of Nauvoo. Within a few months his promotional efforts were handsomely rewarded. He became mayor of Nauvoo, chancellor of the University of Nauvoo, second in command in the Nauvoo Legion, and assistant to the Church president. Andrew Smith agrees with most Mormon authors that Bennett’s rise to power in Nauvoo was meteoric, followed by an equally quick plummeting.

Some of Bennett’s past became known and his ulterior motives were also detected. That past included the fact that he had a wife and three children in Ohio while he was posing as a bachelor in Illinois. He had been repeatedly unfaithful to his wife before deserting her and was considered to be a rogue by many who knew him. In Nauvoo he posed as a moral Church leader while secretly carrying on numerous adulterous affairs. Andrew Smith provides useful information about some of his sexual encounters, especially his involvement with Sarah Pratt, wife of Orson Pratt.

Joseph Smith’s disillusionment led to Bennett’s expulsion. Without hesitation, Bennett became as ardent an anti-Mormon promoter as he had earlier promoted Mormonism. He published a series of letters in various newspapers, lectured in many cities across the country, and eventually compiled a book, *The History of the Saints: or an Exposé of Joe Smith and the Mormons* (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842), consisting of previously published articles, pamphlets, and letters. It charged LDS leaders with “infidelity, deism, atheism, lying, deception, blasphemy, debauchery, lasciviousness, bestiality, madness, fraud, plunder, larceny, burglary, robbery, perjury, fornication, adultery, rape, incest, arson, treason, and murder” (p. 125; punctuation standardized).

Mormons have generally believed that Bennett’s attacks had little impact. Smith disagrees: “Whatever the truth or falsity of Bennett’s accusations, they rocked Nauvoo and the Mormon Church” (134). Here, Andrew Smith has overstated the case. Bennett hoped that his exposé would precipitate a wholesale exit of Church members. In fact, only two or three families such as the Brothertons and Olneys left the Church. Most of the Saints rallied around Joseph Smith and condemned Bennett. Andrew Smith has inflated the effect of Bennett’s work and, in a sense, accepted Bennett’s views, although he later admits that Bennett’s books and lectures had a minimal effect and that anti-Mormonism in Illinois developed without any help from Bennett.
I also found Andrew Smith’s attempts at cleverness to be unevenly successful. For instance, “The ‘Getter Up’ of Colleges” as a chapter title, though not particularly witty, is humorous, but he should have resisted the temptation of titling a chapter on Bennett’s chicken-breeding “A Fowl Ending.”

Considering that he is a non-Mormon and discovered John Bennett by accident, Andrew Smith has done a remarkable job of presenting the real John C. Bennett, the promoter, propagandist, and salesman. His research is impressive. His writing style is clear, and the book is tightly organized. I see his major contribution as helping Latter-day Saints understand John C. Bennett. Smith is aware of the natural antipathy Mormons have for Bennett when he writes: “Bennett is the man Mormons love to hate” (192). Now, Smith has allowed Mormons to see John C. Bennett in much broader context—a context within which it is easier for Mormons to come to terms with Bennett. They may still find his actions reprehensible, but they are now more likely to understand and be less inclined to censure. Bennett is less a criminal and more an all-American promoter.

On balance, the book is well worth reading. It captures John C. Bennett in his total life, not just in one narrow dimension. It helps make Bennett more understandable.


Following an introductory chapter on the purpose and significance of state constitutions, White considers Utah’s quest for statehood. Drawing on the constitutions of other states and on their own political experience, the
people of Utah drafted six constitutions between 1849 and 1887. Because of various objections, lack of population, and the Congressional battle over slavery in the first constitution, and other issues, especially polygamic theocracy thereafter, Congress declined six times to admit Utah. White argues that the conventions held between 1849 and 1862 used as models the constitutions of Iowa and Illinois together with those of from older states.

However, while retaining the traditional framework of separation of powers and checks and balances, the proposed 1872 constitution drew most heavily on the 1864 Nevada constitution. Though the previous constitutions had adopted provisions to separate church and state similar to the First Amendment, not until 1872 did the delegates address the polygamy issue. With considerable naivete, they authorized Congress to attach conditions for admission which would apply only if a majority of Utah’s voters approved. The constitution also tried to protect the rights of minorities by allowing for proportional representation through cumulative voting.

In many ways, the 1872 constitution followed the pattern of many constitutions drafted in other states during the late nineteenth century by promoting local economic development and addressing other local concerns. It promoted business, limited the taxation of mines, and granted woman suffrage.

The 1882 constitution resembled that of 1872. It deviated by prohibiting women from serving in state offices and on juries, while granting them the right to own and control their own property.

In 1887, for the first time, the delegates “met the polygamy problem head-on” (38). The 1887 constitution declared polygamy illegal and prohibited the people from amending that section without Congressional approval. Congress and the American people—no doubt with considerable accuracy—considered this a ruse. Clearly Utah could never achieve statehood as long as Protestants, Catholics, and Jews perceived the state as a polygamic theocracy. Changes, beginning with economic reconciliation in the late 1880s, continuing with Wilford Woodruff’s 1890 Manifesto, and leading to the breakup of religiously based political parties, eventuated in the easy passage of the enabling act in mid-July 1894.

The convention began its sessions in March 1895. Despite the economic depression, fifty-nine Republicans and forty-eight Democrats met on the third floor of Salt Lake’s new City and County Building in what White rightly considers “an air of optimism” (47). Averaging in their mid-forties in age, the delegation consisted of a plurality of farmers and stockraisers with an admixture of merchants, manufacturers, lawyers, and mining entrepreneurs, and a sprinkling of bankers, builders, and sundry others. Four General Authorities of the LDS Church also served—Apostles John Henry Smith and Moses Thatcher, Presiding Bishop William B. Preston,
and B. H. Roberts, a president of the Seventy. The Rev. George P. Miller, a Methodist minister, represented Sevier County. Seventy-eight of the delegates were Latter-day Saints, twenty-eight were Protestants and Catholics, and one was Jewish.

Sidestepping the acrimony of nearly a half century the delegates devoted most of their time to economic and political matters. Moreover, as White rightly argues, they demonstrated “a remarkable willingness to listen to opposing viewpoints . . . [while exhibiting] a high level of civility” (83-84). Even where the majority held certain views, they listened to minority viewpoints and compromised to achieve consensus. In drafting the constitution, the delegates drew on the constitutions of other states especially those of Washington, California, Wyoming, and New York. Such borrowing, together with other features, such as the weak and divided executive and limitations on the legislature, led Martin Hickman to conclude that the Utah constitution did not grow out of the political and social experience of the territorial period. I have disagreed with him in “Utah’s Constitution: A Reflection of the Territorial Experience,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 64 (Summer 1996): 264-81. White does not address this disagreement, perhaps because my article appeared too late for her consideration, nor does she address directly Hickman’s point of view.

Though an overwhelming majority of the delegates favored woman suffrage, the question generated considerable rancor, largely because of the fear of Protestants and Catholics that Latter-day Saints would use women’s votes to reestablish a theocracy. Principal opposition came from Catholic Republican Richard Mackintosh, Protestant Democrat Fred J. Kiesel, and Mormon Democrat Brigham H. Roberts. Principal proponents included Mormon Democrats Franklin S. Richards, Samuel R. Thurman, and Orson F. Whitney. The convention approved woman suffrage 75-14. To address the theocracy issue, the convention included provisions on religion in six separate sections of the constitution. As White points out, and as many Utahns still do not seem to understand, the arguments over religious toleration and prohibition of sectarianism in schools and colleges were not unique to Utah. Congress mandated the inclusion of provisions for such toleration in the constitutions of the Dakotas, Montana, and Washington as well. On the other hand, the Congressional fiat prohibiting polygamous marriages in Utah was unique, and it remains in the constitution in spite of its flagrant violation by fundamentalists who have rejected the current policies of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Lawyers tended to dominate the discussion of individual and property rights. Significantly, in view of current tendencies to deemphasize the rights of criminals and the accused, the delegates adopted a provision reading:
"Persons accused or imprisoned shall not be treated with unnecessary rigor" (61).

Following Stanley Ivins's views, White points out that the major partisan debate came over the Republican proposal to authorize the state to offer bounties and subsidies to business. Democrats led by Franklin S. Richards lined up against this measure. Republicans touted the success of such subsidies for the sugar industry. Democrats countered with examples of huge debts incurred in other states from subsidizing failed enterprises. Securing the votes of a few Republicans led by Charles S. Varian, the Democrats included a provision prohibiting the state or local governments from subscribing to the stock of private enterprises.

As in any successful legislative body representing so many diverse interests, compromise became the order of the day. Compromises allowed larger cities to offer tax-supported high schools if they provided the funds locally. Compromises also kept the University of Utah and Utah State University separate and left the location of schools for the deaf and blind to legislative discretion. Compromises also allowed the subsequent domination of the state by rural legislators.

By the time of the convention, issues we generally associate with the Progressive Era from the 1890s through 1920 had begun to concern people. These included particularly the regulation of large business organizations, the protection of women and children, and the preservation of the rights of labor. Many of the provisions then adopted were compromises that extensive revisions of the constitution in 1992 altered considerably. The delegates refused to adopt a proposal by Salt Lake delegate George M. Cannon which would have outlawed discrimination in wages on account of gender. The delegates favored conservatism in water rights and taxation, while rejecting prohibition.

After discussing the drafting and ratification of the constitution White's last chapter explores the history of the constitution in the twentieth century. She concludes, rightly I believe, that Utahns have been reluctant to amend the state constitution. The infrequent changes include the approval in 1906 of state-supported high school education and the adoption of a salary commission to recommend pay levels for legislators instead of retaining fixed salaries as a constitutional provision. Utahns also adopted prohibition in 1917 and repealed it in 1933.

In some cases, subsequent legislatures have simply refused to observe provisions of the constitution. Reapportionment of the legislature, which was to have taken place every five years, is perhaps the most egregious example. Rural representatives controlled the legislature from 1896 until court-ordered reapportionment in 1965.

Utahns have consistently resisted the efforts to assemble a new constitu-
tional convention, but the legislature did approve a constitutional revision commission in 1969. The approval of a “Gateway Amendment” in 1970 permitted the simultaneous amendment of all provisions in entire articles. Established in 1977, a permanent constitutional revision commission, on which White has served, has successfully proposed a number of amendments to the document.

In assessing the value of White's work, I believe that it constitutes a valuable and reliable overview of the background, writing, and history of the state’s constitution. Her last chapter is especially significant since it offers a readily accessible and nontechnical overview of the relative durability of the constitution.

White’s work is important for all those interested in American religion but particularly important for Mormon readers. The drafting and adoption of Utah’s constitution in 1895 resolved the longest-sustained war conducted by the American public and the federal government against one religion in the history of the United States. The constitution and the debates that accompanied its adoption contain the terms of the capitulation of the Mormon people to federal authority on matters such as theocracy and polygamy, and the substance of the efforts of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews to accommodate themselves to coexistence with the Latter-day Saint faith.

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NOTICES


In 1953, the U.S. Congress adopted legislation that, under the language of “emancipating” Indians, created tribal “corporations” that, for all practical purposes, divided tribal lands into individual allotments which could then be sold by individuals. Eager whites were not hesitant to encourage and even pressure such sales. Parker Nielson, a new attorney at a borrowed desk in a small office, heard three Indian women tell about being traded a used car that didn’t run for their stock. He became confidante, attorney, and outraged witness of a process of “American justice” that sepa-
rated the mixed-blood Utes “from their property, from their tribal way of life, and even from their identity as Indians” (ix).

The case eventually went to the U.S. Supreme Court which decided, in 1972, that the mixed-blood Utes had, in fact, been defrauded of their property but declined to restore it. The account is not the dry thrust and parry of legal maneuvering, but the personal stories of the Utes themselves, denied the education and training that would let them manage their own property, mangled by alcoholism, cheated out of land, openly denied grazing rights, and manipulated in tribal “meetings” by Anglo lawyers.

This book should be of particular interest to Mormon readers, given the generally positive impression most have of Brigham Young’s “cheaper to feed than to fight them” policy. Nielson documents the dispossession of the Utes that occurred in the nineteenth century but asserts that “the most outrageous attacks” on Indian property and identity “occurred within living memory, immediately following World War II, and are still in progress” (x). Also of interest to Mormon readers are the roles played by prominent Mormons in this chronicle. U.S. Senator and Mormon Arthur V. Watkins was the architect of the termination legislation. Ernest L. Wilkinson, who had something of a reputation as an Indian advocate for the landmark settlement he wrung from the U.S. government on behalf of the Utes before he became president of BYU, seems less benevolent in this portrait, even though it was his partner, John Boyden, who took the most active legal role in forcing termination on the mixed-blood Utes of the Uintah Tribe. Nor can it be said that all of the good Mormon citizens of Vernal and other towns near the reservation showed either Christian compassion or conspicuously high ethics in their dealings.

Highly personalized and heavily documented (the notes and bibliography cover seventy pages), this passionately written and disturbing account sheds new light on an uncomfortably recent episode of Native American history.


A mere list of Geoffrey R. Spencer’s appointments shows him increasingly at the center of RLDS administration and thoughtful self-definition for the past three decades. Born to RLDS parents in Australia, he was called as a deacon at age thirteen, was
ordained an elder after graduating from Sydney University with a B.A. in English and history, and married Jill Godwin in 1953. They were approved for World Church appointment in 1954 and, after twelve years of service in Australia, were invited with their three children to move the United States to join the staff of the Department of Religious Education at Church headquarters.

In the next twenty-eight years, his assignments included director of the Church School Office; acting director and director of the Program Services Division supervising Christian Education, Pastoral Services, Women's Ministries, Campus Ministry, Family Life, Music, and Communications; president of the High Priests Quorum; Standing High Council; Hymnal Committee; advisory commission for the History Commission; president of Temple School; assistant to the First Presidency; staff for several international conferences; apostle (1984); president of the Council of Twelve; director of field ministries, including the Preappropriations Committee, the board of the Morden (missionary) Foundation, and the board of Outreach International.

Wayne Ham as author had the difficult task of discussing Spencer’s theological beliefs without diverging into biography, on one hand, or administrative history on the other. While his discipline in adhering to this narrow spectrum is one of the strengths of this modest-sized book, it is also one of the book’s weaknesses, since obviously momentous events were happening as Spencer’s theological openness influenced Church directions, finding support in some quarters or being contested in others. These assignments coincided with a significant redefinition of RLDS curriculum, the 1984 revelations on ordaining women and building the temple, and his release at the time Grant McMurray became the Church’s first president-elect outside the Smith family. The exact nature of that influence, however, is barely hinted at here and must await other volumes for exploration.

Some suggestion of Spencer’s attitude may appear in the title of his most recent book, *The Hazards of Theology.*

A flavor of Spencer’s theology and writing style can be glimpsed in the second verse from his hymn, “The Church’s Life”: “A church which seeks the kingdom’s goal responds with consecration. / God’s light is not our own domain—His word is for the nations./ Prophetic fire consumes the whole; / All members share prophetic role God’s will is our salvation” (106).

As assistant to the First Presidency, Spencer produced what he called “ten commandments for a living and lively church”: the experienced testimony of Christ, received through the gift of faith; the power of grace and forgiveness; the high quality of the fellowship
experienced in congregations genuinely attempting to demonstrate the gospel; the concept of universal responsibility and opportunity for ministry expressed in the concept 'all are called'; the concept of the sacredness of all things and the principles of stewardship; the vision of the transformation of community life caught up in the concept of Zion; the healing ministries that flow from the sacramental life of the church; the sense of vitality through worship; the strong call to servant ministries, particularly as expressed in the revelatory communications to the church over the past two decades; [and] the sense and experience of a vital relationship with Deity enlivened through the contemporary experience of a revealing God" (76-77).

Barbara B. Smith and Shirley W. Thomas. *When the Key Was Turned: Women at the Founding of the Relief Society*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998; 58 pp., three portraits by an unidentified artist, $7.95. ISBN 1-57008-404-1

This slim volume contains brief biographical sketches of the twenty women who attended the founding meeting of the Relief Society in Nauvoo on 17 March 1842. The longest sketches, four pages, are on Emma Smith and Eliza R. Snow. Most are shorter and, in the case of lesser known women, comprise merely a paragraph. The twenty are Emma Smith, Sarah Cleveland, Phebe Ann Hawkes, Elizabeth Jones, Margaret Cook, Sophia Packard, Philinda Myrick, Martha Knight, Desdemona Fuller, Elizabeth Ann Whitney, Leonora Cannon Taylor, Bathsheba Smith, Phebe Wheeler, Elvira Annie Cowles, Sarah Melissa Kimball, Eliza R. Snow, Athalia Robinson, Sophia Robinson, Nancy Rigdon, and Sophia Marks.

Each little essay is shaped as inspiration (the importance of doing one's duty, commitment to the Church, the consequences of not being committed to the Church, etc.). While a pleasant overview, the essays rely, with apparently only one exception, on published sources; fail to provide such basic biographical information as date of birth or husband's name, even when this information is readily available; and identify well-known Mormon women's historian Carol Cornwall Madsen in two places as "Marie Cornwall" and "Marie Cornwall Madsen." (Marie Cornwall, like Carol Cornwall Madsen, is on the BYU faculty but is a sociologist, not a historian.)

This lively chronicle of the Utah War juxtaposes two appealing young men as main characters: Irish Sean who joins the army after repeated discrimination in attempting to find a job when the message is "no Irish need apply" and Mormon Dan whose commitment to the gospel is tested when service with the Utah militia interrupts his idyllic early months of marriage and the move south makes him face the possibility of torching their newly constructed home. Sean is mentored by an older Irishman, Nat, who joined the army to get to Utah and find his daughter, a Mormon convert. He receives a broad education in being a decent human being as he befriends a black soldier, learns hunting and crafts from the Shoshone during the winter encampment near Fort Bridger, and asks honest questions about the prejudice against Mormons and why, as someone who has also been discriminated against, he should not feel sympathetic towards their plight.

Interestingly, Nat introduces him to Herman Melville; and Sean finds Moby Dick's Ishmael asking some of the same questions about the meaning of life that he does, questions that he begins to answer as he reads the Mormon "gold Bible." He also serves as a fair and unwillingly impressed witness to the devotion and self-sacrifice of Mormon handcart pioneers and backtrailing missionaries. He wonders uncomfortably why the soldiers' eager patronage of prostitutes is less morally reprehensible that the Mormon system of polygamy, and otherwise serves as an admiring commentator on Mormon life.

Moss has provided a richly textured historical context in which these young men's histories slowly converge, not only in the standard Mormon sources about the war but also in military history (the book includes detailed instructions on the handling and operation of nineteenth-century artillery), folklore (the narrative contained a delightful number of Utah and military folksongs), quotations from historical documents and dialogue that maintains the historical flavor (Brigham Young denounces federal claims: "... as rotten as an old pumpkin that has been frozen seven times and then melted in a harvest sun" p. 155), and a plausible motive for launching the Utah expedition in the desire of Southern senators to have this expensive chunk of U.S. military might safely out of the way as they lay their own plans for withdrawing from the Union.

Despite occasional anachronisms ("Wow" - p. 183), underdeveloped female characters, and a rather uncritical use of inspirational Mormon myth (e.g., Dan experienced the invasion of crickets and rescues by the seagulls as a

The Utah War of 1857 is the jumping-off point for this riveting science-fiction story about an alternate past. Allred posits a technology that is historically possible: a new Browning repeating-fire gun that enabled the Mormons to keep Johnston's troops out of Echo Canyon, not for one winter but for three. During those three years, Johnston killed Cumming and Kane as "traitors" for wanting to negotiate with the Mormons, Robert E. Lee sailed around South America with the rest of the army and made his way over Donner Pass, while Ulysses S. Grant went overland through Texas and then up the Colorado with gunboats. (Numerous other Civil War figures make brief appearances.) As promised, Brigham Young torched the city and led the Mormons north toward Canada. Lee admits to Porter Rockwell, "This war was never about you Mormons or Utah... This war was fought to buy time so the auction blocks could continue" (478). The story ends with North Carolina's succession and Robert E. Lee, walking over the plowed ground of Temple Square, viewing the desolation with a fresh realization of what war means, and trying to decide whether to accept the generalship of the Northern or Southern armies.


Two of these women were still alive when the book was published: "Esther Rosenblatt Landa (1912—): Her Price Is Far Above Rubies," by Robert A. Goldberg and "Helen Zeese Papanikolas (1917—): A Unique Voice in America," by Miriam B. Murphy. Papanikolas is the only person to be both the subject and the author of an essay. Midwives, madams, mother superiors—Mormons, Methodists, Catholics, Jews—Indian princesses, silver queens, stage stars—if anyone harbors stereotyped views of Utah women, this collection of carefully researched and brightly written essays provides a salutary corrective.


This record, which begins in October 1832 and ends in November 1827, was kept by a number of different clerks, including Frederick G. Williams, Orson Hyde, Oliver Cowdery, William F. Cowdery, Phinehas Richards, and others. Its first entries are the minutes of "a conference of High Priests" or a "conference of Elders, called apparently on an ad hoc basis, to deal with specific items of business. Some of these meetings were attended by women. For instance, on 22 January 1833, the conference convened with fourteen high priests named; but in the course of the meeting, the gift of tongues fell upon Joseph Smith, followed by Zebedee Coltrin, William Smith, and "all the Elders . . . together with several of the members of the Church both male & female" (6).

On 17 February 1834, twenty-
four high priests organized the high council and its minutes are commingled with those of the first two categories from that point. The minutes also contain the individual blessings pronounced upon the apostles and seventies, newly chosen in February 1834.

One of the tasks of this council was to establish precedents for its own meetings and behavior; and over the course of the months, general agreement emerges about decorum, attentiveness, and punctuality in the meetings. It also dealt with many disciplinary cases determining disputes between members, between leaders and members, and, from these precedents, deriving guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable conduct of members. Causes of disciplinary action, interestingly enough, include violating the Word of Wisdom, "dancing with the world &c." (196), and insulting Church officers.

Among the most compelling glimpses are a meeting of the Twelve before leaving on missions in the spring of 1835, making general confession and appealing to Joseph Smith for a "a written revelation (if consistent) that we may look upon it when we are separated, that our hearts may be comforted. Our worthiness has not inspired us to make this request, but our unworthiness" (p. 111). Another moving ceremony was the solemnity with which the Doctrine and Covenants was canonized in August 1835, the leader of the First Presidency, the High Council, the Apostles, the Seventy, the bishops of Kirtland and Zion (Missouri), the elders, the priests, the teachers, and the deacons (only two of whom were present) taking the book in his hands in turn, bearing testimony of its truthfulness, and then calling for each group’s vote. Last to vote were “all the members present, both male & female” (127-29).

Several sermons and/or statements of counsel by Joseph Smith are also preserved in these minutes: “Take away the Book of Mormon, and the revelations, where is our religion? We have none…” (p. 37) He also explained that the gift of tongues “was particularly instituted for the preaching of the Gospel to other nations and languages, but it was not given for the government of the Church” (p. 59).

This slim book, written by a great-great-grandson of Edward Partridge, is the first book-length biography of the "first" Mormon bishop. Unfortunately, Partridge kept a diary only during his mission of 1835. He was bishop in Zion (or Missouri) during that tumultuous period of Church history, and Wixom has drawn on the major outline of those events to provide a stage in which Partridge was a major actor. As bishop, he was responsible for collecting and allocating funds, trying to make the Law of Consecration work, negotiating with the Missourians, and caring for the multiplying poor. He comes into focus at such climactic moments as his tarring and feathering in Independence but otherwise his role is largely deduced from more general events.

He died at age forty-six in Nauvoo, 27 May 1840, and his grave remained unmarked for 157 years until "some 400 family members, among an estimated 3,000 descendants, donated $11,000" for a memorial. President Gordon B. Hinckley chose the marker's site, and President James E. Faust dedicated it on 6 September 1997 (113).

Wixom does not document all of his quotations. For example, in his introduction he says that Partridge has been criticized as "stubborn, defied the prophet, was too quiet, and yet fanatical in foisting his beliefs on others." Although these descriptors are in quotation marks, no source is cited. In other cases, the notes are not adequate. For example, Wixom states that Edward's daughters "would later hint that Edward carried the virtue of charity to a fault" but cites as a source only: "Diaries of Emily and Eliza in their later years. See 'Sources Cited' for names and access to these diaries" (18, 22). More conventional notes, which included specific dates, would be more helpful.

Wixom also quotes two novels, written by descendants, as confident speculations upon the emotional states of Lydia and Edward Partridge. Unless the study is framed to include a historiographical appraisal of various interpretations of the individual being studied, the use of fiction does not usually enhance the reliability of the scholarship. The volume might also benefit from more conventional book-making. For instance, the index rather confusingly precedes a section of photographs of historic sites as they currently appear.

One of the most significant contributions of the book is the Jackson County recorder's copy of a deed to the Church's temple lot property, signed by Lydia Partridge on 5 May 1848 as Edward's widow and by her three daughters as Edward's heirs: Eliza, Emily, and Caroline. A photograph of this document is included as Appendix K, but the textual discussion comments little on this legal transaction (123). These four women had
to travel from Winter Quarters to Independence to record the deed, and more context would have been welcome.

The appendices quote in full some interesting historical documents: an August 1831 letter from Edward to his wife Lydia, some excerpts from a similar letter in November 1835 (Wixom gives no reason why this letter is excerpted while the others are quoted in full) plus one to his young daughter Harriet; a May 1833 letter from Joseph Smith and one from Partridge to Smith in November 1833; his patriarchal blessing; an undated prayer at Far West; his formal affidavits of losses suffered in Missouri; a hymn; and a revelation addressed to him. These documents are not arranged in chronological order.

Edward’s death is reported on page 103. The rest of the book is given over to recounting the very interesting stories of his widow (who remarried and was promptly rewidowed), the three daughters (Eliza and Emily, who had married Joseph Smith as plural wives, and Caroline, all three of whom married Apostle Amasa Lyman, who was later excommunicated for spiritualism), and Edward Partridge, Jr. Since all of them left memoirs and/or journals (in young Edward’s case, over a thousand pages of holograph materials), a valuable follow-up project suggests itself using these far richer primary sources.
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